The Magnetic Diaries

"We swallow whole each brush of skin"

"fears that whittle us to matryoshka dolls"

"my body a zoetrope that won't stop spinning"

Marketing Pack

reaction theatremakers

The Magnetic Diaries – a poetry narrative

Synopsis:

A narrative of love, lust, betrayal and depression, *The Magnetic Diaries* re-envisages the characters and storyline of Gustave Flaubert's masterpiece *Madame Bovary* in a contemporary English setting. The modern-day heroine, Emma Bailey, battles with romantic idealism, illusions about love, a stifling middle-class lifestyle, boredom and depression.

Moving lyrical fragments and crafted poems from Emma's diary are set alongside the voices of her doctors and emails from her husband Carl. But will modern medicine save Emma and her family in the wake of adultery and neglect?

"Then a car door slams – | in a stifled metal kiss."

The poetry-play is award-winning poet Sarah James' adaptation of her collection *The Magnetic Diaries*, which was highly commended in the Forward Prizes.

The script version was selected for the Write On Festival 2015 at The Courtyard, Hereford, and performed to a packed studio theatre.

An audio extract featuring actress Vey Straker can be found at: https://soundcloud.com/sarah-james-102/insomniacal .

A video trailer for *The Magnetic Diaries* can be viewed at: https://vimeo.com/143550854 .

Minimum playing space: 4m wide by 3.5m deep by 3.5m high.

"Life itself diced: a giant Rubik's cube, impossible to twist right."

"Sucked dry, hunger's remnants harden to brittle crackedness."

"we race the shadow selves trying to pass us"

Reviewers' Praise

"An exceptionally fine piece of poetic writing, beautifully crafted and wonderfully performed. This is one of those rare theatrical experiences that I will never forget. It deals bravely with a challenging subject while never failing to be first class theatre. I was spellbound from the beginning to the end." **Chris Green, board member Courtyard Arts Centre, Hereford, former Director of The Poetry Society**

"brought mesmerisingly to life by Vey Straker"
"a moving, enlightening and thought-provoking piece of theatre"
"Vey Straker caught the tone and mood perfectly" **Philippa May, Hereford Times**

"compelling, controlled, taut, strong, and varied"
"The audience was completely focused and very positive after the performance. A very good house too." **Jan Doran of Arts Alive**

"powerful, moving, real, touching the void of postnatal depression in a way most writing avoids" **Julie North, former arts reviewer and freelance reporter**

"In Emma Bailey, Sarah James has created a character whose many-layered complexity is perfectly revealed through rich, lyrical prose.
"In *Magnetic Diaries*, Vey Straker brings an intelligence to the role of Emma Bailey, conveying her character's deepest inner thoughts and tumbling, turbulent emotions with astonishing deftness and clarity. A moving performance not to be missed."
Karen Curry, Write On Festival

Audience Reaction

"We knew we were watching something special."
"What was to unfold on the stage had the entire audience captivated. With a foundation of a strong, emotive tale and the unusual concept of a poetry manuscript, combined in a heart wrenching piece of theatre. One that I believe (from suffering depression) could actually help promote mental health,"
"A strong piece." **Nina Lewis**

