

THE PROMISE OF A GARDEN



A very first rough draft sketch of a script

THE PROMISE OF A GARDEN

An Introduction

The Garden is a four-week residency by a group of older people creating an installation with an invitation to the communities of Leeds, that culminates in a production on the Quarry Stage at Leeds Playhouse.

On Day One, a group of gardeners , construction workers, begin to build and transform the Quarry space into a theatrical ‘make-believe’ *Garden*. From Day One, visitors are invited to experience the space as it evolves, following the forking paths through borders of plants and flowers, orchards, arbours and vegetable patches They are encouraged to wander, to sit and meditate, to share stories and memories. *The Garden* installation will be a place of meetings - safe and socially distanced exchanges - where people from different parts of the city and different parts of the world all have their place.

Members of The Performance Ensemble and Leeds Playhouse will wait outside to guide them in, talk to them about the project and encourage them to return as many times as they want. Everyday the installation changes. Everyday there is a spontaneous performance. Visitors may book a ticket or they may just turn up and find it occurring.

Visitors will be invited to contribute to the installation; an old plant, a painted stone, a piece of sculpture, anything they feel able to gift and find a home for in *The Garden*. This object will then begin its own journey within the installation.

The Garden is created and changed by every visitor who enters. Relationships are formed, conversations begun, connections made, transformations shared: each day a garden community emerges.

And at the end of three weeks, in this space that has grown both familiar and unfamiliar, the visitors return as audience to a performance that they have influenced and contributed to.

After the first performances *The Garden* will be stored and continue to be worked on ready to reappear on a site somewhere in Leeds as part of *The Bus Pass Project* in 2023. The dry stone wall, for example, will have grown substantially. I am told it will last for 150 years and will stand as legacy for Leeds extraordinary year of culture.

An Explanation

We will construct the piece together, starting from design sketches from Delaine Le Bas; The expertise of Leeds Playhouse technical team; Video projections; People working on our building site constructing something beautiful; Contributions from communities across Leeds; Garden centres and Leeds City Council Parks Department lending us stuff; Discover ways to construct large scale tree houses that are built in front of our eyes; Plus lots of stories and anecdotes still to be collected

All of our collective imaginations and experiences will inform what is possible and dismiss what is not possible

Ultimately we will create seven sacred moments in seven different environments in the space of a ninety minute performance with no interval.

In simple terms the theatre-piece comprises of a group of 20 plus older people building a ‘make believe’ garden and as they do so they tell stories about their lives and explain why they are creating a garden.

The order of things will change and text will be cut or edited. Stories will be broken up and told in instalments - small insignificant moments of life will become meaningful.

PERFORMANCE | STORIES | MUSIC | PRETTY PICTURES | DANCE | LIFE

A Flavour

“Like so much of director Alan Lyddiard's work, it has a diffuse quality: often, the important things are on the periphery. There are no big statements, only tiny gestures: a woman picking a hair off a man's suit, the men strutting. It takes the lives of ordinary people surviving on the margins and makes them seem special, almost blessed. There is an acuteness about this that is almost frightening, as if the emotion has somehow been distilled: the quickstep turned into a love letter, the foxtrot into a litany of rejection. The piece has a caged grace but it avoids sentimentality. Like Bridie, it has no use for tears.”

From Lyn Gardner, The Guardian review of ‘The Ballroom of Romance’ at Northern Stage.

Scene 1 Rubble



Director

Hello I recognise some of you - I see we have people here who have been here before, some of you have been to visit us over the last few weeks - you've brought things to our garden - you are very welcome

He acknowledges people he recognises who have contributed and are now sitting in the audience.

Let me tell you a story about a story. I met a man called Atiq Rahami In Copenhagen in 2004. Originally from Afghanistan he was living in Paris where he still lives. We were working in Copenhagen at The Betty Nansen Theatre developing a project with writers from the Middle East, mostly Muslim writers. Atiq was one of them.

At the November 2001 election in Denmark the Social Democrats party did not win the most seats for the first time since 1924. The centre-right Venstre party in coalition with the Conservative People's Party and with the support from of the far-right Danish People's Party formed a government that was to stay in power until 2011.

The election marked a major shift in Danish politics: It was the first time that the right leaning parties held an outright majority in the parliament since the

beginning of the modern democratic system in Denmark in 1901. One of the most important things that forced the change was the rise of immigration as a political issue and the ensuing rise of the Danish People's Party.

Immigration played a central role in the 2001 campaign. The Betty Nansen Theatre wanted to do a project with mostly Muslim writers in an attempt to amplify their voices. Why do people feel this way? and if we hear their story - will this change attitudes?

Atiq shared his story with us. We put it in the show. I revived the show in UK in 2005 and his story has stayed with me ever since.

Music begins.

Alex enters at upstage right accompanied by stragglers and older people, mostly men. They struggle across rubble with walking sticks, stumbling - it is an effort - finding a pathway, amongst rubble. The group proceed to walk downstage right and Alex tells the story as he moves.

The music becomes softer as Atiq's story is told

Alex

It was night. The ninth night. The darkest, heaviest, most silent night. Under the snow and in the darkness brought by the weather, the horizon was no longer visible.

