

Welcoming Milón Méla

Organic Theatre is pleased to welcome and host the remarkable **Milón Méla** ensemble from India in their first ever visit to the UK for an inspiring and exciting week of activities, which will be opened by a spectacular parade in Bristol City Centre and will continue with an intensive three-day workshop at the Kingswood Foundation, a day of meeting at the University of Kent, culminating in a UK performance premiere at Bristol's Tobacco Factory. **Milón Méla** – "The Coming Together Fair" – unites artists from East and West, from different religions and cultures in a harmonious spirit of collaboration through artistic practices, and below you can read more about what inspires their work and their vision, while inside this leaflet you will find information about each event of this unique residency.

We look forward to seeing you all at the Coming Together Fair!

Twenty years ago, Indian director **Abani Biswas**, former collaborator of influential Polish director **Jerzy Grotowski**, started an on-going theatre project between Europe and India called **The Sources Research**, through which he identified and isolated the most ancient performative techniques of different Indian traditions to make them actively function for the benefit of contemporary performers. To this end, he invited artists and masters of traditional disciplines from artistic communities in the rural and tribal zones of India to participate in the collaborative ensemble **Milón Méla**.

The artists who gathered, and who are still today core members of the group, were **Baul** musicians from Bengal, masters of **Kalaripayattu** martial art from Kerala, **Chhau** dancers from Bihar, **Gotipua** dancers from Orissa, and later Hindu-Muslim **Patuas** painters and storytellers and Muslim **Fakir** musicians; since its launch in 1986 **Milón Méla** has created conditions to encourage their original and creative work, as well as providing them with material resources for their daily life, and that of their families and communities.

Since 1990 **Milón Méla** has its own work-centre, Theatre House – Khele Danga, at Santiniketan (West Bengal), where they host an annual programme of residential workshops and performance events. The ensemble regularly performs at festivals in Italy, Switzerland, Poland and Austria, as well as in city squares and streets, open arenas and theatres. **Milón Méla** also leads an intense activity of training in schools and universities, and works with various theatre groups, cultural associations, psychotherapy groups and people from different walks of life interested in their work.

For more information visit their website:
<http://digilander.libero.it/milonmela/index.html>

Milón Méla in the South East

For one day only, Wednesday 28 May, there is an opportunity to catch up with **Milón Méla** in the South East, where the group will be visiting the University of Kent in Canterbury for a packed programme including a work demonstration, a taster workshop session, an encounter with the artists, a screening and an outdoor performance on campus. The event has been produced in collaboration with Dr Giuliano Campo and The British Grotowski Project at the University of Kent.

For more information please email:
G.Campo@kent.ac.uk or call 01227 824918.

International Training and Performance Residencies focus on the body in performance, through the crossover between traditional non-western performance practices and western contemporary approaches to performance. It aims to provide high quality multi-art form training opportunities open to all performing arts practitioners and to promote awareness of diversity and multiculturalism through artistic practices. Conceived and organised by **Organic Theatre**, in collaboration with **Asian Arts Agency**, **Tobacco Factory** and **Theatre Bristol**, it is funded by **Bristol City Council** and **Arts Council England South West**.

Organic Theatre is an independent company and laboratory of theatre research, which presents its work extensively in the UK and Europe. It produces and tours original devised performances which combine a physical approach with new writing, constantly challenging and nurturing its philosophy of an organic process-led approach to devising, alongside training projects and educational activities in the UK and abroad.
www.organictheatre.co.uk info@organictheatre.co.uk



Photography: Francesco Galli. Design: David Smart



an **Organic Theatre** project

International Training and Performance Residencies

The Sources Research Project – India presents

MILON MELA

(The Coming Together Fair)

Bristol, 25-31 May 2008

On the branch of a tree
A bird is eating a fruit
On a neighbouring branch
Another bird is watching it
It comes closer and closer
Till they realize that
Both of them are one and the same bird

Supported by Arts Council England
and Bristol City Council



The Parade



At-Bristol map

On Sunday 25 May come and join **Milón Méla** for their parade in the vibrant heart of Bristol city centre, free and open to all!

A truly inspiring event for the bank holiday week-end, **Milón Méla** parade is a joyful outdoor celebration of live performance in all its forms, a spectacular musical and visual procession through the At-Bristol site, creating a colourful atmosphere of marvel and excitement and bringing together the city's diverse communities, children and grown-ups alike, for a true feast of the senses.

Dynamic and filled with energy, the parade is led by the live acoustic music of the **Baul** musicians, followed by the masked **Chhau** with their acrobatic dances and their rhythmic drums, by the **Kalaripayattu** martial arts masters with their sword combats combined with whirling fires, and by the refined and harmonious **Gotipua** dancers. It is punctuated by additional mini-performances by each group of artists, who will surprise and amaze you with the skilful display of their art and talent.

