

WARWICK, 9 MAY 2017
MATINÉE MESMERIQUE



THEATRICAL LABORATORY ON THE POWER OF DISTRACTION

In the second half of the 19th century, the word “Mesmerism” appeared in theatre programmes, offered as a form of entertainment for an educated audience. However, Franz Anton Mesmer’s doctrine was born with therapeutic purposes. Its progression from medicine to stage magic followed a twisted path where imagination, subjection, seemingly paranormal phenomena, tricks and deception are inextricably linked. From Franziska Öesterlin’s psychic perceptions to Magdeleine’s “sixth sense”, from the epigastric sight of Petetin’s somnambulist to Giuseppina Sisti’s eyeless vision, the laboratory will give a brief overview of the history of Mesmerism and the key role of women from the point of view of a secular magician. During Mariano Tomatis’ talk, an actual somnambulist will give a live performance of extraordinary feats of clairvoyance and the audience will take part in the show, reviving a typical 18th-century demonstration of “animal magnetism” and experiencing the power of distraction.

Alessandra Aloisi (Warwick), Paola Cori (Cardiff), Elsa Richardson (Strathclyde), Mariano Tomatis (IAS Warwick), Susannah Wilson (Warwick).

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK, HELEN MARTIN STUDIO
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POSTER BY MARIANO TOMATIS