It was night. The ninth night.

The trafficker had said: The ninth night will be the last night you spend in your homeland.

In silence, we walked furtively towards the border. We were about to flee from our homeland. Each of us for our own reasons...

It was night. The ninth night. And the snow was still coming down. We reached the top of a mountain.

The trafficker called out: Take a last look at your country.

We stopped. We turned round and looked behind us. With the darkness all around we could not make out the land. All we could see were our footsteps in the snow. We cried. Then we began to run across to the other side of the border. Ahead, the land was white. No footprints. A blank canvas.

One of the party began to slow down. It was a small man who was carrying no luggage. Throughout our journey, he had been the slowest, the most tired and the most anxious of all of us. He went off to sit against a rock. I went after him to see if he needed a hand walking.

-Where am I supposed to go? he asked.

-To the other side of the border.

-That doesn't make any sense!

-So why travel all this way?

-I left to save my words. I wanted to take them to the other side of the frontier...

Words? What words!

Seeing my perplexed expression he replied.

I had them hidden in my eyes. And when everyone began to cry, I, too, burst into tears. The tears took the words with them... they fell onto the ground, and into the snow. Without words, no matter where I go, I will be a stranger... More foreign than a foreigner. Down there, without my homeland, I would at least have had my words with me.

I began to rummage in the snow. Beneath the snow, there was mud. The soil and the words had been mixed together. I took a few handfuls of mud and put them in my kit bag. The man smiled. An odd smile.

He said: How do you intend to sift out the words from the soil. Exile will be a blank page for you, which you will only be able to fill with the past. The present in exile can only be written in the margins and at the bottom of the page.

He leaned against the rock and asked me to leave him alone. Then he laughed again, a bitter, hollow laugh.

This frightened me. I left him alone. After a few faltering steps, I began to run and I disappeared into the darkness, on the other side of the border.

Music begins to build as it begins to snow

Scene 2 Snow

One of the group sits down during Alex's speech and remains as Alex and the others turn their backs and begin to walk upstage left, still slow and stumbling on the rubble. Snow lands in their hair and on their clothes. It turns the grey landscape of the stage, white. It catches the light, so that tiny sparkles light up the air, bringing with them the silence that comes with snowfall. The seated man gets up and comes to the front of the stage. He looks into the audience searching for something, then moves off stage the way he came on, departing from his companions.



The stage is empty of everything but music - maybe a single dancer in the rubble.

Then Construction workers enter pushing wheelbarrows - ready to start work - They are 20 big older people, some of the men stripped to the waist so we can see some of their magnificent tattoos, - They begin to move bricks/rocks. A few artificial flowers appear amongst the rubble. The wheel barrows are up ended with the handles towards the sky - for a moment it looks like a cemetery. There is a fine quality of movement as the gardeners lift and move the bricks - a heightened movement of activity. The snow stops - The men continue working. A little old woman arrives through them and walks slowly to a microphone near the

front of the stage. She begins to speak in Cantonese. There is a sur-titled device to translate into English the different languages that will be spoken throughout the performance

Mrs Yip (Cantonese)

I was born in HK in 1936. Then I met my husband, he was a sailor and only came home once every 3 months. He did tell me that before we got married. Why did I choose sailor? His earned well! Everyone was so poor in HK back then, I didn't mind he was 10 years my senior. He's a family man. After our son was born, he decided to give up life at sea us. He settled down in Liverpool and got us over. I was really happy, as I don't have family in HK. The application to get us over ended up taking much longer than we thought. While others took months, it took us 3 year. The reason is my birth certificate was lost when I fled the war as a child.

Harry:

I was born in Manchester and now live in Alwoodley, Leeds.

Namron

I was born in Manchester, Jamaica and now live in Tottenham, London. I first came to Leeds to perform at The Grand Theatre with London Contemporary Dance Company

Villmore

I was sixteen – As a school boy I watched Namron perform on the Grand Theatre Stage

Bernard

I was born in St James's Hospital, Leeds, my childhood was spent in Stanks, near Seacroft and I now live in Moortown, Leeds.

David

Di eyez earth day was in St James's Hospital, Leeds.

Connie (In Portuguese):

I was born in Madeira, and now live in Mytholmroyd. (In English) Madeira means “wood”.

Roger

I first came to Yorkshire to train as a priest, my first job was in Liverpool. I then came back to Yorkshire to become a Chaplain at Leeds University.

Mr Chiu(Cantonese):

I was born in Vietnam, I grew up in Hong Kong, and now live in Moortown, Leeds. My grandfather was a coolie leader and earned good money. When others blew their money on women, gambling and drugs, my grandfather saved up for his family. My father received a decent education from a good school. After graduating from high school at 1933, he joined the colonial government and was a clerk. When the war broke out in 1939 he joined the merchant navy, and met my mother in Vietnam. My father always told me how lucky I am, for many bomb had fallen near him at sea he was never hit, he later managed to bring my mum to HK with me in her arms.

