



Trade in Lunacy – Comment Report

27th to 29th June 2013 – Nine ‘Trade in Lunacy’ performances undertaken.

Audience numbers for all performances = 150

Number of comment cards completed = 91

Members of the public = 63

Academic researchers = 8

Other = 9 (Clinical Psychologist; Writer; General Practitioner; Theatre Practitioner; Funder; Multimedia Designer; Community Engagement Worker in Mental Health Matters; Philosophy Research Student and ex-Mental Health Worker)

Not indicated = 11

Question:

‘How has this performance influenced your views on the treatment of mental illness and on mental health issues more broadly’

Comments given:

It was excellently performed and a reminder of the developments in treatment, thank you! I will feedback to my colleagues and networks.

Certainly makes you consider the options that were afforded to patients of the past and what is at use in modern day institutions! Thought provoking and entertaining.

I have an interest in mental health issues and in the history of medicine so this was of great interest. It confirmed some of my existing knowledge / fears of past treatment and enlightened too. I welcome pieces such as this making powerful contributions to current debates and awareness.

It’s good to learn through theatre! It’s interesting that some/most? Asylums etc were actually commercial ventures – with profit being the main aim, Great music too and of course super venue.

Excellent performance. It hasn’t really other than made it clear that the incidence of mental health illness was as prevalent then as it is now. It has also demonstrated that the ‘care’ industry for commercial was as dodgy then as it is now!

Modern psychiatry still feels very much at the stage of classification of illness, and of trialling treatments with frequently only limited or theoretical evidence base. In this respect, not so different to the ‘experimental treatments’ of private asylums, but more broadly applied!

A fascinatingly moving piece which engaged with the ideas and voices in an illuminating way.

Very relevant to today's mental health system still. With diagnostic uncertainty and no clear research in terms of treatment the story remains the same. Unfortunately, so do the narratives of distress. I hope to see more performances like this as it raises awareness but most importantly it raises very important questions such as how do we alleviate distress?

Gave "Voice/Theatrical" perspective to what I had previously read.

This performance has, more than anything else, amazed me with its humorously, sensitively and carefully researched transformation of what is in many ways a highly emotive subject. Before the performance I couldn't imagine how the material I presumed would be used could be turned into a performance; after it I'm very impressed by the ingenuity. (Much of the information was already familiar to me).

The mind is very complex and I think we do not yet fully understand how to fully treat diseases. People that suffer such diseases are fully confident that they are the sane ones and everyone else is crazy – since reality is subject to everyone. I find this truly intriguing.

The comment made by the male patient re: 'how can I get well when I am confined in melancholy' – as a community mental health nurse I view inpatient admissions as a last resort and have many experiences of patients less able to recover than if they receive treatment in their own communities. Always a shock to think how mental illness has been 'treated' historically, especially the admissions (re: the wrongful confinement) where socially unacceptable behaviours are treated as illness i.e. homosexuality.

After watching this performance I am fully aware of how patients were treated while being in an asylum. Mental issues are all extremely serious issue and patients should be helped accordingly.

My wife works in mental health so it brings home how far treatment/understanding has come, though mental health is still taboo in many places. Great play, many thanks!

It made me very happy I was born in the century I was. Treatments are still far from perfect, but thankfully they're nowhere near as barbaric. I'm also very happy that I'm no longer considered mentally ill solely for being gay.

I did not realise that some private homes opened up as asylums and it is very interesting to consider this in regards to how mental illness was viewed by society.

Like many branches of science, things change but one must wonder whether or not today's treatment with drugs and sedation is humans or just different to the practices of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

More aware of historical methods of almost torture. Loved how the story was narrated through period song. Use of shadow worked well to show the almost brutal methods and allow one's mind to imagine what was really going on behind closed doors.

A moving performance. How much progress have we made since then? Multiple prescriptions haven't guaranteed a cure either.

Informed of mental illness commonly in the past – lots of conditions are raised awareness now that I thought could have been mistaken previously. Great use of song for comic relief.

It was very well performed, interesting and illuminating. One can only hope the mentally ill receive better treatment in modern times.

I have become a lot more aware of these issues effecting mental health/illness and I wish to learn more about said issues.

Mental health care has progress greatly but I can't help thinking some patients are still drugged up today just to keep them quiet. Enjoyed production very much – thank you.

The performance has shown me how just how far it has come over time, the discoveries, improved methods and the changes since the times when drilling a hole in the head cured a headache. Without the evolution of those concoctions, medicine and therapy would not be as good as it is today. Good performance, great music, thank you.

Interesting that in reality very little has changes over the years. The separation of people who do not fit in –whether family or social norms remains. While 'care in the community' as the correct way to support those with mental health issues its underfunding and lack of well trained professionals means it cannot meet the complex needs.

It's given me a glimpse into an aspect of the treatment of mental illness that I wasn't aware of, and the piece would benefit from being expanded into a longer more in-depth explanation of this fascinating subject.