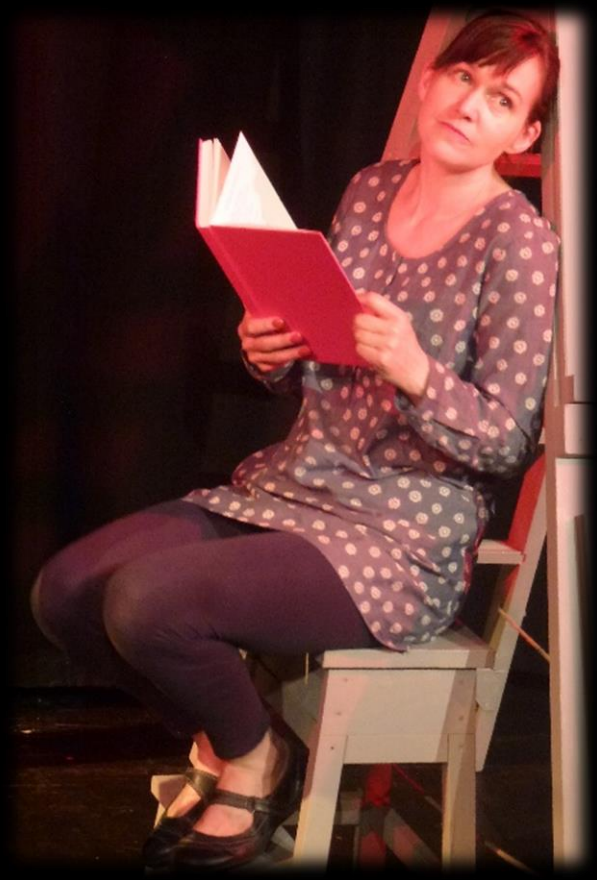
"I was spellbound and you could have heard a pin drop" **Jane Suffield**

"The language was beautiful and her interpretation sincere and compelling." **Elizabeth Ross**

"A remarkable and dramatic interpretation by Vey Straker of Sarah James' moving poetry." **Lucinda Leech**

"a fascinating experience" **Tom Cannan**

"A moving and thought provoking piece of poetic drama, performed exquisitely by Vey Straker. The set was well constructed and creatively used and stage direction was excellent. An engrossing commentary on depression and its effects on all those around us – especially our nearest and dearest." **Jan Bailey**



Who We Are

Actress: Vey Straker

Vey's previous roles include 4Play Theatre productions: 'Iron' by Rona Munro (lead character Faye), 'Two' by Jim Cartwright (all 7 female characters) and 'The Pillowman' by Martin McDonough (Mother/Foster Mother). She also appeared in local writers' plays; the monologue 'The Reason I'm Here', 'Talking Tortoise' and 'Butchers Yard'. Vey has devised and performed with Reaction Theatre Makers. She reached the semi-finals of the Norman Beaton BBC Radio Drama scholarship and has featured in a number of short films.

Director: Tiffany Hosking

Tiffany is director of Reaction Theatre Makers, Artists-in-Residence at Malvern Cube. Having studied theatre in Goldsmiths College, London and at the University of Amsterdam, her work has a European and filmic style. She also trained with Augusto Boal and as such sees the value of theatre for social change. Reaction's work is best known in the West Midlands, though their last piece, 'FishHead' toured nationally to consistently five-star reviews. Tiffany also takes care of the contemporary theatre programme for Malvern Cube.

Composer: Joanna Karselis

Joanna is a competition winning composer. Her success includes winning the University of Birmingham's Composition Competition (2013), a commission for Birmingham Arts Fest (2011) and finalist in the Iris Theatre Christmas Songwriting Competition (2013). Joanna has scored several plays (*House of Bernarda Alba*, 2013, *Hide & Seek*, 2013, *Honey*, 2015 (scratch performance). She completed her masters in composition in 2014 and scored a feature length documentary film called *Reunification,* which is currently touring world festivals. Her debut singer-songwriter EP (*Journey on Home,* March), and a single (*Here is Love*, October) were released in 2015. She has received airtime on BBC WM.

Writer: Sarah James

Sarah is an award-winning poet, short fiction writer, journalist, arts editor and reviewer. The Oxford University modern languages graduate has four published poetry collections and was winner of the Overton Poetry Prize 2015. *The Magnetic Diaries* was highly commended in the Forward Prizes 2015 and her debut collection *Into the Yell* won third prize in the multi-genre International Rubery book Award 2011. Sarah has performed at Cheltenham and Ledbury Poetry Festivals and in the Carol Ann Duffy and Friends series at the Royal Exchange in Manchester. Her website is at www.sarah-james.co.uk.

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Reaction Theatre Makers: http://www.reactiontheatremakers.com/
Contact us: email to info@reactiontheatremakers.com
Tel: Tiffany on 07964 458637
or Sarah on 07525 942625