Jen

I was born in 1961. My mum tells me that when she knew she was expecting me she unwittingly bought baby blue clothes. I readily adopted the colour blue favouring it above any other colour and detesting pink!

Marcia

I was born in St Luke's Hospital, Bradford, and now live in Riddlesden, Keighley.

Mary(In Cantonese):

I was born and grew up in HK. My elder sister had come to the UK. One year, a friend of hers was coming back to hk to get marries, so she asked that friends to drop by our house to collect some clothes and bring back for her. After he's collected my sister's clothes, he had a fight with his then fiancé at the door of the registrar's front door and ended up broken up the marriage proposal. Later on after he went back to the UK, my sister told me he had fallen love with me at first sight, and he wanted to marry me instead. That was 1976, my boyfriend in Canada broke up with me, and I thought the UK was alright, so here I am.

Tammy (In Polish)

I was born in London, I lived in many cities in my life including recently Puszczykowo in Poland. I now live in Beeston, Leeds.

Mr CHIU. Starts to sing ‘Can’t Help Falling In Love With You’. He is stopped and made to come back to the group

Alex (In Catalan):

I was born very close to London and now I live northeast just minutes from Newcastle. As a child I spent every summer with the whole family at the rectory of Montcal. There were a lot of people, cousins and friends. Parlavam

in Spanish but with neighbours spoke Catalan. It's very strange. Even cousins who have lived in Catalonia for more than 50 years who do not speak Catalan, They do not want to speak Catalan, they do not want to learn. I frankly do not understand.

Dance - Sally and then joined by Alex on a patch of grass that has emerged from below the rubble then joined by Sonja?

Jen

When I was 18 years of age I went to Polytechnic. I met Susan and we immediately connected. We liked the same music, shared the same sense of humour and enjoyed drinking a lot! It was a very deep and intense friendship which for me became something more. I overheard her one day say in the kitchen that if we were boy and girl we would have got married.

Margaret

When I was eleven years old I met Yuri Gagarin.

Roger

Living in Leeds for 42 years, I've met a lot of people. Yaseen's father came from Pakistan to work in a textiles factory. He then opened a corner shop and this became a supermarket. Yaseen's now taken over the business. (In Urdu: "He lives and works in Leeds") (In English: "He lives and works in Leeds") This year he became a Councillor. When England play Pakistan at cricket he now supports England.

Miguel was born in Chile but now lives in England with his English wife. Miguel'd play the guitar all day if he could. But that doesn't pay the bills. So he also works in a restaurant. (In Spanish:) Of course he loves his wife and his children. (In English) Of course he loves his wife and his children. But he wants to be a musician. And he misses Chile. Sometimes he can't resist cocaine. And sometimes he steals money to pay for it.

Sonya was born in St. Petersburg. But she thought she'd have a better life here. So she found herself an English husband on the internet. But now she's here she can't find a good job. (In Russian): They live in a bad area. Drugs. Violence. (In English): They live in a bad area. Drugs. Violence and the mental health of her husband is not good. She feels trapped.

Sonya taught me Russian. Yaseen taught me Urdu. Miguel taught me Spanish. But the only language I spoke fluently was the language of the Church. I spoke it so well I became a Priest.

Mr Chiu (In Cantonese):

I lived on Temple Street when I was little. Often I went to tea house with my granddad in the morning in Kowloon City, we would watch the airport being built there, then walk all the way home. That was 3 whole miles, and I was only 3. People said Little Chiu is so gifted and strong.

I went to the same school as my father. After high school graduation I went to study textile at HK Technical College. My friends were like “Dumb Chiu why don’t you go to university?” I just listened to my father. My father passed away now, but before when I chat to him on the phone and my son overheard our conversation. My son asked me, “dad, why do you always say Yes to granddad?” Well I don’t say no much in front of my father. My son is what they call BBC British Born Chinese, he doesn’t speak Chinese.

Barney

IN 1925 Attila József, one of Hungary’s best loved and most famous poets, wrote a simple poem called *Kertész leszek – I shall be a gardener*. This is the first verse:

Kertész leszek, fát nevelek
kelő nappal én is kelek
nem törődök semmi mással,
csak a bejött virággal.

*I shall be a gardener, I'll grow trees
with the early sunrise – I'll rise too.*

*And nothing else will bother my head,
except my tenderly grafted flowers.*

But Attila was not a gardener. And he grew up far from any garden or flower. Born into abject poverty in the ninth district of Budapest – a tough, industrial, working class corner of the city - Attila lived a semi-feral early life. A self-confessed street urchin, he scrabbled to survive. His mother, Borbála, died of cancer when he was still in his teens. His father, a soap factory worker, had abandoned the family long before. Attila and his two sisters were like wild flowers, pushing through the cracks in the tough urban pavement.

*Minden bejött virágom
kedvesem lesz virágáron*

*ha csalán lesz, azt se bánom,
igaz lesz majd a virágom.*

*Every flower that I have planted
will be my favourite one of all
and if weeds grow – I won't care
each flower of mine will come true*

Attila got some schooling in the end, when his brother in law paid for him to attend. He even went to university, with dreams of being a teacher: but he was sent down for writing poetry deemed seditious by the state.

