

The Why Not Institute

THE NATIONAL RESOURCE FOR CONTEMPORARY CLOWNING

TEACHING & TRAINING | ARTIST DEVELOPMENT |
PRODUCTIONS & EVENTS | RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT |
NATIONAL ARCHIVE | PUBLICATIONS

PROPOSAL FOR VENUE PARTNERS

**What is a Venue without its
Clowns...?!**

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Image 'Silva' by aEa fotografis

Outline ●

The Why Not Institute is the UK's only organisation totally dedicated to contemporary and traditional clowning and provides a special focus on clowning within theatre traditions.

The Institute offers resources, builds support networks for practitioners, develops and directs clown performers, and runs a variety of workshops.

The Why Not Institute is looking for a venue partner to provide a base for participants and practitioners to gather - in return we can offer a wide range of benefits to a host organisation.



Image 'by Hugo Glendenning

**'WE BELIEVE IN THE VITAL ROLE OF
CLOWNS AS TRUTH TELLERS,
ENTERTAINERS, SUBVERSIVES
AND COMMUNICATORS IN THE ARTS,
IN SOCIETY AND ACROSS THE WORLD.'**

ANGELA DE CASTRO

Our Vision.

There are 5 strands to the work of the Why Not Institute.

Support

Providing mentoring and guidance to new and experienced clowns in person, on the phone and online. Answering anything from PhD and performance related questions, to where to get the best nose, to supporting artists at a crossroads.

Image 'by Balt Rogers

Teaching

Promoting a variety of workshops from an international network of teachers of clowning and physical theatre - for professionals, beginners and enthusiasts of all ages and backgrounds.

Creative Producing

Producing shows, cabaret nights and platforms for new clown work. Offering devising, mentoring, directing and staging input for individuals and companies across a wide range of theatre and performance. Also much in demand for providing a director's 'outside eye' at the request of individuals and companies.

Image 'by JME Photoart

National Resource

Offering access to an archive collection - of international significance - of books, film and artefacts, for use in research. Our ambition for our website is that it will be a 'one-stop-shop' offering resources to meet a wide range of clowning needs.

Image 'by JME Photoart

Research & Development

Offering practical R&D opportunities as well as other investigations (business and education); and contributing to academic debate - publishing/contributing to articles and books; conducting regular market research; and developing digital platforms.

Image 'by Joe Castro

Through these five strands

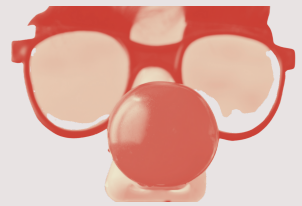
We Aim To ...

Engage New Audiences

and provide more opportunities for people to access and enjoy the work of a wider range of clowns and performers who use clowning in their work



Change Audience and Arts Industry Perceptions of Clowning



Promote High Standards of challenging, innovative clowning in the UK



Develop a network of peers for clowns

for mutual support, research, training and personal development



Provide opportunities for new and less established clowns to develop their work



Image by Isidre Magrinya

Make links between audiences and professionals

in the UK and Internationally and act as a networking point for clowns across the world



Proposal :

