

MUCKERS

A Q&A WITH THE CAST

Who are Paloma and Pichon?

Maybe they're friends, maybe they are two sides of the same person. Caroline (the writer) says she has a bit of Pichon and a bit of Paloma in her.

How did the bird names get in the story?

Maybe it's to do with the flying! Caroline likes the contrast between a beautiful, graceful white dove and a dirty little pigeon - she liked that they can be friends.

How long have you been an actor?

Caroline: I wanted to be a vet until I was 17, then did a u-turn because I was doing theatre and writing all the time in my spare time. I did some extra A-Levels so I could study English at University, and picked a uni where I could do loads of student drama. I did loads of theatre there, then I went to Drama School in Paris for two years and started doing badly paid acting jobs! But I've stopped doing so much acting and now do more writing/making. In 2010 I did an Edinburgh show which was my first piece of work.

Patricia: I took part in school shows from the age of 5, but I wanted to be many things until I enrolled in Drama School in Spain when I was 18. At the age of 28 I went to Paris to study with Philippe Gaulier and that changed my way of experiencing this acting thing... That means I have been doing this for 24 years?!? Seems like a long time but it has gone quickly! I haven't stopped working since 1994, which means that when nobody hired me I invented ways of making projects for myself. Now I co-run a theatre company as well as working for other people.

What's the best thing about acting?

Caroline: There are loads of brilliant things, like living in a not-very-real world a lot of the time, which is fun! Collaborating with different people on different projects; getting to explore the human condition; things that I get fascinated by, then become my work; connecting in a really profound way with audiences if the show works - regardless of the emotion (laughing, crying etc).

Patricia: The laughter and beautiful moments in the rehearsal room and in the theatre with the audience, and also the social times with the team you work with.

How long did it take to make this play?

How long did you rehearse this play for? It was a long process. Caroline has written many drafts of the play and there have been different rehearsal periods, spread over two years. The idea was picked up, worked on, then put down for a while, then picked up again etc. But if you counted all the time up and put it together, it would probably amount to about five months - all day, every day - so a long time!

These questions are based on questions that the cast and creative team have been asked during sharings. Of course, in the wacky world of the show, things aren't always clear - they are ambiguous and open to interpretation.

What's your favourite part in the play?

Caroline: Hmm, not sure, it changes every day. The punk song is fun!

Patricia: When Paloma helps a toilet to fly...

Where did you buy all the stuff (clothes etc.)?

In all sorts of places! Verity (the set and costume designer) looked for things in charity shops, on eBay, at flea markets and recycling centres. Since she had to buy a lot of stuff, she went to a place where you pay by weight instead of per item. That meant we could get a massive pile of clothes for dressing up.

Why is there so much about poo and toilets in the play?

The play explores things we find embarrassing and encourages us to ask why we find them embarrassing, awkward and weird. Paloma doesn't like talking about poo and toilets because she thinks it is impolite. Pichon says pooing is natural and everyone does it - it's nothing to be ashamed of. What do you think?

How many times have you done this show?

Caroline (Paloma) wrote the show and also plays Paloma, so she has been involved from the start. She has done the show a lot, in different places ranging from Madrid, Spain to Bath, UK. The role of Pichón has been played by different actors. They have done the play fewer times than Caroline, but still a lot! Muckers is performed several times in a single venue, often more than once a day.

How long does it take for an actor to remember a script?

A long time! Patricia and Caroline (the actors) have to work really hard to remember everything. Caroline says it's the worst part of the job, but luckily the other bits are really good, so it makes up for it.

What inspired you to make this show? Why did you choose this storyline?

Caroline was interested in making a play that explored rules and doing the right thing, but included a big adventure.

Why did you decide to make a show in Spanish and English?

There are several reasons: Exploring two cultures and languages meant more silliness - we could contrast very Spanish things, like passionate flamenco dancing, with very English things...like marmite sandwiches. More and more, we think it's important that different cultures and languages collaborate with each other. We can learn so much from each other. It's a fun experiment to see if something can work in different languages. We live in a world at the moment where there is less and less of that, and it's important that we make those connections instead of building walls.

What was the hardest part about making this

show? There are practical things that are hard, like learning lines and remembering everything that has to be done on stage, and hard emotional things, like spending a lot of time thinking about what makes us feel small, stupid and ashamed. It can be hard and upsetting to think about these things. When making the play, we were looking for a balance between these tricky moments of darkness and moments of lightness - that is why we wanted to include lots of playing and silliness too.

Why does Paloma stop playing with Pichon?

When Paloma and Pichon are playing, Big Luce suddenly appears and Paloma feels pinned by the light. She feels like Big Luce is watching her - shining a spotlight on her that she can't escape. She doesn't feel good but she thinks if she makes Pichon leave, she can control everything and make things feel better.

What is Big Luce? What is Big Luce's goal?

A boy who watched the show when we were rehearsing it said that he thought it was good that Big Luce was a bit of a mystery. Different people have different thoughts about who or what Big Luce is. One girl suggested that Big Luce highlights the people who don't behave or follow the rules. Someone else thought that Big Luce's goal was to make the world even and make sure that everyone 'fits in'. Others say that Big Luce is like a big boss and a bully. Caroline says that the spotlight makes her feel like you've done something wrong, even if you're not really sure what you've done. In the play, Paloma learns how to stand up to Big Luce.

Why was Paloma sent to another world?

In a way, Paloma sends herself to the other world when she makes Pichon leave her alone. When Big Luce appears, Paloma feels like she has to behave differently. She thinks if she gets rid of Pichon things will get better because the naughty one (Pichon) won't be around anymore. But things aren't that easy...

What was the purpose of the world?

Caroline wanted the play to include a sense of adventure, and it was important for Paloma to go on a journey. When Big Luce appears, there's a change in how Paloma feels, which is shown partly by her entering another world. She has to try to find her way out of this world to finally stand up to Big Luce.

Why does Paloma have secrets?

At the start of the play, Paloma thinks she has to be perfect and hide the worst parts of herself - the things she is ashamed of. These are her secrets. She only tells us her secrets in the dark (Pichón says night time is the best time for secrets). She goes through a lot (meeting Big Luz etc.) before she feels ready to tell us these secrets.