

Beginning  
Middle  
End  
The Trilogy  
by Michael Pinchbeck



# Beginning Middle End

## The Trilogy

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A blindfolded man. A dancing bear. A donkey's head. A bubble-wrapped dad.

Award-winning writer and theatre maker Michael Pinchbeck (The White Album, The Ashes, Bolero) has created three devised performances inspired by the work of William Shakespeare to mark the 400th anniversary of his death.

In 2011, Michael made The End, triggered by a stage direction from The Winter's Tale. In 2012, he interpreted A Midsummer Night's Dream to make The Beginning. In 2013, he deconstructed Hamlet to create The Middle. Now for the last time, especially for neat 16, they will be shown together as The Trilogy.

"The Trilogy has something for everyone; it's about the adventure of life and discovery, love, how an artist grows and matures, or doesn't. It's a meditation on the passage of time but perhaps more aptly that all the world's a stage, which should be embraced."  
- A Younger Theatre

### The Programme Notes

Stop me if you've heard this one before, but these will be Michael Pinchbeck's final performances on stage. Should you choose to believe him. After all, he's said the same words in every performance of The End since it began, in 2010. Each ending has been an ellipsis: dot dot dot. And a beginning: literally, The Beginning grew in 2012 from The End. What comes next?

Time doesn't pass, my friend Selina tells me, it accumulates: accretions of experience that the body carries within. She travels the sea and we think of time as fluid, unpredictable. Linear time is a construction, John Berger writes in And Our Faces, My Heart, Brief as Photos, that ignores its quality: time of the body and time of the consciousness; time that passes and time that turns on itself like a wheel. Cyclical time contains new beginnings, new possibilities, in each ending.

Final words in the mouth of the speaker, held in a memory long after they're gone.

It's two and a half years now since I saw the whole Trilogy, in a tucked-away theatre in London, and I sift through the accumulations of performances since for glimpses of what I remember. A spaciousness, note cards, humour and frustration; a bicycle, a bear suit, the songs of Serge Gainsbourg. Bubble wrap and an electric guitar. More than images, a set of feelings: admiration, emotion, surprise.

I meet up with Michael at another tucked-away theatre in London and he gives me the texts of the Trilogy in a neat plastic folder. I sit beside a river to read them and I'm surprised again by the intricacy of their construction. Their accumulation of beginnings, middles and ends: the beginning of love, first steps on a stage, the time of hovering betwixt youth and age, the end of a journey, the final drift from consciousness.

What looks like juxtaposition - Bottom in A Midsummer Night's Dream and the Histoire de Melody Nelson; Hamlet and a holiday in Malta; the bear of The Winter's Tale and a firing squad - becomes synthesis. "The notion of a uniform time," Berger writes, "within which all events can be temporally related, depends on the synthesising capacity of a mind."

The Trilogy was shaped as the practice element of Michael's PhD exploring the role of the dramaturg. It's how I first encountered him, searching the internet for something that might help me understand what that word means. My friend Duska says that "as a dramaturg I am looking for one core idea around which the various themes of the piece can be seen to hang". That one core idea is surface throughout the Trilogy, themes not so much hanging from as flowing through it.

The river and time move on, inexorably forward, in cycles. Michael says once again those words about no longer performing. And stop me if you've heard this one before, but this evening won't finish when you walk from the theatre. It began when you first started thinking about the Trilogy, and it won't end until you...

Maddy Costa  
Writer

Michael Pinchbeck is committed to telling stories that are both personal and powerful. He aims to find innovative structures to scaffold those stories that are original, surprising and risk-taking. He tells stories that take place across time and space and weave together different threads into a dynamic narrative. The Trilogy invites the audience into a world where a performance can be a rehearsal, text can be both script and set, and they are always aware of where the fire exits are...

The Trilogy asks why we perform, when we began and how we will know when to stop. It takes place in the theatre and the foyer and unpacks three classic texts.



### The Middle

(20 minutes - Foyer)  
The Middle sees Michael bubble-wrap his father in the foyer. Hamlet is caught in a limbo between 'To be or not to be' and by casting his father, Tony, to play the role, Michael explores time passing, ageing and the relationship between father and son.

"Michael Pinchbeck is a terrific theatremaker"  
- The Guardian

"A stunningly crafted piece of theatre"  
- Fringe Review

### The Cast

Nicki Hobday  
Michael Pinchbeck  
Tony Pinchbeck  
Ollie Smith

### The Crew

Anneke Van De Stege  
Danny Ridealgh

### The Credits

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### The Biography

Michael Pinchbeck is a writer and theatre maker based in Nottingham. He co-founded Metro-Boulot-Dodo in 1997 after studying Theatre and Creative Writing at Lancaster University. He was commissioned by Nottingham Playhouse to write The White Album (2006) and The Ashes (2011), and was awarded funding by the British Council to direct a new devised performance -- Bolero -- which premiered as part of neat14 at Nottingham Playhouse before touring to Bosnia & Herzegovina and Kosovo. Michael is currently touring The Man Who Flew into Space from his Apartment and his work has been selected three times for the British Council's Edinburgh Showcase. He has a Masters in Performance and Live Art from Nottingham Trent University, lectures at the University of Lincoln and has recently completed a PhD at Loughborough University exploring the role of dramaturg.

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### The Beginning

(55 minutes - Theatre)  
The Beginning collides the Mechanicals with the music of Serge Gainsbourg to write a flirtatious love letter to theatre featuring Ollie Smith and Nicki Hobday. The Beginning takes place between a rehearsal and a performance, dreaming and being awake. It is a reflection on what it means to begin a career, a relationship or a show.



### The End

(55 minutes - Theatre)  
Inspired by the stage direction from The Winter's Tale, 'Exit, pursued by a bear', The End explores endings and exits, departure and loss. This melancholy resignation letter to theatre asks why we perform and how we will know when to stop. Michael and Ollie have never worked together before. Now they will never work together again. Michael has decided to call it a day, to make this show his swansong, and Ollie is left to pick up the pieces.

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