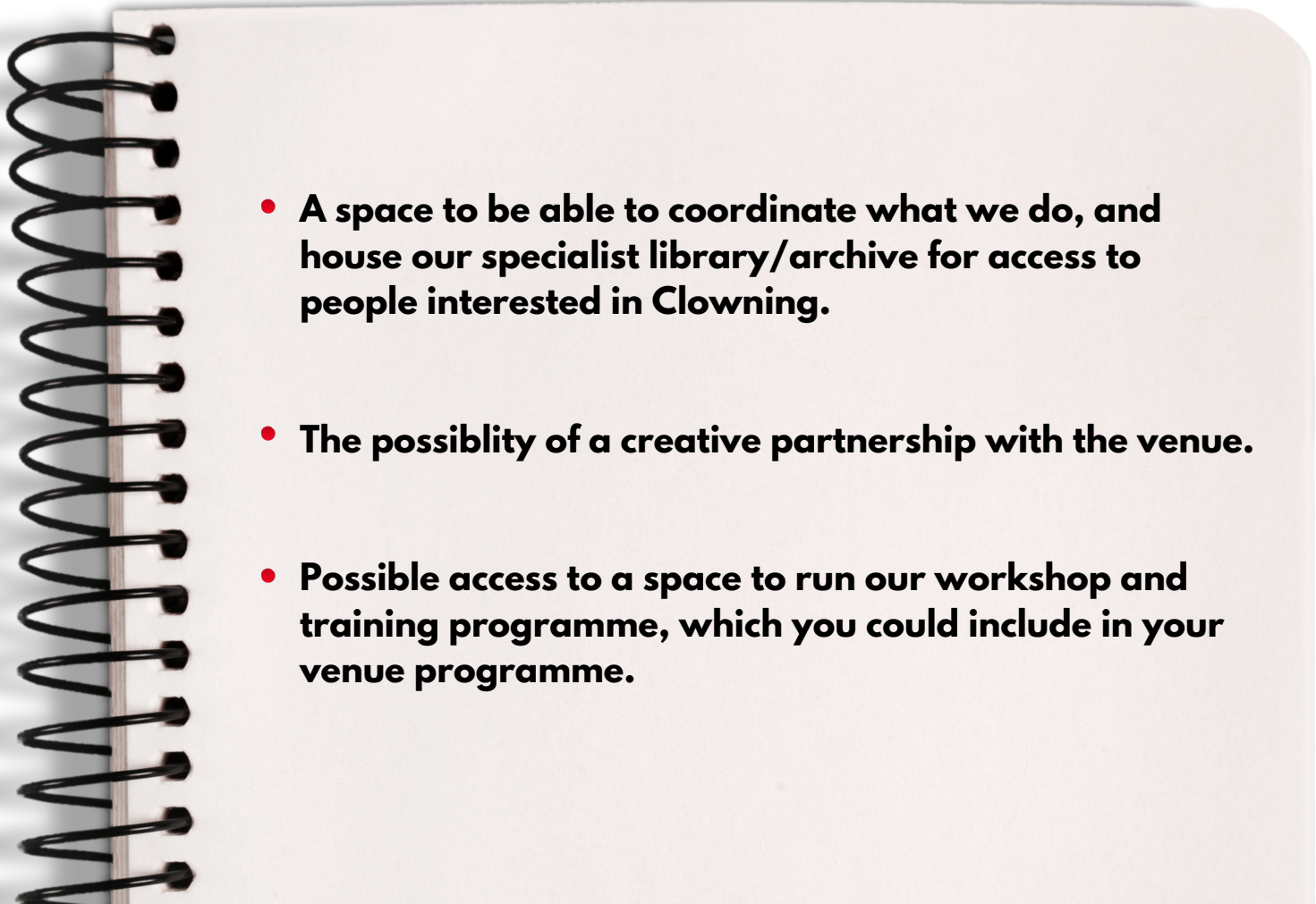
The Why Not Institute as a Partner.

We are a small self-funded organisation. We have a wide community of practitioners, participants and supporters but have no place to call 'home', where we can meet, discuss, plan and create.

We would like to find a home with a venue or organisations where we can give back to our host and contribute our experience and skills to its projects and programme.

We see this 'home' as a collaborative venture, sharing hearts, minds, skills, experience and networks.

What we are looking for:

- 
- **A space to be able to coordinate what we do, and house our specialist library/archive for access to people interested in Clowning.**
 - **The possibility of a creative partnership with the venue.**
 - **Possible access to a space to run our workshop and training programme, which you could include in your venue programme.**

What we can offer you.

● Increased Profile

We already collaborate with numerous high profile artists and festivals such as the London International Mime Festival. We can help you, as a host venue, to attract national and international attention as 'the home of a National Resource for Contemporary Clowning'.

● Creative input for your venue

We could offer training and drop-ins for the venue staff and companies. Historically, the most influential people have had a clown in their entourage to subvert and change, and apply a creative intelligence to projects and decisions. *'Clowning is not purely for people who wish to be clowns or go into comedy, it's not even purely about 'making people laugh'. It is a practise that can benefit any creative person; artist, actor, director, writer, etc, by enabling them to achieve a level of honesty and playfulness that creates work unique to those that undertake the training.'* Verity Williams

● Enhanced Cultural Offer

The Why Not Institute could run a variety of high-quality events as part of a season, specially programmed for the venue. This would further enhance the venue cultural offer in a unique and innovative way.

