Are the Birds Happy?

a performance without an audience

by Simon Lee, Eve Sussman, Volkmar Klien

Are the Birds Happy? is a performance in the form of a public workshop, exploring the instruments of control that mediate our lives.

Members of the public co-create the piece, combining spoken word, song and movement.

- Smartphones, FM radios and a live Master of Ceremonies direct the proceedings.

- Participants only need to bring their smartphone and earbuds.
(loner phones are available for those without a phone)

Mirroring our daily lives each person's phone individually directs the action in the room. Over the course of the show the phone as director is challenged by the crackle of voices coming from FM radios and finally a conductor who takes over the proceedings.

In *Are the Birds Happy?* participants are initially guided by a newly developed phone app called SADISS –– Socially Aggregated, Digitally Integrated Sound System.

- SADISS is a directing + conducting tool that facilitates unrehearsed dialogues, ad hoc choirs of human singers, phone symphonies and choreographed movement.

- By individually "channeling" to each participant, SADISS communicates different roles within the group.

- "Channeling" means each person speaks a specific dialogue or carries out specific actions as instructed through an earbud.

- Six local performers collaborate on the preparation of the workshops. Indistinguishable from the public they provide guidance, leading by example.

There are no spectators, only performers.

Are the Birds Happy? plays with the central paradox inherent in our smartphone tethered lives: isolation vs. community. Tied individually to their phones the public forms a cohesive group and carries out a performance as one.

Are the Birds Happy?

Details and Tech Rider

Details:

Venue type: Minimum 2000sf ––
black box, gallery, theatre, warehouse, gymnasium.
Acoustics are important, participants need to be able to hear each other.

Duration: 45-60 minutes

Participants: 42 people

Props:

10 cafe tables
40 chairs

Technical requirements:

– Lighting grid: Simple grid, truss or C-stands for 15 - 20 focusable lights.

– Lighting technician to run the light board.

– Small PA-system