He travelled and studied in Vienna and Paris. He read Hegel and Marx, joined the - then illegal - Hungarian Communist Party in 1930, but was expelled from that too, for being too maverick and independent a thinker.

*Tejet iszok és pipázok,
jóhíremre jól vigyázok,
nem ér engem veszedelelem,
magamat is elültetem.*

*I shall drink my milk and smoke my pipe,
and closely guard my own good name,
no danger will ever reach me now,
I've planted my very self in the soil.*

How Attila longed for the peace and quiet of the garden. But it was never to be his. He suffered terribly from depression and schizophrenia. His brilliant mind was tormented to death. On the 3rd of December 1937, he died under the wheels of a train on the railway tracks at Balatonszárszó, whilst staying with his sister. Was it an accident – or suicide? He was just 32 years old.

*Kell ez nagyon, igen nagyon,
napkeleten, napnyugaton –
ha már elpusztul a világ,
legyen a sírjára virág.*

*This is needed, so much needed,
with the rising and with the setting sun –
and if the whole world should one day perish,
may there be flowers laid on its grave.*

In the century since his death, Attila József's exquisite poetry has become embedded in the very soul of the Hungarian people. He never grew flowers – never planted trees. But the poems that he wrote, created a garden of the mind, as profound in impact as the desperation in which they were written.



Scene 3 Grass

The rubble is cleared and grass has appeared. Artificial grass covers the stage - a large football pitch size of green grass.

A harmonium is carried/wheeled on and Christopher Benstead arrives he sit at the harmonium - He plays live music for the first time in the show.

Chris tells the story of the Harmonium

A section of dry stone wall is being constructed in one area. There is a disagreement in another corner about how something should be done - maybe the director gets up and helps to resolve it - each person has their own way of doing things and we observe their individuality as they begin the construction.

**Alex, Sally and Sonja continue their dance - a duet becomes a trio.
Then David and we have a quartet.**

Song - voices from across the landscape

Songs Unsung
My heart unswept
What will survive?
It all begins again

Rowena

I'd been a primary school teacher throughout my life and retirement was not an easy thing to do - I decided to have an adventure. I decided to go and work for VSO in Cameroon and was sent to a little village right up in the far north of Cameroon, not far from the Chadian border. It was, it was. Very strange at first, very strange at first. I was given a house, a little pink house with a corrugated iron roof that looked out onto a compound where there were two other houses. The women used to sit and chatter, enjoy the gossip of the day, as they did each other's hair. Next door to my house lived a group of students. The compound was owned by a Major and I think a lot of these students were relatives of his and they were very good to me when I first moved in, to help me get used to such a different way of life. Olivier hung the mosquito net over my bed and constructed a washing line from the tree at the tree at the centre of the compound out to my house, so that I had somewhere to hang my washing.

Behind one of the houses was a big hole and I was supposed to put all my rubbish there. I felt a little worried about this, putting in all my old jagged edged cans and glass bottles just didn't seem very safe to the children. It wasn't a very savoury place either, there were a lot of hens savaging around and lizards and plenty of flies and as soon as I put my rubbish in the hole all the children would come running to see what they could find to play with.

My friend one of the Peace Corps workers, who lived in the next village told me that she burned her rubbish in her garden. "What a good idea" I thought. So the next time I put my rubbish out I looked for a place to burn it. "Ah,



there's a er slab of breeze block stuck in to the ground that will make a good bit of shade to stop the wind blowing out the flames. So, that's what I did. I made a fire, burnt my rubbish and - went back inside. The next time I came out to burn my rubbish little Flora from across the way came to see what I was doing. I noticed her grandma standing in the doorway, looking a little bit worried and wary. I wasn't quite sure why.

In a corner Barney is practising her T'ai Chi

I carried on burning my rubbish. Flora was always there. And then one evening Olivier from next door came round and told me what I'd been doing was a bit of a difficultly for them because the stone, the breeze block marked the place where the Major's grandson had been buried. The village had had a procession for the funeral through the village and had brought his coffin tot he compound where they buried him. And placed the stone to mark his burial.

I hadn't realised. There was no inscription. I felt terrible. I felt so inadequate. So ignorant. He, he he was quite understanding, Olivier, he - wasn't cross - I didn't know - and how could I have known. It's all so difficult in another country when you haven't - had the opportunity to - to - understand -the culture and the customs and I'd trampled all over them.

Mr CHIU begins his Elvis song is stopped again.

Jen

Susan and I both decided to leave at the end of the year Susan to do nurse training and me volunteering nursing two severely disabled students. When I saw Susan get on the bus to leave for the last time I had a real Brokeback mountain moment. As the bus pulled away I started sobbing

uncontrollably and I headed full pelt into a deep depression. I can even admit that I contemplated suicide. I was truly heartbroken.