● Outreach

The Institute can offer courses and events for local people and communities and can support practitioners who are running outreach programmes.

● Renewed and Resilient People

The benefits of play have been well documented, in terms of an increased sense of well-being and improved creativity. The Why Not Institute would not only attract new people to the venue; but the programme of workshops and events - including regular, high-quality, drop-in courses - would help build a stronger and richer community, with increased resilience and morale.

As Groucho Marx said, *'a clown is like an aspirin, only he/she works twice as fast.'*

We can impact in the health of your organisation.

● Financial Benefits

These could be the result of additional people accessing the venue, shared courses or productions, joint funding, and also through links with the The Why Not Enterprise, which offers corporate training.

" Angela de Castro is, in my opinion, the world's leading researcher and pedagogue in theatre clowning, and an outstanding performer in her own right. UK theatre and theatre training is the richer for having her as a resident in this country. She has worked with major companies including the National Theatre Scotland, and makes major contribution to the training of emerging artists across the UK. Without her work, British theatre would be greatly impoverished."

Prof. Maggie Kinloch FHEA FRSA, former Vice Principal, Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama.



Image by Bathazar Roger

"... is a genius clown who is like Buster Keaton, holding that beautiful balance between complete and utter fragility and complete power."

Due South Magazine July/August 1989

Past and Present:

Where we came from and where we are now.



The Why Not Institute is an organisation with a passion for clowning and an obsession for promoting the work of clowns in the UK and beyond. It seeks to validate, celebrate, investigate, develop and reclaim recognition for the noble art of clowning. In particular, we seek to promote, study and experiment with theatre clowning and theatre traditions.

Despite a long and honourable tradition of clowning, it is still a misunderstood and undervalued art form.

The art of clowning is one of the greatest and most difficult of them all. It is about communicating truth in its purest, rawest form, which demands great courage and discipline from the performer. Yet it reaches out with such simplicity in order to engage an audience.

Clowning is a performance tradition that has developed over hundreds of years. In the twentieth century, theatre or character clowning has developed alongside circus clowning. In recent years, theatre clowning has been linked with the development of other art forms, such as physical theatre and dance. Contemporary clowning includes comedy and tragedy on a metaphysical level. Its focus is character, feelings, meanings and ways of seeing the world, rather than simply slapstick or 'gags'. Britain has strong traditions in all these art forms, which nowadays often merge, with performers using skills from all of them.

Angela de Castro founded The Why Not Institute in 1999 in response to a question posed by participants who came to her clowning master classes: what next? Participants and professionals find themselves jumping from class to class, teacher to teacher, without a space that enables their clown to exist outside of a show or a workshop.

The Why Not Institute has, amazingly, been running for 21 years and has operated throughout this time as a voluntary organisation, supported by a partnership called Contemporary Clowning Projects.

Angela de Castro, as Founder and Artistic Director, has given her time and expertise freely as part of a lifelong commitment to the art of clowning and to her vision of what The Institute Why Not Institute can offer.

For the first few years, The Institute was based at ArtsEd (Arts Educational Schools, Chiswick, London). ArtsEd provided free workshop and office space and with the support of international clown teachers, it began to run annual seasons of workshops, and weekly drop-ins. Classes covered clowning, play, eccentric dance, slapstick, and many other disciplines.

Because The Institute had a base, we were able to offer drop-in sessions as well as bookable longer courses, and a place where practitioners and participants could gather, with a shared language and sense of belonging.

Many participants from this era have gone on to tour productions and stay in touch with each other. Within a couple of years, we had trebled the mailing list. The surplus made from running courses (after paying teacher fees and overheads) was ploughed back into publicity and preparation for the next season. We also developed contact with a number of influential advisers and supporters, including high-profile workshop attendees (for example, The London International Mime Festival, Sir Ian Holm, Miranda Hart, Sally Phillips, Eve Best and Tom Burke).



The collaboration with ArtsEd also enabled The Institute to create 'The Land of Why Not', de Castro's physical embodiment of a vision of a home for clowns.

