

***Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men*** (1988) was loosely based on the story of mass murderer Dennis Nilsen; although it ended up being as much about the lives of the cast, four gay/bi-sexual men, living at a time when the Thatcher government was introducing the anti-gay legislation known as Clause 28.

I found the process of making *Dead Dreams* bleak and depressing, despite the support and commitment of 3 incredible co-performers; Nigel Charnock, Russell Maliphant and Douglas Wright. Nikki (Milican), Director of the NRLA, had asked DV8 to come to Glasgow (Third Eye Centre) to finish making the work. The evening before the premiere I was exhausted, feeling very pessimistic about the work, having lost any objective sense of what I was directing. Towards the end of the evening we did a dress rehearsal where I accidentally hit my head very hard against the floor during one of the typical hard-hitting lift-and-fall movements that characterised the work. Despite being dazed, every phrase of movement we had made, and discarded, over the 3 month rehearsal period came flooding into my mind. Not wanting to stop the run I continued, struggling to remember the actual phrase we were supposed to be doing at the time.

Shortly afterwards I found myself in the toilet, vomiting; feeling dazed and completely disorientated. Someone suggested I might be concussed, so Nigel accompanied me to Glasgow Royal Infirmary. Everything seemed rather surreal and funny at this stage and I remember laughing a lot before the hospital staff stuck me in a large ward full of mainly drunken Glaswegian dossers, who spent most of the night yelling incoherently.

The next morning I was discharged, tired and woozy. I met up with Nigel in some greasy spoon cafe, feeling incredibly sorry for myself. All I wanted to do was cancel the show. My sense of bleakness about the work had only been compounded by the concussion and night in hospital.

But that evening we went on. Simon Callow came up to me after the performance and said he felt he'd just been through some deep cathartic experience watching the show.

I'm not sure how cathartic the show was for the actual performers involved, all I know is that a number of us had to see therapists either during or after the run. At the time it felt that the work had a power beyond our control. I don't believe in demons or the supernatural, but *Dead Dreams* awoke very disturbing feelings in all the performers. I suppose when working with themes associated with Denis Nilsen's life, we shouldn't have been surprised that some of these might have had negative repercussions on our own psyches.

While I admire David Hinton, the filmmaker, who turned the stage work into a film and am thankful it was filmed, enough people who saw the stage production have told me the film could never recapture the intensity or visceral qualities of the live show. *Dead Dreams* was an important work in DV8's history but I'm glad humour has become a bigger element within our more recent work than in was back in 1988.

Lloyd Newson, 2009