

FIERCE

Fierce! Festival heralds new artistic era with appointment of directors

Following an extensive search which attracted international interest, Fierce! Festival are delighted to announce the appointment of its new artistic leaders. Heralding the transition into the next phase of Fierce!'s life, the Board today announced the appointment of **Laura McDermott** and **Harun Morrison** as the new Joint Artistic Directors of Fierce! Festival and its related year round programme of work.

Since the departure of Mark Ball, who left his role as founder and artistic director of Fierce to take up the helm at LIFT (London International Festival of Theatre), Fierce! Festival embarked on a search for a new leader. The board wanted a talented individual to maintain Fierce's role as a vital pioneering organisation and to create a new artistic vision to build on the success of this award winning brand, its internationally acclaimed festival and ground breaking development work. They are delighted to have discovered two such individuals.

Laura and Harun applied jointly with a compelling vision for festival and the region. Talented producers in their own right, with highly developed curatorial voices, between them McDermott and Morrison have worked as producers at Greenwich + Dockland's Festivals, LIFT and the Royal Opera House. The foundation of their collaboration developed at the award-winning BAC (Battersea Arts Centre) where they have worked together for the last 4 years. Laura has extensive experience of producing work in found, unusual, or outdoor spaces and in a music festival context, both for Glastonbury in the UK and the *vinspired* Lake of Stars festival in Malawi.

Fierce! is Dead, Long Live Fierce!

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Harun has worked extensively in the visual arts sector for *Whitechapel Art Gallery*, *South London Gallery*, *INIVA* and this summer will be working for *Tate Modern* on their annual *Summer Institute* project.

Recent standout projects they have worked on during their time at BAC include the Punchdrunk and BAC production *The Masque of the Red Death (2007-8)*, a building-wide performance across all 71 spaces of the former Victorian town hall, which was listed in *The Guardian* by Lyn Gardner as one of nine ‘Productions that Transformed Theatre’; the BAC and Time Out Young Critics scheme, which developed and showcased the critical voices of under-25-year-olds; and for 2009’s BURST festival, performances by Dries Verhoeven for the foyer payphone, Amy Sharrocks for Battersea Park’s boating lake and Rotozaza for the local ASDA supermarket.

Chair of Fierce! Festival, Alan Rivett said: “We are delighted to welcome such a vibrant and dynamic duo to Fierce! We seem to have skipped a generation but not skimped on quality! They have an impeccable pedigree and this new appointment can only further the vision, commitment and international outlook of the arts in the West Midlands. I believe that, together, Laura and Harun with the wider Fierce! team, will re-interpret for a new age Fierce!’s longstanding reputation for wonder and spectacle, excitement and danger, confrontation and intrigue.”

In responding to the news of their appointment, Laura and Harun said: “On our way to the interview we did a straw-poll, asking passers-by: ‘If you could bring any live event to Birmingham what would it be?’ A man called Martin collecting for RNLI, a young guy called Jay Ahmed, and a woman called Ashley in an Afro-Caribbean hair care shop each gave us challenging, creative, demanding answers. We want future Fierce! events to be as provocative, enabling and eye-opening as those answers. We want to create a program born from this spirit of dialogue with Birmingham which can resonate throughout the UK and beyond.”

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For more information please contact Helga Henry on 0121 244 8079 or helga@fierceedearth.com.

Notes to editors

- 1 Fierce! Festival has now established an international reputation for risk-taking, excellence and innovation and is now widely recognised as one of the UK's most important contemporary arts festivals. It has consistently engaged new audiences with a broadening programme, delivered in conjunction with a wide variety of producing and presenting partners including Warwick Arts Centre, Birmingham Hippodrome, Birmingham Rep, Compton Verney, Birmingham Royal Ballet, and the CBSO.
- 2 Fierce! Festival was founded by one of the UK's leading producers, Mark Ball in 1998. In 2007, Fierce Ten marked the Festival's 10th birthday with major collaborations with the cultural institutions of the West Midlands including "Ballet on the Buses" with Birmingham Royal Ballet, the proposed live "Sky Orchestra" with Luke Jerram and CBSO and Joshua Sofaer's iconic project "Name in Lights".
- 3 In 2008, Fierce! scored another world first with Myfiercefestival: the first time major strand of a festival was curated by the public. Following a call out for artists to present their work to the world at large via their website; the final line up was chosen by public vote. The nine selected works were presented in a range of specially reserved spaces including **Birmingham Hippodrome, Patrick Centre, Warwick Arts Centre and Birmingham Town Hall**. From studios to conventional performance spaces, to foyers, cupboards, dressing rooms and spaces on the roads, pavements and piazzas outside, an eclectic range of work was shown to a sell-out audience of Fierce! fans.
- 4 To find out details of the new artistic vision for Fierce! from our exciting new directors we would like to invite you to an event on **Thursday 1st October** (venue to be announced). Here, our board will welcome you to a new era for Fierce and Harun and Laura will outline their vision for the future, giving you a flavour of the artistic excitement to come.