

**MONSTROUS  
REGIMENT**



congratulations on your tenth anniversary. Hard to believe it's nine years since Vinegar Tom. Remember our excitement at for the first time writing a play written specifically for you, and mine at for the first time writing a play specifically for a company – a company of nine actors then, seven women and two men, which shows how much time has passed and the difference in funding now. Thank you for energy, exchange of ideas, friendship and a lot of sheer delight.'

*Caryl Churchill*

'Anyone who's worked in committed theatre knows the problems of balancing the interests of polemic with the needs of (for want of a better word) art. Over the years, Monstrous Regiment have produced a really quite dazzling series of pieces, which have managed to be both complex and celebratory, to combine artistic maturity with political clout. Their future returns should be happy and many.'

*David Edgar*

'Over the last 10 years women's place in theatre has changed radically. Now women's theatre groups proliferate where once there was on the Monstrous Regiment. Long may they continue to encourage us all.'

*Claire Luckham*

'The aim of placing women centre-stage, which has been one of Monstrous Regiment's basic principles, is essential if the theatre is to represent the experiences, and challenge the imaginations, of its audiences.'

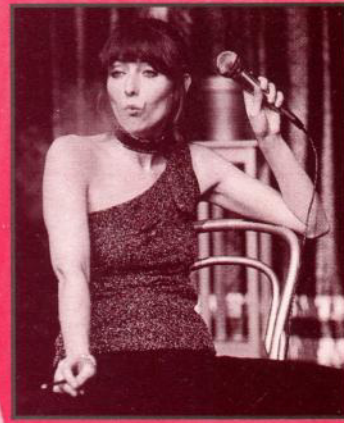
*Micheline Wandor*



*Jane Harper*



*Sheila Burnett*



*Mark Risher*

... a company of extraordinary high quality. *Liverpool Post* 1977

... it is a joy to see how *Monstrous Regiment* exploit surrealist and expressionist techniques and give them a blazing theatrical life and function... *The Guardian* 1982

The ultimate success of this introspective elegy as drama depends on *Monstrous Regiment's* no-nonsense magic touch... *Time Out* 1981



Mark Rusler

I enjoy *Monstrous Regiment's* personal approach *Stage* 1983

With their policy of commissioning new plays which have strong parts for women and always having more women in the company than men, *Monstrous Regiment*, since their inception in 1976, have combined artistic endeavour with political good sense *Time Out* 1982

... a company of unqualified excellence. *Tribune* 1979



Roger Perry



Howard Gibbons



*Monstrous Regiment* handle this gentle material with characteristic sensitivity and concentration *City Limits* 1981

... a testimony to the still-striking standards of *Monstrous Regiment*, a company whose fundamental feminism is (incidentally) mature enough to be implicit *New Statesman* 1982

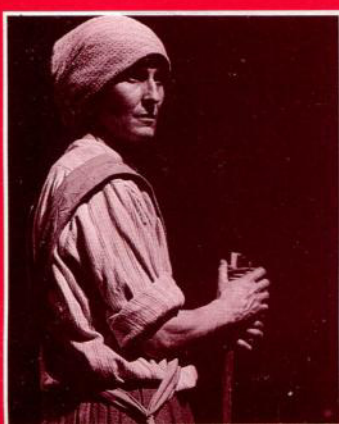
Six years on, the *Regiment* have many distinguished productions under their belt *City Limits* 1982



Roger Perry

*Monstrous Regiment* are one of our most consistently popular touring companies. After their highly acclaimed season of foreign plays they now return to commissioning new plays by British women *Entertainment and Arts Management* 1981

With so many of our small theatre companies in peril it's good to see that *Monstrous Regiment* still has a grip *The Stage* 1984



Roger Perry



Williamby Gullichen Pictures

**MONSTROUS REGIMENT**

# MONSTROUS REGIMENT PRODUCTIONS

## SCUM 1976

by Claire Luckham, C.G. Bond and the company

— A musical celebration of the women of the Paris Commune of 1871.