'The Land of Why Not' is a safe space where the clown can exist without the critical demands of shows and workshops. Within this space, the participant can discover things about their clown and solidify their clown persona. 'The Land of Why Not' acts like a lab of learning for clowns. In Brazil, de Castro successfully experimented with observation of 'The Land of Why Not', where members of the public and staff in a venue could pass by and see the clowns existing in their world. This experiment has yet to be tried in the UK.

In 2004, ArtsEd expanded and needed back the space they had given to The Institute, so we moved to People Show Studios (Bethnal Green). After the sale of that building, in 2013 we moved to the rented office in Stratford Circus Arts Centre.

In addition to office running costs, we have to hire workshop space - which has increased the cost of running courses and made it more difficult to offer them at a reduced rate. As we didn't have a space for drop-in courses we adapted our programme to Summer and Winter School Seasons.

The Why Not Institute, through de Castro, has travelled to over 35 countries, establishing an on-going relationship with Ernst Busch Academy of Dramatic Arts, Berlin for over 15 years, and running courses in Australia, Brazil, USA, Israel, France, Sweden and many more. Relationships continue with Hospital Clowns, particularly with Hearts and Minds in Scotland, whose participants must attend training with either The Why Not Institute, Lecoq School or Philippe Gaulier.

New collaborators have joined the team over the last few years bringing their unique expertise, including: Sascha Goslin, Balt Rogers, Alex Tabrizi, Becky Illsley, Fran Godsal, cabaret/burlesque clown Kerry Norman (aka Jack Stark), and Stephen Sobal, from All In Theatre. Courses continue to reliably sell out, we've had a large number of participants over the years, many of whom have continued to stay in touch with our community of creatives and performers. We regularly meet for discussions and to share ideas.



The Why Not Institute's work is adaptable. Many participants who do not work in the performing arts who have benefited greatly from the personal development that clowning offers.

In recent years, the work has extended successfully into business, education, health and a wider investigation into the state of the imagination and the creative intelligence.

Having concentrated on training, directing and building a community for 21 years, The Institute would now appreciate finding ways to come back to a 'home', a place where a rich interaction, use the skills and the benefits of clowning can be built to enhance everyone's creative experience. The Institute is looking for a venue partner to house its base and, in return, offers a chance to engage with its unique community in a meaningful and rewarding way.



The Facts: What we've achieved so far

Our philosophy has always been to do rather than just talk.

We proved (to ourselves as much as anyone else) that The Why Not Institute is a good idea and that people want what it offers.

A Strong Community

Over 21 years we've had over 2000 participants. Many of which still actively keep in touch, meet up with us and each other and engage with our courses and mail outs.

Business and the Wider Community

We have run bespoke courses with business people and teachers. The Performing Arts Labs established in 2001 has involved over 500 teachers, artists and educators in pioneering a new model for the creative continuous professional development of teachers across the UK. The Why Not Enterprise has been transforming businesses for almost a decade and have inspired a variety of organisations, from small start up advertising agencies to multi-national telecommunications companies.

Strong Networks and High Profile Tutors

We have run 21 seasons of successful courses, involving over 2000 participants, many of whom are regular attendees. **Our teacher, and master clown, is Angela de Castro** but we have had many guest teachers over the years, including **Jos Huben, Carina Bonan, Nola Rae, Marcello Magni, Bim Mason, Barry Grantham, John Wright, Linda Kerr Scott, Kevin Brooking** and, currently, **Kerry Norman and Stephen Sobal**.

Popular High-Quality Courses

Our courses are oversubscribed with applications, as we keep the participant numbers small, to ensure the highest-quality learning experience and opportunities to develop, that we know achieves life changing results. At the moment we offer two seasons of courses per year, in January, supported by the London International Mime Festival, and in the Summer. We hope to expand this in collaboration with our partners.

Courses on offer include:

- 10 days '**How To Be A Stupid**'
- 5 - 10 days '**How To Be Even More Stupid**'
- 5 - 10 days '**Clown in Tragedy**'
- 6 days '**Imagination to Reality – Devising Material for Clowns**' course
- 1-day sessions in '**The Pleasure of Playing**', '**The Beauty of Mistakes**', '**Eccentric Dance**' and other topics.