You can follow the parade all the way through from the start, catch it and join in at any point on the route, or just watch it as a bystander – any of these, only make sure you don't miss it!

Sunday 25 May
8.15 pm (lasts approximately 1 hour)
Bristol City Centre - in and around At-Bristol, Harbourside, Bristol BS15DB
Free of charge

Pictures and comments on **the** parade can be uploaded on Myspace.com/milonmela

The map above is only indicative of the parade area - for updates/further details visit:
www.organictheatre.co.uk
Event collaborator: Dan Danson

Funded by Bristol City Council



The Workshop



Kingswood Foundation
(20 minutes by bus from Bristol City Centre)

"Traditional disciplines provide stabilized cultural structures. By knowing and keeping its roots alive, art can move forwards into an age of high technology without losing sight of its essential values and purposes; it can continue to express the human spirit and at the same time renew it" **Abani Biswas**.

This intensive three-day workshop provides performers and practitioners with a personal training which improves professional skills such as physical perception, full mobilization of energy, voice and body resonators, alertness, attention and concentration. It also offers anyone who wants to explore **their creative sources** (regardless of experience and background) a cultural, verbal, corporeal and emotional de-conditioning, as well as the rare chance to encounter and practice some of the most ancient and fascinating Indian performance traditions.

Each session, conducted by all the artists and masters of **Milón Méla** under the direction of Abani Biswas, focuses **on the practice of traditional dance and martial arts disciplines**, of body and voice techniques, as well as dramatic actions which help to re-balance body, mind and emotions, and at the same time put in action a process which brings every participant towards the space of intuition and creativity. Much of the work is conducted in silence, typical of teaching methods in traditional Indian arts, which works as a "diet" for the mind in order to override habits, banalities and automatisms.

To participate, no previous experience is necessary, though a good attitude towards physical work would be beneficial. The workshop is open to 20 participants. To apply, write to Workshop with Milón Méla – 55 Union Road, Exeter, EX4 6HU or email info@organictheatre.co.uk. Please explain why you'd like to attend and include a short CV. For more information, call John on 07796 597863.

Sunday 25 May 10am-5pm
Monday 26 May 10am-7pm (Bank Holiday)
Tuesday 27 May 10am-5pm
Kingswood Foundation, Kingswood, Bristol, BS15 8DB
£110 / £90

(participants also receive a discount on tickets for performances at Tobacco Factory, 29/30 May)

The Performances

Milón Méla performances at the Tobacco Factory are a unique opportunity to enjoy a stunning mix of live music, visual and physical performance from across India. Come and be enchanted by the traditional music and medieval mystic songs of the Hindu **Baul** singers and musicians of West Bengal. Let yourself be mesmerised by the acrobatic dance of the magnificent masked **Chhau** dancers and drummers from Bihar. Let the adrenaline flow watching the exciting sword fights of the **Kalaripayattu** masters from Kerala and be captivated by the refined and harmonious young **Gotipua** dancers from Orissa - all the **Milón Méla** artists join together to provide you with an exceptional and unforgettable evening!

Bauls (God's Fools) originate from a community of wandering mystical singers that goes back to the Middle Ages. Although Hindus, they profess equality of faiths and religions and retain that Divinity has its place in the Heart of every Man. **Bauls** live through their music, they make their own characteristic musical instruments and are true masters of improvisation.

An explosion of energy and movement, daredevil somersaults and jumps, **Chhau** is an ancient tribal dance of Purullia (Bihar), practiced to this day by rural populations while invoking the Hindu divinity Shiva to grant them rain and abundant harvest. The **Chhau** dancers use beautiful masks (weighing up to 4 kilos) that represent Hindu deities, demons and tribal spirits, and enact stories of the Mahabharattha, Ramayana and Purana, the ancient sacred books of India, to the rhythmical accompaniment of pipe and drums.

Kalaripayattu is one of the most ancient martial arts of India, originating in Kerala and sometimes called "the Mother of all artistic disciplines of Southern India". Sticks, multi-blade knives, swords, shields and fire are used in this traditional breath-taking combat.

The roots of the **Gotipua** dance go back to Indian Middle Ages and are linked to the ancient tradition of Devadasi (female temple dancers). Today **Gotipua** dancers are mainly boys between the age of 8 and 15, dressed in women's clothes, who, using a very refined style, perform precise steps, as well as Mudra (hand gestures), eye and facial expressions, and classic Yoga postures. The soft harmony of their acrobatic movements combines with vocal and instrumental accompaniment of Paknaj percussion and Harmonium keyboards.

Thursday 29 and Friday 30 May 2008
8pm (1 hour 15 minutes, without an interval)
Tobacco Factory, Raleigh Road, Bristol, BS3 1TF
£10 / £8
For more information call the box office **0117 902 0344**
or visit www.tobaccofactory.com