

August 3rd – 18th, 7.05pm
TheSpaces@ Surgeon's Hall, Theatre 2, (v53)

THE MOST DANGEROUS TOY

Devised by Playades. Written by Eva Mann.

When Nietzsche meets Lou Salomé, he feels he has found 'a voice, for which I have waited and waited since childhood'. One year later, he has retreated to a remote mountain village, madly scribbling *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. And advising men to take a whip when going to women.

The Most Dangerous Toy explores what happened in that seminal year of 1882: The play merges private letters, historic documents, poetry and devised theatre to tell the story of their ill-starred relationship: A struggle between genius and madness, philosophy and reality, society and individual fulfillment - man and woman...

CAST:

Lou Salomé - Maria Alexe
Friedrich Nietzsche - Jamie Laird

CREW :

Director - Eva Mann
Assistant Director - Cindy-Jane Armbruster
Musician - Anna Stefanic

Special thanks to: Wolfgang Beuschel & Kulturmarkt ZH, Michel Fry & East 15 Acting School, Gabriel Haidau, Nina Moniri Headshots, Emu Santer Poster Design.



Lou Salomé, Paul Rée and Friedrich Nietzsche. May 1882

THE MOST DANGEROUS TOY



Nietzsche

is 37,
ailing,
almost blind,
and about to
prophecy
the superman.

Lou

is 21,
independent,
fiercely intelligent,
and about to
become
his undoing.

'You go to women?
Don't forget the whip.'

Incepit tragoedia...

THE WOMAN WITH THE WHIP

A "muse and goddess", a "cock tease" and a "cannibalistic virgin" – these are just a few of the epithets Lou von Salomé is given in the course of her life.

Lou is Nietzsche's friend, Rilke's lover and Freud's student, a writer, literary critic and one of the first psychoanalysts. She serves as model for Wedekind's Lulu and Anna Mahr in Hauptmann's *Lonely People*. In her relentless pursuit of self-fulfillment, she refuses to comply with 19th century ideals of moderate female emancipation.

She studies, travels and lives with whomsoever she pleases. In the first half of her life she fiercely denies herself (and her numerous suitors!) any physical relations. But her love life in later years transcends societal norms, making her an icon of the erotic.

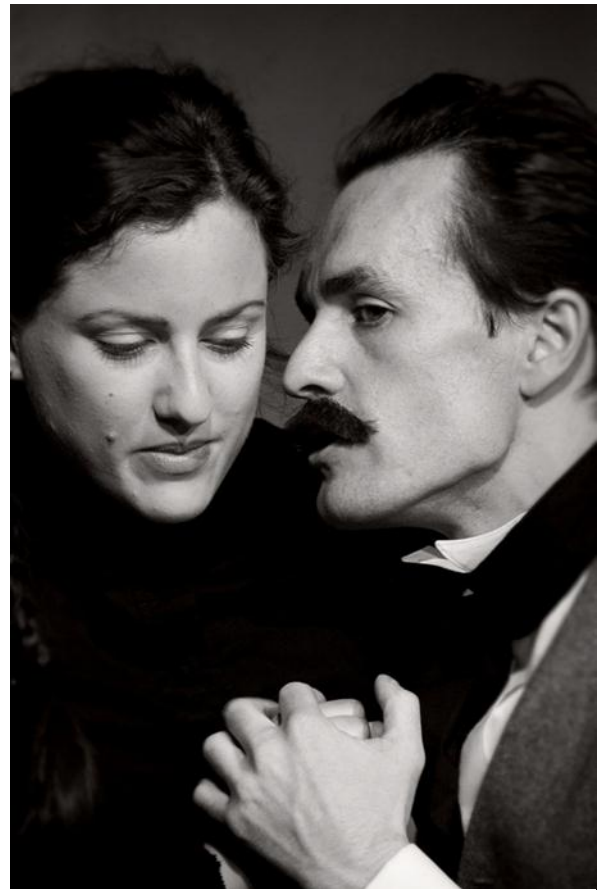
Lou von Salomé is born in St. Petersburg in 1861, to a family of liberal Protestant aristocrats. Her childhood is carefree, her teenage years marked by two losses: first her faith in God, then her beloved father. She seeks consolation in intellectual pursuits, as her religious teacher introduces her to the writings of Kant, Spinoza and Schopenhauer. Lou is in passionate adoration of teachings and teacher. When, however, the married minister attempts to transform their cerebral love into physical love, Lou bolts.

