



Acts of Kindness – Science meets Theatre in *The Altruists*

Menagerie Theatre Company and the Darwin Correspondence Project.

Saturday March 23rd 2013

Welcome to **Acts of Kindness**, a collaboration between theatre and science, centred on a new play, *The Altruists*, by Craig Baxter. *The Altruists* is about the lives and ideas of evolutionary biologists, George Price, Bill Hamilton and John Maynard Smith, who explored the genetic basis for human kindness. Set in London during the 1960s and 70s, the play centres on George Price whose inspired discoveries coincide with a conversion to Christianity. It charts his attempts at altruistic living, mental illness and a lonely journey towards taking his own life. Menagerie is producing and touring the play in 2016-17.

Acts of Kindness is a key part in the development of *The Altruists*. We have partnered with scientists, historians, philosophers and theatre researchers to create 4 events throughout the day. Each event includes an extract from the play performed by a professional cast, followed by presentations from guest researchers whose work intersects with the play's ideas, narrative and themes.

Who are we?

Menagerie Theatre Company is the leading independent new writing theatre company in the East of England. Based in Cambridge, we have been creating theatre for over ten years and have a regional, national and international reputation for the development of first class new writing for the stage. As well as touring widely, we run workshops, writer development courses and produce the annual Hotbed Festival in Cambridge.

The Darwin Correspondence Project, based at the Cambridge University Library, aims to annotate and transcribe Darwin's extraordinarily revealing letters, making them freely available online. To date, the project has located, both in libraries and in private collections, a total of more than 15,000 letters exchanged by Darwin with nearly 2000 correspondents around the world between 1821 and his death in 1882.

Contact Menagerie

Write to: *Menagerie*, The Studio,
Citylife House, Sturton Street,
Cambridge, CB1 2QF

Call: 01223 322111

Email: office@menagerie.uk.com

Or visit our website: www.menagerie.uk.com

Contact The Darwin Correspondence Project

Write to: *Darwin Correspondence Project*,
Cambridge University Library, West Road,
Cambridge, CB3 9DR

Call: 01223 333008/339770

Email: darwin@lib.cam.ac.uk

Or visit our website: www.darwinproject.ac.uk/



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Programme

11am – 12pm

The Group, the Species, the Individual and the Gene: Levels of Selection in *The Altruists*

This session kicks off the day, set around an early encounter between Hamilton and Price on a park bench in London.

Guest Speakers: Dr Rebecca Kilner (Dept. of Zoology, University of Cambridge) and Dr Rufus Johnstone (Dept. of Zoology, University of Cambridge)

12.30 – 1.30pm

Highs and Lows: The Representation of Bi-Polar Disorder in *The Altruists*

This event takes Price's mental illness as its focus, working around a hallucinatory meeting on the steps of the Galton Labs.

Guest Speakers: Dr Belinda Lennox (Dept. of Psychiatry, University of Oxford) and Dr Martina Cherubini di Simplicio (Dept. of Psychiatry, University of Oxford)

2.30 – 3.30pm

Sympathy and Altruism: Charles Darwin's Moral Theories and *The Altruists*

A session comparing and contrasting Darwin's moral theories with those of the play's main characters, from historical, philosophical and scientific points of view.

Guest Speakers: Joel Peck (Genetics, University of Cambridge), Catherine Wilson (Philosophy, University of York) and Paul White (Darwin Correspondence Project, Cambridge)

Chair: Francis Neary (Darwin Correspondence Project, Cambridge)

4 – 5pm

Play Science: Representing Science and Scientists on Stage.

Bringing the whole day together, this final event looks at the wider picture of theatre's engagement with science.

Guests include:

Dr Kirsten Shepherd-Barr (Dept. of English, University of Oxford)

Craig Baxter – Playwright, *The Altruists*

Steve Waters – Playwright, *Radio Stars*

Patrick Morris – Director, *The Altruists*.

Performers

Kath Burlinson *Iphigenia*

James Hirst *Bill Hamilton*

Jesse Fox *Ray*

David Meyer *John Maynard Smith*

Patrick Morris *George Price*

Caroline Rippin *Sara and Kim*