Scene 4 Flowers

Flowers appear - an expansive flower arrangement on the grass and on the stage - the stage is filled with flowers - brought on stage individually or in bunches, wheeled on discovered in spaces - appear somehow

Namron enters and begins to dance a solo amongst the flowers

In the auditorium potted plants have emerged

Roger

I used to be a Christian Priest. So at a funeral I would speak in the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit to commend the deceased to a glorious future. “Earth to earth, Ashes to ashes, Dust to Dust...” I would say, “but in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to Eternal Life”. I would say we are all the children of God. So when we die that’s not the end but the beginning of another journey. For there is nothing... no disease, no cruelty, no pain, no injustice...nothing, not even death, that can separate us from the love of God. Of course we grieve for the loss of those we love. And maybe we rage at the dying of the light. But in death we are not disintegrating into nothingness. We are on our way to God where all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well.

I could say such things because I believed that they were true. But now I think that when we die we do disintegrate into nothingness and there is nothing left of us to continue. Earth to earth and we stay in the earth. No spirit or soul to continue a journey. That’s it. The end. There is no God to go to and those we love we will not see again.

I don’t see how we can know for sure that this is so but I think it probably is. So this room is not a Church. There is no religious building in the Garden. No Church, no Synagogue, no Mosque, no Temple. There is no building that expresses any kind of faith in any kind of God or any kind of afterlife in the presence of a God. I’m not claiming to know for sure that people are wrong to express such a faith. But they will have to go elsewhere to express it.

So what can we express here in this room in this garden? Merely the brutal truth of our annihilation? Can we only be negative, depressing, spirit-crushing? If so, how will we cope with grief?

When someone we love dies we are likely to feel so overwhelmed by grief that we cannot see how it could end. To feel that there is nothing that can in any way alleviate the pain of our loss.

Of course we'll know that there is still music, that there is still beauty, that there is still friendship, that there is still love. That there are still people doing good things, achieving great things. We'll know that life is continuing in all its best and brightest colours. But the brightness will not be able to encourage or comfort us. The boulder-like weight of our grief will not be lifted.

We cannot predict how long so bleak a time will last. But it may be the case that in time the grief will slowly loosen its grip. This may be because our love is not as strong as we thought it was. And we are not the substantial person we hoped to be but someone so flimsy that death in a single puff can blow even our deepest feelings away. Maybe. But it may rather be the case that there's a new kind of energy that begins to operate within us. The energy for resilience. The energy for life. The energy of the earth.

To be governed by grief is to be an acolyte of death. But we are the produce of the earth and the earth forbids us to serve in such a temple. The earth must endure the winter but it does not surrender to death. Even when frost or snow invade the Garden it is not dead but biding its time, waiting to pounce and astonish the dead land with Spring.



Sally Cardboard Solo

I don't think we should expect our grief ever to let us go. We should expect to keep on feeling its weight. We might be thinking we're feeling quite strong. And then suddenly the memory of some wonderful moment with someone we loved will ambush us, rolling down once more the boulder of life-crushing grief. But we are of the earth. In the garden we celebrate all the produce of the earth. The abundant beauty of the earth. The beauty of the trees the flowers and fruit. The beauty of the seas and the lakes and the moors and the mountains outside the garden. The beauty of music, friendship and love. The beauty of all the good and great achievements of humankind. We celebrate life in all its best and brightest colours. Grief will not let us go. But the energy for resilience, the energy for life, the energy of the earth will operate within us, demanding awareness of the beauty that it continually creates. Despite our grief there will still be so much to celebrate.



A bench arrives. Colin sits down on it.

Colin

My partner Sylvia returns home from a course one day and says "I met somebody who knew you. - his name is Roger and he's sent his mobile number.

I don't really like 'going back' in life.

Ten singers start to sing

Song ‘The Road Less Travelled’

*I shall be
I shall be
I shall be telling
Telling this with a sigh*

*Somewhere
Somewhere ages and ages hence
Two roads
Two roads
I took, I took
The one less travelled
Travelled by*

Colin

Eventually I ring Roger and we arrange to meet for lunch in Saltaire. I arrive and take a seat. The bar is very quiet. My mobile phone rings. It's Roger. He's sitting two tables away from me. We haven't recognised each other.

Sally cardboard solo finishes

Roger and I were at Infants together with the suitably named Miss Nags. He taught me how to shoplift. For our final year of junior a new school was built and Cousin Steve, Roger and I were in the same class. We took our 11 + and moved onto secondary school together. Form 1a, Form 2 a, Then Roger left in Form 3 and moved to Harrogate. I only saw him once after that...

Steve goes to Durham University to study marine biology and I train to become a teacher. Don't know where Roger is.

Jen sits on the bench at the other end to Colin

It turns out we've both been teaching in Leeds for Approximately thirty years, but never encountered each other.

Cousin Steve joins us for a meal. We laugh a lot and the two of them chat happily about their shared love of fishing. I just enjoy the food.

While we are eating Cousin Steve starts to slide under the table. Steve is suffering from Parkinson's. His wife just left him. He is also unable to work. He can't even cope with looking after a dog anymore. He's not allowed to drive since he somehow steered sideways into a car park.

He relies on his son Chris and a group of fellow Wobblers, as they call themselves, for support. Roger tells us he is recovering from prostate cancer. His treatment has been successful.

