

# ***CALL IT A DAY***

**A NEW PERFORMANCE BY GREG WOHEAD**



In January 2009, on a freezing snowy day in rural Illinois, my then-partner, Hetty, and I—two atheist liberals—went to the home of Samuel and Martha Herschberger, an Amish couple not much older than us who had 7 children. We spent the afternoon in an often awkward exchange with Samuel and Martha, finding out about each other's lives; we told them about our small Victorian flat in London, about my partner's vegetarian diet, about how and why we value art. They told us about their family, church meetings and the work they do in the fields.

**Call it a Day is a partially improvised theatre piece performed by four people that takes our exchange with Samuel and Martha as its source and loops it in a retelling best summed up as a live art Amish 'Groundhog Day'.** Through an almost musical progression of repetitions—as well as meditations on the lyrics of Cyndi Lauper's *Time After Time* and out-of-context scenes from the Harrison Ford film *Witness*—we turn one afternoon into a strange, kaleidoscopic examination of the possibility or impossibility of ever really understanding each other.

**“Wohead’s sensitive exploration of the way we grasp at understanding and seeing each other truthfully are realised through poetic narration and a disarming approach to form”**  
The Stage

**A group of four performers—including me—enact the idea of the original conversation, each person taking a turn narrating as ‘Greg’ from 2009.** With each looped retelling, each new 'Greg' takes different liberties as they alter the story, sometimes subtly, sometimes wildly. Through these semi-improvised repositionings, we lean into a sense of the queer, the weird, the plural—we see different points of view and layerings of gender, race and background. Mireya as Samuel tells about the time he bathed himself in apple butter, Tim as Martha explains in detail how to slaughter a pig, Amelia as Hetty compares acting to physically getting inside someone to see the world through their eyes.

**“In Wohead’s work, making theatre is an attempt to bring people and ideas to life. In a generous, calm performance, Call It a Day demonstrates how hard true understanding – of both oneself and of another – is to achieve.”**  
Exeunt

**The looped conversation is interrupted at times by playful, considered monologues spoken by me in Pennsylvania Dutch,** the language spoken by the Amish. Through these monologues, the audience is invited to consider the slipperiness of language and the difficulty, humour and weirdness in communicating and miscommunicating through words.

**At the heart of the performance is a question about whether it's ever really possible to understand another person.** While at times in the show this might be a political question—what is it like for an American man and a British woman to try to understand an Amish man and woman, and vice versa—the emotional thread that emerges has to do with the couples between themselves. It emerges that Hetty and I are no longer in a relationship; what at first seems like a show about people from different cultures trying to understand one another also becomes about the tiny culture that can be formed by two people in a relationship and what happens when that tiny culture is no longer shared.

**What does it feel like to find familiarity in a stranger, and what does it feel like when someone who used to be so familiar becomes a stranger themselves?**

**The scenic design is simple and stark, centring the table itself as a place of potential, communion, liveness and debate.** The original music my Maxwell Sterling and Ben Babbitt provide a meditative tonal pathway through the performance drawing on post-rock styles and inverting and refracting Cyndi Lauper's *Time After Time*.

**Call it a Day brings my artistic practice into new areas, while merging formal and thematic threads from my previous work.** Previous projects deal heavily with the slipperiness of re-enactment and memory, sourcing a serial killer's confession tapes in *The Ted Bundy Project*, re-enacting an Elvis concert in *Comeback Special*, and getting two unrehearsed performers to stand in for me in *Celebration, Florida*. This project takes those interests, and, starting with the personal, unravels a remembered event through repetitive re-enactment that eventually explodes its scope resulting in a funny, relatable, strange and heartfelt performance.





## BASIC TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

### SPACE

- Traditional end-on set up, well suited to a studio theatre

### LIGHTING, SOUND, PROJECTION

- Lighting: basic cover with 5-8 specials
- PA
- Large cyclorama or white back wall for projection
- More specific information and plans can be provided

### PERSONNEL

- 5 on the road: 4 performers, one technical manager
- Provided by venue: 2 technicians to assist with get in and get out

### Age recommendation

- 14+

### RUNNING TIME

- 85 minutes

### INTERNATIONAL TOURING

- Surtitles can be integrated organically into the design. Requirements can be discussed.
- Most props and set pieces can be transported in suitcases if certain items can be sourced locally.

***Crack of Dawn***, a durational companion piece to *Call It a Day* using the same performers, can be programmed in tandem with *Call It a Day* or on its own. *Crack of Dawn* takes places from sunrise to sunset, replaying the conversation with an Amish couple over and over throughout the day in improvised loops against a live responsive soundtrack by Maxwell Sterling. This performance can take place in theatres, galleries or rehearsal studios. More information is available on request.



*Call It A Day* is co-commissioned by Theatre in the Mill, South Street, University of Reading, Chapter and The Yard with additional support from Shoreditch Town Hall. The development was supported by a residency program with Los Angeles Performance Practice at CAP UCLA, mala voadora's Dois por Dois residency program supported by Inresidenceporto and the Peggy Ramsay Foundation. Supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England.



Concept and performance  
Originally realised & performed with  
Composing and sound design  
Lighting Design  
Scene Design Consultant  
Production Manager  
Dramaturgy  
Producer  
Photography

**Greg Wohead**  
**Tim Bromage, Mireya Lucio, Amelia Stubberfield**  
**Maxwell Sterling and Ben Babbitt**  
**Dan Saggars**  
**Shannon Scrofano**  
**Helen Mugridge**  
**Season Butler**  
**Laura Sweeney**  
**Paul Blakemore**

**Casting:** Touring performances will be cast from a pool of performers based in London and Los Angeles including Season Butler, Amelia Stubberfield, Tim Bromage, Vera Chok, Mireya Lucio, Jesse Saler, Jessica Hanna and others.

**Workshops are available in conjunction with *Call It a Day*** on methods of re-enactment, autobiographical performance and collaborative performance making. Workshops can also be tailored to specific needs. Please get in contact to discuss further.

**Greg is happy to take part in Q&As or round table discussions** on topics such as autobiographical performance, re-enactment and artistic process, all of which are relevant to the research and practice behind *Call It a Day*.

**Greg Wohead is a writer, performer and live artist originally from Texas.** He makes theatre performances, one-to-one pieces and audio works. He draws on a range of references and forms including autobiography, found audio, film, historical reenactment and fan fiction. Recent touring work includes *Celebration*, *Florida*, *Comeback Special*, *The Ted Bundy Project* and *Story #1* (in collaboration with Rachel Mars). His work has been seen at theatres and festivals in the UK, US and Europe including Battersea Arts Centre, Brighton Festival, Forest Fringe, Bristol Old Vic, Mayfest, Northern Stage, Bios (Athens), LAX Festival (Los Angeles), Fusebox Festival (Austin), ArtPower (San Diego), mala voadora (Porto) and English Theatre Berlin. Commissions and residencies include Orchard Project, MAKE, Vooruit, Contact Flying Solo International Commission, Choreodrome by The Place, Dois por Dois Residency by mala voadora, Experimentica, Theatre in the Mill, South Street, Bristol Ferment and Dance and the Homemade by Chisenhale Dance Space. He's an Associate Artist at The Yard and Shoreditch Town Hall in London.

[gregwohead.com](http://gregwohead.com)