International Reputation

We have participants travel from as far as Hong Kong, Canada and beyond to train with us in London, and are booked to provide workshops and training for creative organisations and groups throughout the world including Europe, Asia, Australia and North America.

Effective Support

We have maintained a telephone and email advice line, giving information on courses, individual support and specific advice (such as where to get clown shoes and how to find a neutral mask!).

Performances

With the Why Not community we have created the HaHarmonics: the Why Not Clown Choir, performed in several places in London, Edinburgh and online.

We also created The Road: The Why Not Variety Show, which has been staged in Brazil, Scotland, Andorra and Wales with workshop participants from the local community.

We know we have established a unique and vibrant organisation. We know we have proved that there is a real need and excitement for what we offer.

Mentoring

We have given free advice and creative assistance to a large number of solo performers and emerging companies.

The Research:

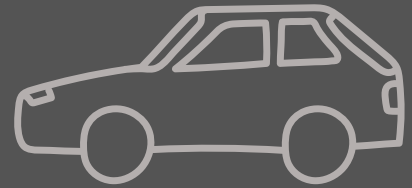
What we know about who attends our workshops.

25%
of participants
came from
outside of the
Creative
Industries

Over
50%
were self
employed

4%
Were
disabled

**50% live
outside London**



**38% travelled
over 2 hours to
get to a course**

3/4

of participants
worked in the
performing arts

100%

**thought the
course(s) they
attended offered a
high quality of
teaching.**

98%

thought
the course(s)
they attended
had been
value for money

2/3

were aged
between 25
and 55.

60%

of respondents
were women

38%

men

2% did not respond to this
question



The Why Not Institute training opportunities continue to attract people from all over the UK and the World.

In the last five years we have had participants travelling from: Malaysia, China, Ireland, Germany, Norway, Switzerland, Hong Kong, Finland, Netherlands, Sweden, Italy, Greece, France, Australia, Hungary, Czech Republic, Belgium, Japan, South Korea, Canada and the USA, as well as all parts of the UK

In 2019 students were :

- 65% of participants were female, 25% were male, and 10% were trans or non-binary participants.**
- Aged from 19 to their 50s, with most participants in their 30s or 40s.**
- 67% of participants were performers, 19% worked in the arts sector, 14% were from outside of the arts sector.**
- 18% were from BAME backgrounds, with 48% from backgrounds other than White British**

A collaboration with The Institute would bring to the host a new audience who wouldn't usually go to that venue, building a reputation in contemporary clowning with people from across the UK and the world.

Our Impact

One of the remarkable things about being part of The Why Not Institute for 21 years is hearing about the impact that clowning can have on those who attend our training and activities.



Here are some examples:

- **A CEO of a foundation for musicians** who, after coming on the course in January 2019, left her job and set up a company speaking with young people about facing their fears. She is now writing her own show and a book.
- **A Director of a theatre in Huddersfield** who came on the course in 2018 and has since given up her job and gone back to performing, receiving Arts Council funding to tour her own show.
- **The Headteacher of a Primary School** in special measures who was part of the PAL 'Failing to Learn' Teachers' Lab. She asked de Castro to run a course for all the teachers and develop a model of work to help struggling schools. The school came out of special measures.
- **An Advertising Executive** from a company that was about to fold, who came on the course and invited de Castro to work with his colleagues to help with team building and refresh their creative intelligence. The company won more clients and became very successful.

“... the enthusiasm of the participants and the popularity of this workshop was beyond all our expectations ”
(Clare Muldoon, former Artistic Director of the Hackney Empire Theatre, London)

These are just a few examples, there are many others. Clowning is a diverse kind of art, with historical and contemporary aspects, and cross-overs into many other art forms and disciplines.

The Why Not Institute brings a lifetime's understanding and experience of this to its work, enabling creativity to be freed, creative intelligence enhanced, and performance strengthened in all sorts of artistic genres and paths of life.

The Why Not Institute has a set of core values and beliefs about creating a safe space within which the art of clowning is valued and understood, people can challenge themselves and grow, facing their own struggles and failures and finding courage to change.

The Institute works with a sensibility, a generous belief in people, that it is ok to be different, that we collaborate and create through trust, through failing and taking risks together. These values guide everyone involved in The Why Not Institute and in all its work.