'Scum traces the political and emotional development of women laundry workers and two young men in the People's Militia through the struggles of the Paris Commune... fighting, celebrating, touching the stars. Each scene is beautifully constructed... very funny... with superb music. This vivid production is political theatre at its very best.' *Rosalind Asquith/Time Out May 1976.*

## VINEGAR TOM 1976/77

by Caryl Churchill

Why were so many women hanged as witches? Were they really possessed by the devil? Did they lead men to damnation with unbridled lust? Did they kill and corrupt or were they victims? — scapegoats of church and state in unsettled times when people needed diverting from the real source of their misfortunes.

A witch hunt with music for the oppressed and possessed.

'*Vinegar Tom* is both an impressive feminist play and an impressive feminist theatre production.' *Micheline Wandor/Spare Rib Nov 1976*

'*Vinegar Tom* is intensely dramatic... an intensity which is echoed in the acting of everyone of Monstrous Regiment.' *The Stage Nov 1976*

## KISS AND KILL 1977/78

by Ann Mitchell and Susan Todd

Why do men hit women? And why do they fight each other?

The threat of violent assault keeps all women in a state of fear. It is part of the process of intimidation which ensures the continued subjection and inequality of women. The threat of violence enforces woman's status as the property of man.

*Kiss and Kill* looked at the causes and effects of violence between men and women, at the way it erupts in their sexual lives, in the family, in work... and in war. It examined the group and class pressures which teach men to use their bodies as weapons against other men and against women.

'A fast moving and schematic survey of some of the patterns of domestic violence in our society... very funny.' *Micheline Victor/Time Out 1977*

## FLOORSHOW 1977/78

by Caryl Churchill, Bryony Lavery, Micheline Wandor and David Bradford

A musical cabaret which looked at the contradiction which surrounds the world of women at work. There were sketches, jokes, stand up routines and songs. In a dozen musical numbers the company sang about:

Women working for pin money  
Women working in factories and offices  
Women working in the house  
Women in pursuit of those 'glittering prizes'

And yet, can equal career opportunities by themselves really bring about fundamental changes in a fundamentally unequal society?

'*Monstrous Regiment* have produced a dazzling cabaret which is glamorous and funny.' *Time Out Jan 1978*

## TIME GENTLEMEN PLEASE 1978

by Bryony Lavery

This show was an ironic review of heterosexuality. A cabaret which was disturbing and hysterically funny by turns. A personal afterthought on the seamier side of sex — the dream of true love.

'The latest from *Monstrous Regiment* is a cabaret, suavely staged and elegantly dressed, with astonishing versatility and sophistication in the music.' *Jim Hiley/Time Out Oct 1978*

'It is a brilliant two-hour cabaret about sex, with jokes, songs and sketches following one another in smooth, satirical succession.' *Stephen McClarence/Doncaster Evening Post Nov 78*

## TEENDREAMS 1979

by David Edgar with Susan Todd

*Teendreams* was a retrospective look at 10 years of the women's movement and its influence on different generations; a school teacher, two of her pupils and the circles around them. *Teendreams* took the idea of 'the epic' and translated it into modern terms to examine new ideas and values.

'The company are excellent and play with pace, clarity and humour.' *The Observer March 1979*

'The performance is subtle, passionate and self-aware.' *The Birmingham Mail March 1979*

## GENTLEMEN PREFER 1979/80

BLONDES  
by Bryony Lavery

A tempestuous triangle of love between a woman, herself and... MONEY. A relentless story of a woman driven to the depths of emotion by a craving beyond control... the thrilling sound of notes (preferably \$100) falling like snowflakes... of diamond rattling against diamond... the roar of the effervescent stock market... a rushing leaping drama of charm and excitement unrolled against the cinematic backcloth of the twinkling twenties.

'The production is clever and inventive.' *Ned Chaillet/The Times April 1980*

'The play is very funny and excellently performed by the company's versatile actor-musicians.' *Ros Franey/Time Out Nov 1979*

## DIALOGUE BETWEEN A 1980

PROSTITUTE AND ONE OF  
HER CLIENTS

by Dacia Maraini

The first of a season of foreign plays — we translated it from the Italian. We chose it not only for its subject matter, but for its experimental form: it was not a documentary about prostitution, but rather a funny and poetic examination of the nature of heterosexuality. It was an open dialogue with the audience at set points during the play — inviting their direct participation and making them an integral part of the theatrical experience.