Very emotionally touching, I have come away with a more in depth insight into how mental illnesses were dealt with and attitudes towards them in the 18Century. Very eye opening and engaging. Excellent!

Brilliant- Great Theatre – Makes me think how will we cope – how will the NHS cope- we need more awareness, more plays to show how lucky we are – we need more money to fund services and projects – thank you for your support in this work.

It has broadened my view on the historical treatment of mental health issues – I was until now unaware of the commercial aspect.

'Trade in Lunacy' is a vivid portrayal of the state of mental health 'treatment' on the context of 18th century Britain. The class perspective, politics of gender and the inequalities that existed within both, have been portrayed well with respect to attitudes towards mental health.

It was interesting to find how easy it was for someone to be committed to an asylum. The performance was very informative.

It has re-affirmed my view that when defining mental health it is all subject. One's own environment may affect more than a mental illness may affect the environment. An excellent production offering a clear insight.

Very interesting and thought provoking piece – mental health issues and treatment are still a topic which needs more discussion and awareness – any piece of work that begins these conversations is important and especially that looks at the historical context.

There is still so much more to do regarding the treatment of people with mental illness. This play confirms that.

Wow! What an intelligent piece of theatre. Darkly funny.

Found very interesting. I am a Samaritan listener.

I thought that the intimacy of the performance helped to focus on the themes in ways that you might not ordinarily encounter in a film or in a larger production. The strangeness of historical figures in general makes it easier to sympathise with people as victims of their time; ion context of the performance, the inability to initially determine who is a patient makes it all the more clear that eccentricity is often a product of a time and place.

Well performed, interesting to know about the past and what they used to do in the past.

It was at times deeply emotional to consider the madness of the centuries of mental illness and that core cruelty and stigma of asylums – lives slighted – and I hope also then and now, lives and minds saved. Well done, great piece and verse.

The performance was superb, the way the person supposed to cure, was the one who has 'mad' at the end, shows the possible 'slide' to mental illness. The script and songs were very well thought out and nice to see 'local' places used.

Totally true to the period and relates broadly to today's issues. An excellent performance which show the total feeling and emotions of the condition. It raises questions and answers at the same time. Every human being needs help at some stage in their lives. Only a 'what if' divides between one of the other. Stop, think, dance, sing, shout or others, therapy is us, within us all. Share with others.

Much better understanding of history of mental health and its relevance to today. Far less barbaric than I thought. Great event; discussion.

Raised awareness of how much history there is of this subject. Provided insight into the progression of the 'madhouse trade'.

This is the first time I know about private asylum. However I think the 'patients' were given better treatment on their well being. Compare to when I saw / studied in the 80s in Jakarta. Over there 'mind people' people were 'treated' in an asylum sort of 'were put away for life' to avoid family embarrassment. For those who could not afford hospital they were treated at home by putting shackles on their feet or lock in a room. However the treatments are progressing now. Very good performance, I enjoyed it.

It makes me realise the inequality in treatment between the rich and the past. The doctor/psychiatrist seemed to want so strongly to help and to 'cure' his patients however what does that even mean? By such draconian mentioned that don't seem to have changed so much. The patients were used to experiment the possible 'cures' on, which I didn't realise. A very thought provoking piece that makes me want to find out more – particularly the institutionalism of the poor.

A very moving and interesting piece showing links between history and the arts. I was very surprised to see the possibility of confinement for no reason or more from possible family members to 'rid' themselves of 'complications'.

It was very interesting to get an idea of treatment in the past.

I work in mental health (Cov Clin Psychologist) and am struck by a) how little we have advanced in terms of treatment and understanding of mental disorder and b) how prevalent stigma remains. I was impressed by the play and thought how clever the performance with such few resources! Well done, very enjoyable.

It is quite poignant to remember that sane people were made 'mad' to get them away from an awkward situation. We are all 'mad' but the truly mad never consider such a term. True madness is in the mind, and will probably stay there (except when the moon is full).

Given me an understanding of the history of private hospitals and the business associated with that. Highlighted the potential for corruption in the area and pathos of the individuals involved and their stories.

It showed the massive improvement of the treatment of the mentally ill since the 1800s.

How horrific to have been alive at this time and subject to the whims of family and experimental ideologies of care. I can only hope this performance is used to assist with the opinions of the policy makers.

Made me realise the cruelty involved, the misconceptions and wrong diagnoses peddled in this area of health, the lack of power of patients in institutions.

Raised awareness – not something I think about much and certainly not past practices. Clearly there is room for wider dissemination of information.

Makes me think the definition of mental illness is less clear than I thought it was.

It's confirmed my previous thoughts that the illness(es) in the first instance are (through ignorance, fear and lack of knowledge) treated with somewhat contempt and/or embarrassment. Only through open and honest discussion/consultation can we all assist in the improvement and care of our fellow men/women who are not so fortunate.

It has opened up an area of history that I was previously unaware of. The high mindedness of the physicians was a revelation, we usually assume ignorance and malice but clearly there was some compassion at work.