The garden is growing - trees - bushes - banks - dry stone wall - wicker fences and wicker men



Jen

I met my husband Simon two years after Susan left. Simon and myself got on so well. He was a kind, sensitive and gentle man who was highly intelligent in both sciences and the arts. He simply adored me and that was irresistible and intoxicating to me. Of course I asked Susan to be my chief bridesmaid I hadn't seen her since that faithful departure and when she arrived the night before the wedding I felt a rush of excitement. I quenched the fire I felt in my heart and never spoke about it.



Colin

We carry on meeting, sharing stories and puerile jokes - and that's where we are really - Except three weeks ago Rogers cancer returned. He had to have radiotherapy on his chest before he starts further treatment on his - as he calls them - my once interesting little places. I hope that this continues. But will it?

Jen

I lived with Simon for ten years but still had attraction to other women. whilst I was doing my nurse training I met Sandra and we planned a walking holiday together but two days before we due to go she cancelled. I asked her why and she said very delicately that she knew I had feelings for her that were just not friendship based. She actually used the word lesbian which completely floored me. I started to reflect on this but again dismissed my feelings.

Music - Paulette? - Colin and Jen help with the garden

Margaret

When I was eight we spent our summer holiday in London, and my mum took my brother and me to Earl's Court, to see the Russian Exhibition. It was really crowded, and suddenly, there was an extra commotion. People were pushing through with thick red ropes. "Hold on to the rope!" said Mum, worried about losing us in the crush. Then, walking straight towards us, waving and smiling to the crowd, came Yuri Gagarin. Yuri Gagarin - who three months earlier had been the first man in space.

And I knew: that was what I wanted to do.

Not long after that, I came across an author called Hugh Walters. He wrote a series of books with wonderful titles: *Journey to Jupiter*, *Mission to Mercury*, *Destination Mars*. The spaceship captain in all these stories was a physicist. So it was simple: to go to space, I needed to become a physicist.

It's twenty years later. It's eleven o'clock on a Saturday night in October, and I'm standing in the desert in New Mexico. The experiment I've spent the last four years developing and testing is now sitting on top of an Astrobee rocket at White Sands Missile Range, ready to be launched into space.

The tannoy comes to life: "T minus one minute and counting". There's a public highway running for about 70 miles across the range, and the military police have closed it. We have a one hour launch window.

"T minus 20 seconds and holding."

The countdown has stopped: something's wrong, and I run back into the control bunker, my pulse racing. It's the wind. Range control have to be certain that the launch and re-entry trajectories will stay within the range boundaries, and right now the wind is too strong.

"T minus 20 seconds and counting."

It's back on. I'm clenching my teeth so hard to stop them chattering that my jaw aches. "10... 9... 8..." My mouth is as dry as the desert, and I can't control the trembling. "3... 2... 1..." Oh, please work!

Then there's the sudden roar, as the rocket bursts into life. And it's gone. Hurtling safely through the atmosphere into space, as planned. With a take-off so fast, I didn't even see it go.

A wind machine has appeared on stage causing a fierce wind across the stage. Anyone moving towards it is getting blown back - scarves, hats, shawls flying off , feathers flying through the air. They are moving towards it - giving up and starting again - they are fighting an obstacle - a dance in the wind with flying objects across the space.

The wind subsides



Scene 5 Sitootrees

Two or three sitooteries are built on stage one at a time. Two of them will become tree house one will stay on the ground



Peter C:

When my wife and I separated after 40 years of marriage, I fell to pieces. I got an allotment. I grow my own fruit and veg. It's no doubt that getting another allotment in 2016 was the start of my fight back to some sense of normality with my life. It gave me an objective and a focus to get myself off my arse and doing something. I purposely took on a plot that needed a lot of work, it was hard graft and it kept me going, the following year I left my plot I took over another plot that needed a lot of work and began to do more of the site managing I had the time to repair communal tools, and the fencing around the site, I cleared up the orchard began to cut the grass on the site made it look cleaner I took on more responsibility and became a trustee of the Allotment Site. In 2018 I took on my 3rd and biggest plot again starting from a wilderness made it workable, excess produce going to two local cafes as any

allotmenteers will tell you Your plot is always changing and this year I'm planning more, a pond, a greenhouse to replace the poly tunnel, wider paths, lots to do. Growing my own fruit and veg has got me into cooking, making jams, and excess produce I give to local cafes in Harehills.

What do I do now? I do youth work, litter picking, and volunteering. I've joined an Ensemble. Life is getting better.

Duet from Paulette and Chris sung as she sits by the piano

Barney:

Budapest airport was hidden in freezing fog. There was no one around, except for the odd soldier, gun at his hip, blank look on his face. She went through customs without being stopped. Just as well, because her suitcase was full of Irish whiskey, which the Hungarians loved, but couldn't get their hands on, behind the Communist Wall. Budapest was empty too, except for faded yellow trams - and the red stars on top of the government buildings. When they got on the train to go south, she could see nothing out of the window, except for fat icicles, hanging from trees. Already she loved this place. It felt so strange. It felt like home.

