**The Encounter**

**Programme notes**

*The Encounter* tells the true story of National Geographic photographer Loren McIntyre who is lost in a remote area of the Brazilian Amazon in 1969. This leads to a startling encounter that is to change his life.

Directed by Simon McBurney and hot from London, Edinburgh and Broadway, this solo performance by actor Richard Katz traces McIntyre’s journey into the depths of the Amazon rainforest, using binaural technology (3D audio) to build an intimate and shifting world of sound. As McIntyre’s mesmerising tale reaches its climax, this extraordinary performance asks some of the most urgent questions of today about how we live and what we believe to be true.

Duration 1hr 50mins no interval

**Descriptive notes:**

These notes have been provided by Audio Described Aotearoa Ltd based on a recording of a previous performance. They are intended to be read by blind and low vision patrons prior to the show to enhance understanding of the visual elements of the performance. They introduce the performer, costume, set, props and lighting.

**Description**

*The Encounter* is performed by a single actor on a stage that’s bare apart from the technology and props he uses to create the huge array of sounds. Although at times it sounds as if the actor has been joined by other people, he is the only person onstage throughout the performance. The other characters and sounds are made through a combination of recordings, distortion of the actor’s voice, and the use of the props he has on hand.

There are three microphones onstage in addition to the headset microphone the actor wears. He moves around between them creating atmosphere by his proximity to the microphones and the effects that are added to the sounds he generates. There are also four speakers angled in at the front and back, left and right corners of the acting space on the stage.

In the centre of the stage is a vertical microphone stand with a microphone the size of an adult human head on the top. It stands a little lower than the actor’s head, and has stylised ears on each side and an angular nose. On the ground to the left is a foot plate that enables the actor to play with the sounds he generates through the microphone including a “loop pedal” that creates a repeat.

To the left of the microphone, near the front of the stage, is a plain rectangular table. Behind it isan armless office swivel chair that the actor sometimes sits on. Standing on the floor behind the table are two microphone stands. The microphones point diagonally in to the actor’s mouth as he sits on the chair, and can be easily raised as he stands. As the story progresses he uses the right hand microphone for the voice of the narrator, and the left hand microphone to speak in the low American voice of McIntyre.

On top of the table to the left hand side is an angle poise lamp. In the centre are a range of props and around half a dozen bottles of water. There are more bottles of water onstage: near the head microphone in the centre; behind the table on a rigid moving box on wheels; and standing in a row on the right hand side of the stage.

On the ground to the right hand side of the table as the audience looks at it is a large cardboard box that’s full of unwound video tape.

The actor uses a range of props, many of which he mentions as he deploys them: a video tape; a stick; a speaker that looks like a beer can; a smartphone; a bag of chips; a camera; a roll of camera film; a pair of scissors; a hammer; a book; many plastic water bottles and one glass water bottle. They are mostly stored on the table or on the moving box behind it. There are few visual effects that are not discernible from the audio, but the following two appear significant: although the performer has a camera as a prop, most of the time he mimes using a camera, holding curved hands up at either side of his face and moving his right index finger down as if taking a photo. The click is generated through the sound system, not the prop camera. Late in the performance, the actor uses a shard of the green glass bottle that he has previously smashed onto the floor to represent the knife of chonta palm, and mimes cutting his left forearm. The mark that appears on his arm is a liquid line of (fake) blood, which in the low light looks very dark in colour.

The actor wears black shoes, jeans, a khaki cap and a khaki shirt over a white t-shirt that he removes later in the piece to dance bare-chested.

Throughout the piece, lighting effects are used to enhance the mood. For example: the London flat is denoted by a cold bright square of light; the forest by a softer, warmer light. At times there is a tight spotlight on the actor to focus attention onto him, at others: narrow but intense shafts of light from spotlights at either side of the stage. Sometimes when he’s deep in the rainforest there is only a dim light or no light at all. The lighting seems to follow the performer’s movements around the stage, so that different areas bleed between shadow and light fluidly as he travels. There are some lighting effects that echo the story, for example: projections of green lights onto the back wall to denote the rainforest canopy; orange flames for fire and a crucifix-like silhouette of the actor against the back curtain as McIntyre soars above the rainforest in his dream, but these effects are used sparingly.

Ends