Highlights how behaviours open to interpretation and misinterpretation and that diverse behaviour might to some be an example of individually and to others a sign of illness. How trial and error scientific processes are...

I learnt that they didn't put bars on the windows in asylums. Very informative, many thanks.

It put into context the pressure of the owners of the asylums were under and the resulting treatments that the patients then got.

It was very interesting to realise that the treatment of mental health was a private industry run by individuals. The performance also made me think about the respect for mental health as well as treatment. It was interesting to hear from both sides (professionals and patients). Interesting portrayal of various mental health issues and the different approaches and treatment of them.

Coming from a reasonably well informed position on the history of the treatment of mental illness, I think that this performance reflects the difficult nature of treating mental illness well. It was well done, tackling a difficult subject matter in thought provoking manner without being too inaccessible.

Eye opening, excellent acting, very happy to see this funded by the Wellcome, informative, reinforces my thoughts that the treatments for mental illness are not as well funded/researched as those for physical illness.

I worry that the treatment of mental illness has not changed that much – families ship off their ill relatives or suffer looking after them in silence.

Perhaps we've become 'slightly' more humane? More institutionalised.

My first thought is how lucky we are not to live in the 18th century. The second is that we haven't actually come all that way in the treatment of mental illness. The stigma, for sure, is still there and treatment is still a halting process in many ways. Yes, we have the drugs to calm or incapacitate now, but in many ways 'cure' is not a word that can be used with complete confidence. Mental health is a lingering taboo and we must do more to bring it into the open.

Reinforced the brutality of mental health care and the timeless nature of mental illness.

Not really changed anything, already aware of certain issues modern and historical.

How far treatment and diagnosis of mental illness has come and perhaps how far it is yet to go. Perhaps treatments considered standard now could become as archaic and frowned upon as older treatments/diagnoses seem now.

It has given me a greater understanding of the pressure put upon the medical practitioners in the psychiatric field.

This was fantastically powerful. The story of the woman brought in by her husband embodied how the notion of madness was a convenience in many cases.

Really insightful and emotive. Raises lots of questions and things to think about in methods used in the past and present. Was this a real place in the region? Great collaboration between artist and university and would love to see more in the future.

Something we're still scared of because we can't explain it.

It shows some examples of the kinds of reasons people were put into asylums – but not influenced my views on the treatment of mental illness in anyway. It was an enjoyable performance.

Historical perspective on mental health issues; discussion of gender; emotions involved in the lived experience of asylums.

Fabulous engaging performance followed by thought provoking panel. Many parallels brought to mind from the C18th to contemporary times – the suffering of patients and the struggles of those trying to understand and help them. Mental health issues have had a profound effect on the human condition through the ages - it is not a contemporary epidemic.

I would be interested in the history of mental illness in the UK. This performance raised questions for me on this subject. Liked the music, very evocative of the period.

It was helpful to understand how primitive people with mental health were treated when there was no NHS.

Personally I was pretty well informed on the practice of medicine and mental health through history. But, thoroughly enjoyed the performance. Actors were great and the subject matter was accurate.

The performance was very insightful, has left me wanting more information, so I will research further. It is fantastic when high quality theatre values are maintained and the story message is clear, nothing was diluted; big impact! Many thanks.

Really great performance; very interesting exploration of the back stories to the patients and the people who ran private asylums. Interesting suggestion that treatment was so experimental – is this still the case? Also interesting exploration of less than palatable family and commercial motivators at play.

This performance highlighted that mental illness is not necessarily a 'modern' set of diseases, but something that has always been present in society.

It visualised and dramatised many of these concerns evocatively and compellingly, It made these issues seem more vital and direct.

Yes, this has been a really interesting insight into the treatment of mental illness. I have a better understanding of the types of disorders and types of institutions that treated mental illness. I liked the combination of singing and acting and contemporary ballads.

As the content is historical, we see the inability – actually- of doctors to treat. Presumably we have advanced! However, we also see the personal care taken of the 'client'. Is this still the case, I wonder? What goes on in today's asylums. The etymology of the words is significant...

Hmm. Some things have not changed. The closure of long stay hospital ran by the NHS opened the way for private hospitals to accommodate the most severely disturbed and dependent patients. Some do a good job; care in the community is a mixed blessing. To what extent we label people 'ill' who are inconvenient is still an open question.

It reinforced the contemporary tensions between marginalisation and a genuine desire to care for sufferers of mental health problems. But the financial pressures to bring patients in and the consequences of that both on practitioners and patients was particularly enlightening. I also thought the contemporary ballad received greater public awareness than I had anticipated.

It brought back vividly the books and articles I've read as a student. It helped me think about the sufferings of mental patients more than if I just read an account or history of the insane during the C19th – Well done!

I think mental illness still evokes fear and mistrust in people today and although there has been fundamental changes in treatment and support, some attitudes and treatments seem to endure, Is it that the expectation of a cure (in clinical staff and families) is seen as the fault of the patient when this is not achieved. Some treatments seem to be a 'punishment' even now.