The actors were very friendly. None of them spoke English, but they got by with sign language. And the whiskey and pálinka and Russian champagne, soon loosened their tongues. The Kaposvar company had worked together for years. The actors' flats were just across the road from the theatre - and they spent all their free time in the bar, playing cards, gossiping and drinking. The work they did on stage was astonishing. Every production - a hidden subversion, giving their audience a message of freedom, when open dissent was forbidden. Hungary: the happiest barracks in the Eastern Bloc. That's what they said. But it wasn't true.

"We can't travel abroad", said her friend, through an interpreter. "Except once every three years. And only if the regime approves.

But she - she had privilege. A British passport. She could travel where she liked. The company kept inviting her back, to work with them. And the main appeal, she knew, was her Britishness - and that suitcase, stuffed with tea bags and whiskey. The last time she went, it was summer 1989. She got really sick, and when she went home, she knew it was forever. The Berlin wall fell four months later. The red stars were dragged from the roofs, and a new era began. Some years after that, Hungary joined the European Union. Her British passport and their Hungarian passports were joined, under a single blue flag with a circle of gold stars.

Now everything has changed again. The UK has left the European Union. Freedom of movement is over. The Hungarians can still travel where they like across Europe. But what about her? Ah, how she longs for that slow train out of Budapest now, with snow piling at the window, contraband in her case, and a sense of something beautiful and foreign and free, just ahead of her, on the country railroad track.

Mr Chiu

My grandfather and uncles knew martial arts, they did the Hung style. I learned Mantis Style when I was a teenager. Me and my friends got cameo stunt fighter jobs in Kung Fu movies. I haven't practised for a long time. Last Valentines Day I performed a sword fight sequence and that was Mantis Style sword. My partner got a coin sword, and I used one with a retractable blade. It looked rather dramatic when I slashed her!

Mr Chiu sings 'Can't Stop Falling in Love With You' and with Tammy does the sword dance.

Bill:

I was born in Bromsgrove, Worcestershire. I am the son of an immigrant. My father was Jamaican, part of the Windrush generation, and my mother was from Gloucestershire. I am mixed race. You sometimes hear Politicians say, they are a son or daughter of an immigrant and own it, like a badge of honour. But I couldn't "own it". I had never bonded with my birth father. We had met a couple of times, but it's not the same. If he had cared more, made the effort, then maybe it would have been different... he could have guided and protected me, but without that bond, I struggled to own who I really was.

Although she had lived through a world war, my mother had no insight into racism. She was 'colour blind'. Her love was tough and conditional. I was like any other kid playing in the street.

She married eventually; a white man, he didn't accept me and was a racist. I was only 8 yrs old. I had to cope with his verbal abuse, name calling - coon, wog, blackie. I was full of anger and hurt, struggling in class, restless. As that man got older, I felt sorry for him, and when he died, I didn't attend the funeral.

Music

Peter G:

My story hinges on a moment. But to appreciate that, you need to know my marital history. I was married in 1958, my wife fell pregnant on our honeymoon. We were Catholic, so contraception wasn't an option. And she was very sick during her pregnancy.

Before the child was born, she revealed she didn't love me, but told me she married me because she didn't think I'd beat the children, in the way her father had beaten her.

On her final pregnancy the doctor told her another pregnancy would be life threatening.

Eight times in twelve years, and not again in the next fifteen. She was very ill.

In 1970 I became a probation officer. I had a young lady attached to me, studying to be a social worker. She joined me at court, interviews, home visits, and on the final day of her placement I went to see my client in a Liverpool prison.

As we were crossing a busy road, she took my hand. I was hit by a bolt of lighting. She kept hold of my hand, and we saw the caverns, and the Antony Gormley statues.

It became clear we were in the same situation. Unreciprocated love. We embraced, we kissed, we sat, until we got to Batley.

I said to her, "I hate Batley". "Why?" "Because Leeds is the next stop. There we will part, and I'll never see you again."

Harry:

It's not true that everything happens for a reason.

Dance. <https://vimeo.com/454638072>.

Between Namron, Villmore and David

Khadijah:

Do you see me

Sankofa

stirring rituals of memory

cast out of deep ocean magic



inscriptions
to recall rhythmic sounds
of the cartographer's feet moving
to anchor father's dreams
of back home
baptized in mother's tears
and the holy ancestral spirit
I soar in all shades of the moonlight
body spinning truth
as if storm and wind
evoke my skin
to remember
a soul molasses softly man
a tuff drum reggae man,
a bronze like man
birthed from old Caribbean prayers
in the drip of British coldness



my body a well-made vessel
that holds posture and beauty
limbs like tree roots
wheel and knowledge

to come again
to a soundtrack
of life

Scene 6 The Sun Sets and Lighting The Garden

Gradually the sun begins to set and evening comes in towards night - lights are brought into the space and descend from above - the space becomes a mass of small lights. It grows darker and darker until all that is left are these lights, the buzzing - crickets - natural sounds - bird song insects around them and the outlines of the performers - a garden at night time - lit by the stars. Music song Paulette.