What they say ...

“... her workshops are very enjoyable, funny, attractive and captivating that I’ve ever seen. She combines a truly passion for what she does with an immense technique and skill. It is a real pleasure to observe Angela teaching her workshops and it is a source of inspiration for who shares her passion. I, sincerely, believe that my students are really very lucky to be taught by her.”

Jackie Clune, Formerly Royal Holloway New College, University of London.



“Angela de Castro is a quite extraordinary woman who passionately believes in her work. Personally, I would say she is inspirational as a teacher, although she breaks every rule in the ‘What makes a good teacher?’ Ofsted handbook. Still, it is very hard to quantify the experience of working with her.”

Sue East, Head Mistress of St. Julian's Primary School, Wellow, England.

"The nature of Ms. de Castro's work is highly specialized and specific to her person, no other professional in the clowning arena is able to convey the techniques of this special art form in a way that makes them relevant to contemporary performing arts. In addition to these techniques, she has demonstrated the ability to convey a set of values that go beyond the realm of clowning and have helped the students tremendously in their human and creative development."

Prof. Marina Busse, Folkwang University, Essen, Germany

"Over the years, Angela de Castro's work has changed our students in a dramatic way. They went through an astonishing maturing process and at the end of this process everything they have learned at the school had a completely new quality."

Prof. Viola Schmidt, Head of Voice and Speech,
Academy of Dramatic Arts Ernst Busch, Berlin, Germany.

"A teacher, a master clown, who is very delicate, who respects the performer in front of her and cares to take you to the best path, so you do not expose yourself unnecessarily to expose yes, the fragility of the clown and the your skills. A director who strives for the actors to help them build and delivery their scenes with confidence. De Castro really makes her performers feel important within the entire production."

Michelle Silveira, clown and editor of the 'Women Clowns Magazine', Brazil



"This is clowning at its best... achieving an effect comparable to the best of the silver screen stars."

Festival Times review of 'The Gift' , Edinburgh, Scotland

"De Castro is the most focused teacher I have worked with. Her energy, focus and attention are always on full no matter how demanding or exhausting the work.

This course made me feel open to the possibilities of the world and my possibilities in it in a way no other training has done

Do this course and you will be changed. At the finish you will be a different person to the one you were at the beginning."

Louise Peacock, Author of 'Serious Play', De Montfort University, Leceister.
Formerly University of Southern California

“All the best universities, theatre and circus groups, arts centres, festivals from every continent around the world continue to request A de Castro’s workshop because it really delivers. Don’t lose the chance of getting a place on her course? For me, it was brilliant. If I was you, I would call now!”

Guiherme Miranda, composer, musician, actor, clown. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

“de Castro's gift is in bringing to the fore the sometimes very quiet voice at the centre of the artists being and expressing that. In an atmosphere as serious as it is playful, laughter and discipline lead to a connecting with inner truth and the principles at the heart of acting and of communicating with an audience. Experience the invigorating presence of an experienced performer who lives to share the joy and simplicity of the clown form and how it can so usefully relate to the art of acting.”

Stephen Wisker , Actor, Director, Storyteller, Ukulele-ist, Buffalo, USA



“This time Polunin is accompanied by the amazing British-based but Brazilian-born clown Angela de Castro, an outlandish, dumpy and almost Beckett-like foil whose outsize boots dog Polunin’s every move. (Who said women can’t clown?)”

Time Out Magazine, London

“...the complete metaphysical power of the clown on its highest level”

The Scotman on de Castro in 'Snowshow'

**“... can make you laugh and cry in the same moment,
a sign of serious talent.”**

Everywoman Magazine, England

“Forget circuses, here is the full metaphysical force of clowning at the highest level, offering one of the most simultaneously sublime and exhilarating experiences to be had this Festival time. Two doleful characters captivate the audience to an unprecedented degree: adults become children once more, helplessly held and enraptured by the skill and subtlety of this wordless unfurling of humanity.”

The Scotsman

"The trump card of this production is Angela de Castro. As a professional clown, her work alone is already worth the price of the ticket"

Evening News , Glasgow, Scotland



“Prepare to be entertained. One blink and you are in danger of missing something ludicrously funny.”

The Voice Newspaper