'Despite the rawness of the subject matter, the play is extremely poetic, easily making the transition from naturalistic dialogue to fantasy monologue' *Eileen Fairweather/Spare Rib*

'Quite extraordinary... a skilful and very relaxed translation... alert and intelligent performances... to describe the show as thought provoking would sound like a Victorian understatement.' *Spare Rib Nov 1980*

## MOURNING PICTURES 1981

by Honor Moore

This play, another in our season of foreign plays was set in New England and spans six months in the life of Maggie, a fifty year old mother of nine who was just starting a new life of independence from her children when she learnt she had terminal liver cancer.

Her daughter, Margaret, told the story of how

she and Maggie came to terms with the disease and of how the family turned to alternative homeopathic medicine to fight against it. It was an exciting and startling blend of poetry, prose, music and visual imagery, a powerful affirmation of life out of the experience of death.

The production of *Mourning Pictures* was broadcast by BBC Radio 4 as the Monday Play on 24 May 1982.

'*Mourning Pictures* is a play of extraordinary sensitivity... painfully truthful and factual.' *Peter Hepple/The Stage March 1981*

'Music is effectively used both to create atmosphere and dramatise the play's reflective soliloquies. But the ultimate success of this introspective elegy as drama depends on *Monstrous Regiment's* no-nonsense magic touch.' *Ros Franey/Time Out March 1981*

## YOGA CLASS

by Rose Tremain

1981

Five women and one man gathered in the gymnasium of an adult education centre for their weekly yoga class. All six characters were seeking that true balance... that harmony with the world that comes about when the intellect, the emotions, the will, and the body are in harmony... they were all seeking emotional props to get them through the day.

'When I stand on my head I sometimes think 'Good, now my life will fall out and I'll be able to see what's there...'

'*Yoga Class* works beautifully, the exchanges between the characters give added meaning by soliloquy and aside, and bursts of song that seem just right.' *Jon Holliday/South Wales Echo Oct 1981*

'*Monstrous Regiment*, who have clearly worked hard on their Yoga, handle this gentle material with characteristic sensitivity and concentration.' *Ros Asquith/City Limits Nov 1981*

## SHAKESPEARE'S SISTER

by Théâtre de l' Aquarium

1982

*Shakespeare's Sister* was originally written and performed by the Théâtre De L' Aquarium in Paris. We translated it into English. What particularly attracted us to this piece was its extraordinary use of visual images to present complex ideas. It was a style we had never used before. Four brides in radiant white were instructed in the wifely arts by two kindly but stern grand-mothers – played by men.

*Shakespeare's Sister* is a tragic fantasy figure created by Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*. She is a gifted woman, born in the wrong age and of the wrong sex and therefore was never allowed the chance of self-fulfilment. *Shakespeare's Sister* took this image and

explored it in relation to marriage today, measuring it against views of contemporary women.

'With its inventive interplay of choral speaking, balletic movement and surreal visual effects *Shakespeare's Sister* marks an exotic departure for *Monstrous Regiment*.' *Ros Asquith/Time Out Dec 1980*

'Superb... it is a joy to see how *Monstrous Regiment* exploit surrealist and expressionist techniques and give them blazing theatrical life and function... the cumulative effect is devastating.' *Nicholas de Jongh/Guardian Dec 1980*

## THE EXECUTION

by Melissa Murray

1982

*The Execution* marked a return to the large scale political historical epic. Eight performers enacted the story of the women and men behind the killing of Tsar Alexander II, Holy Father of All Russia. Tsar Alexander was assassinated by the People's Will. The death of the very embodiment of patriarchy was seen by the groups of women whose lives are explored in the play as the keystone in a course of action necessary to change the shape of Russian society.

*The Execution* examined the moral and political questions of revolutionary violence as a challenge to the patriarchal state.