Lou convinces her mother to accompany her to Zurich, where women are allowed to study at university. On a subsequent trip to Italy she meets the philosophers Paul Rée and Friedrich Nietzsche, with whom she plans an intellectual flat-share. Yet the "holy trinity" never becomes reality, as frustrated love and outside pressure lead Nietzsche to break with Lou.

Paul Rée – seemingly content with his status as a "brother" – becomes Lou's companion. After 5 years, however, Lou marries another man (under the condition that she will never have to share his bed). Paul leaves, never to return. Several years later he is found dead at the foot of a cliff.

The true man wants two things:
danger and play.
Therefore he wants woman,
as the most dangerous toy.

Friedrich Nietzsche: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*



Maria Alexe & Jamie Laird. © Nina Moniri Headshots.

Lou works as a literary critic and novelist. Many of her writings deal with the loss of faith – but also with the joys of motherhood, an experience Lou never made. 1894, five years after Nietzsche's mental breakdown, Lou publishes a comprehensive study of his thinking and life in an attempt to explain the personal origins of his thoughts and defend him against a growing league of uncritical followers.

Some years later, she becomes friend, mother-figure and lover of the young poet Rainer Maria Rilke. Their relationship lasts some four years, during which they travel to Russia, seeking the "simple life" and its herald Tolstoy.

In 1913, Lou begins her studies with Freud; both he and his daughter Anna become close friends. During the rise to power of the National Socialist Party, Lou undauntedly voices her appreciation of her Jewish mentor. She is spared witnessing the outcome of the new era - Lou dies in 1937, aged 76. Immediately after her funeral, the Gestapo raids and confiscates her library.

"I am faithful to memories forever;
to people I shall never be faithful."

Lou Salomé: *Memoirs*

CAST & CREW



MARIA ALEXE
(Lou Salomé)

Spotlight:
0938-4537-3336

Maria is a Romanian actress, who trained at "Spiru Haret" in Bucharest before coming to England to obtain an MA from East 15 Acting School. Maria's experience includes projects in theatre, TV and audio recording in several languages. She worked extensively for the Masca Theatre in Bucharest, in London she has recently appeared as Luba in *A Leap of Faith* at the Arcola, in various roles in 21 *Limbs' Dream Play* and in *Writer's Avenue* Film Launch at Soho Theatre.



EVA MANN
(Director)

www.evamann.ch

Eva is a Swiss-American actress and director. Directing credits include *Resurrection Blues*, *The Difficult Man* (both Cellar Theatre Basel), *Blue Beard Babes* (EdFringe) and *Got, Mentsh und Tayvl* (New Yiddish Rep, NYC). Eva has an MA in Literature and Philosophy from the University of Tübingen and an MA in Theatre Directing from East 15 Acting School, London. Areas of work include: Devised, Literary Translation, Classics, Yiddish Theatre.



JAMIE LAIRD
(Friedrich Nietzsche)

Spotlight:
7811-0166-9855

www.jamielaird.com

Jamie trained at Drama Studio London (2010-2011). He most recently played Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* (Minack Theatre, Cornwall). Over the last year he has appeared in *King Lear* (Rose, Bankside), *Abandonment* (New Diorama), *Cranes* (Cockpit) and *Regretting Dialogue* (Arcola). Screen credits include *Crimewatch* (BBC) and *The Wee Man* (Carnaby films), as well as a number of corporate and short films.



CINDY-JANE ARMBRUSTER
(Assistant Director)

www.castingcallpro.com

The Most Dangerous Toy is Cindy's first foray into Assistant Directing. She has a passion for language(s) and loves the multimedial nature of story-telling on stage, Shakespeare, new writing, devised theatre and radio plays. Cindy is in her third year of training in the BA in Acting & Contemporary Theatre course at East15, where she will be seen in Alexander Zeldin's *Butterfly Soup* at the Yard theatre this autumn, and later in *Lightning Bent* at the Debut Festival.

One must have enough chaos in oneself to give birth to a dancing star..

Friedrich Nietzsche: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*



ANNA STEFANIC
(Musician)

Anna trained at the American Musical and Dramatic Academy. Both an actress and a musician, theatre credits include Viola in *Twelfth Night*, Hecate in *Macbeth*, Isabella in *Measure for Measure* and one third of Hamlet in *Hamlet*.

Believe me, the world will give you nothing.
If you want a life, then steal it.

Lou Salomé: *Letter to H. Gollot*

What is done out of love always takes place
beyond good and evil.

Friedrich Nietzsche: *Beyond Good and Evil*

“JUST A FOOL, JUST A POET”

Nietzsche was born in 1844 near Leipzig, attended the prestigious Schulpforta, studied philology and theology (despite having lost his faith in God). Age 24, he became professor for classical philology in Basel. Nietzsche briefly took part in the Franco-Prussian war, despite having renounced his Prussian citizenship.

He dedicated his first book *The Birth of Tragedy* to the composer Richard Wagner, whom he ardently admired - for a while. Nietzsche's declining health forced him to resign from his professorship. During the next 10 years of his life, Nietzsche travelled frequently. His radical views and irreverent writings alienated him from the academic world he had formerly been part of. After a decade of rich literary output (*Human, all too Human* / *Dawn* / *The Gay Science* / *Beyond Good & Evil* / *Twilight of the Idols* / *The Antichrist*), he suffered a mental collapse in January 1889.

Ironically, his popularity took off shortly after his breakdown. The paralysed imbecile nursed by his sister was speedily becoming the thinker of the century to come. Nietzsche died in 1900.

But who or what was Nietzsche? The antichrist? A prophet? A proto-Nazi? A man of unbending human principles? A lunatic? A visionary? A misogynist? – Or perhaps just a bit awkward with the ladies...?

It is not necessary, not even desired to take my side. A dose of curiosity, as if faced with a strange plant, an ironic resilience, would strike me as an incomparably more intelligent attitude toward me.

Friedrich Nietzsche: *Letter to C. Fuchs*



PLAYADES is an international theatre company with a strong interest in devised work, and in exploring images of the female in literary history. We use documentary material to bring to life stories so extraordinary that only reality could have written them.

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www.lovefringe.com/CD2B

DEVISING

Devised Theatre is an umbrella term for a wide variety of creative methods that strive to put the actors at the centre of the creative process – they are to *create*, not only *recreate* the character. In some cases, devising is used as a rehearsal technique when working on an existing play, in other cases – such as ours – it is the means to jointly create a new piece of theatre.

The actors are encouraged to shape characters, plot and style of the piece they are devising, while the director facilitates and chronicles the discoveries made in the rehearsal room.

In the case of *The Most Dangerous Toy*, this meant initially researching the characters, finding the large strokes of their story: Boy meets girl, boy proposes to girl, *something* happens on a mountain, girl turns boy down, friendship fails, boy writes angry book and becomes famous.

Research (all company members in spectacles sitting around a table of books) was intertwined with improvisation (half a dozen different Monte Sacro stories). Using texts and images that inspired us, we played with how they would fit on stage.

Drafts were written, dismissed, re-written, drastically cut and at long last rehearsed “like a normal play”.

We devise because we are intrigued by the collective creative process. But our ultimate aim is to create a piece of theatre that - we hope - entertains you!