'*The Execution* is testimony to the still-striking standards of *Monstrous Regiment*.' *Benedict Nightingale/New Statesman May 1982*

'One is all too rarely able to use the word 'excellent' in theatrical criticism. It is therefore with considerable pleasure that I pronounce *The Execution* to be precisely that.' *Fiona Ellis/Gay News Number 242*

## FOURTH WALL

by Franca Rame and Dario Fo

1983

*The Fourth Wall* was made up of four of the monologues in the *Tutto Casa, Chiesa e Letto* collection by Franca Rame and Dario Fo; *I'm Ulrike Screaming, Alice in Wonderless Land, The Whore and the Madhouse and It Happened Tomorrow*. They deal with themes of women and the state, as victims, as political prisoners; women who fight back and deal with and understand their situation, even against incredible odds. Stylistically the production was an exciting collaboration between two performers: a highly skilled female actor and a respected improvising singer. As a result no two performances were ever exactly the same.

'The result is the kind of evening that superlatives were invented for... *The Fourth Wall* will take you, with laughter and feeling, right to the edge where you can look over and perceive a truth. Brilliant. Buy a season ticket!!' *Diana Simmonds/City Limits April 1983*

## CALAMITY

by Bryony Lavery

1983/84

The strangers arrived in town. One was French and mysterious... one dust-stained and raucous... one quiet and homely... come to audition for Kohl and Middleton's celebrated Wild West Show. This unlikely trio were signed up and the Wild West Show headed for Dakota. But who were they and why were they there? Based on the lives of three extraordinary women *Calamity* followed the hilarious trail of their epic wagon train across the mythical history of the Wild West.

'Superb performances by the versatile cast of three make this a work well worth watching.' *Victoria McKee/The Birmingham Post Oct 1983*

'*Calamity* is a fabulous antidote to all those sharp-shooting, gum-chewing westerns which feed childhood... *Calamity* is wired up for laughs with writer Bryony Lavery on her best form.' *Barney Bardsley/Tribune Feb 1984*

## ENSLAVED BY DREAMS

devised by Chris Bowler

1984

Inspired by Florence Nightingale, this show exploded a few myths about the angel of the Crimea. It challenged assumptions about saintliness, self-sacrifice and the fuel that fires great obsessions. What was it that made a perfectly sensible woman of more than average intelligence take to her bed for 50 years? With irreverent humour and a passionate affection this show celebrated the phenomenon that was Florence Nightingale and is every woman who navigates the treacherous waters of desire and duty, ambition and obligation, career and family.

'... the show is fascinating and well worth seeing.' *Time Out March 1984*

'... the play is dream-like – intriguing and disturbing in turn.' *Nick Baker/T.E.S. March 1984*

## ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES

– A LOVE STORY

by Bryony Lavery

1984/85

Molly Starkey, famous archaeologist and raconteur was awaiting the passing of 1984 with a mixture of excitement and dread. As the clock ticked on towards midnight, she told us a story... it was a love story – a historical romance, set in Africa and Yorkshire, an epic tale filled with excitement and adventure – spanning those heady years from The Dawn of Time until Now – a story so very strange that even Molly's lifelong friend Victoria found it difficult to believe.

'*Origin* is distinguished by its simplicity and accessibility.' *David Rabey/Plays and Players Jan 85*

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**M**ONSTROUS REGIMENT was formed in 1975 by a group of professional actors who wanted to make exciting political theatre based on women's experience; tired of seeing that experience marginalised or trivialised, we wanted to take it out of the wings and place it at the centre of the stage.

Over the years we have explored a wide range of theatrical forms including the epic, the straight play, musicals, surreal images, naturalism, cabaret ... We have looked at women in revolution, in history, at work, at play; women mourning, women laughing.

We have worked in many different venues, from clubs and studios, community centres to large theatres. We have toured extensively throughout Britain and have been part of international festivals in Holland and Rome and our audiences have been as varied as the places we have played.

It has always been our policy to provide work opportunities for women which are traditionally denied them, whether as performers, writers, directors, technicians, although both women and men have worked with the company.

*Monstrous Regiment* has worked extensively with women writers and we have commissioned a large body of plays about women from such writers as Chris Bond, Caryl Churchill, David Edgar, Bryony Lavery, Claire Luckham, Rose Tremain, Michelene Wandor.

The company has no Artistic Director. Company policy and artistic direction are decided collectively by a group which currently consists of seven women.

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