Mrs Yip

HK was at war when I was little. I remember I could walk, and my mother carried me on her back to seek refuge. She crossed mountains and rivers to get to Hueizhou. Later we went back to HK. It was desolate everywhere, nothings grew. One day my mother and I were going heading out to search for food and water, leaving my sister a home because she was too little to walk far. My sister kept crying ang and crying, and begged us she take her with us, she cried please take me, don't leave me otherwise I'll die. We didn't take her. When we came back she was nowhere to be found. We stayed there while others moved away, hoping we might find her. But she never came back. I reckon she was kidnapped and sold. My mother passed away when I get married.

Sonja

"Love is not changed by absence ...and you shall live forever in Spring."

This is the inscription on a bench...in a beautiful garden...in the middle of a busy bustling city suburb. Every day, people sit on this bench listening to the trees rustling, the birds splashing in the fountain of the pretty pond, watching the flowers swaying in the breeze.

For several years, every week, sometimes twice a week, a woman walked towards the bench and the pond carrying a basket of beautiful flowers. She lovingly and expertly cut the flowers arranging them in a plastic bottle with the bottom cut off, filled with water from the pond, then turned upside down. The woman would then affectionately clean the little stone boulder , on which were etched the words:

"Jenny Barnett. 13.5.81 – 24.8.2005....Eternally young....everlastingly beautiful....forever missed." Then walking round the pretty pond, she would sit on the bench, gazing in awe at the beauty of the gardens, the little bridge, the weeping willow - majestic and protective.

I was/am that woman. The words on this bench and the little boulder are for my elder daughter Jenny. I have them now here with me in Leeds, in my own pretty garden. My Jenny **was** beautiful and as it says on her little boulder, that beauty WILL be everlasting.... because she passed away at the age of 24 – indeed, in the Spring of her life."

Jenny was popular and clever and bright and bubbly and funny and a talented performer. She was a great friend, a special daughter and granddaughter, a caring, protective big sister....

A few months after graduating with Honours in English Literature from Sussex University, Jenny had surgery for cancer. She recuperated, then set off with

friends for a year's travelling to Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and finally, Australia where she decided to stay and work for 6 months. (I was extremely relieved that she chose not to tell me she had completed a parachute jump there until her return home!)

Back home in London, Jenny worked towards her ambition to break into journalism, but in 2005, just before she embarked on a journalism course, she



fell ill once again. Jenny is and will forever be:

“Eternally young....everlastingly beautiful....forever missed.”

Scene 7 The sun rises

Women's dance - The building of the final garden including tree houses

The construction workers get back to work - the musicians are invited out of the sitooteries which are placed together to become treehouses - maybe three of them. The rest of the stage is full of trees and green organised into sections - the wall, the treehouses flower beds, bushes and the trees. The musicians move into these different areas. The

construction workers are near the end of their work and begin to congratulate each other.

Mrs Yip

IT was 66/67 when I came to the UK, my son was 4. I found British people very nice. When we transfer at Heathrow for Liverpool, the pilot was so kind to help me with my luggage and even held my son. I didn't speak much English; I didn't work when I arrived at Liverpool and stayed at home to look after family. Two years gone by and I felt bored and lonely. My husband then decided to open his own business so I could help in the shop while look after our son. He found an empty shop in Leeds, that's how we end up here. Our takeaway shop is called Harehills Chop Suey House, it was quite famous then! We ran the business for 30 years. About 20 years ago I said to my husband, I don't wish for much after 30 years of hard work, I only wish for a roof over my head and a car to go places. Then we retired.



Jen

When I was 29 years of age I began working with a probation officer who admitted to me that she was bisexual. This just sounded so much safer to me! I admitted that I was attracted to her and we began an affair that lasted nearly a year. It was primarily sexual and very intense but we both had no romantic or longer term plans. When it ended I knew that I had to leave Simon he was wanting to start a family and I knew that I could not make that commitment to him. At this time I met two gay men and I confided in them. They both gave me unconditional support to be myself even offering me a room in their house.

I finally had the courage to be true to myself and told my husband my predicament. He was naturally devastated and tried everything to make me stay even suggesting an open relationship. I moved in with my two gay friends and spent the next 18 months sleeping with as many women as I could. I felt like I had a lot of catching up to do at the time but in hindsight its not really a period of my life that I'm proud of. I am now 56 years old and have had three long term relationships with women.

Villmore and Margaret dance a duet

Alex:

My mum and dad should never have met My mother was from Valladolid, an ultra conservative town in the heart of Spain. My dad was the only son of a Communist from a village in the East Durham coalfield getting out of his National Service by working in Jersey. They were in the same guest house. It didn't take them long to decide they wanted to be together

My dad passed his driving test and on the same day drove down through France to Madrid to get married in a language he didn't speak, to a woman he barely knew

His father and mother travelled by boat and he picked them up from Bilbao just in time for the wedding. They spent a few days of the honeymoon travelling with the newly weds.

One day my granddad went off to buy a roast chicken. They were staying with my mother's friends in Alicante and he wanted to thank them for letting them stay. Two hours passed and no sign of my granddad. They went searching and found him shortly afterwards. He had gone into a bar to ask for directions and having no Spanish had begun to walk around the bar imitating a chicken, hoping they would understand what he was after.

When he was finally discovered he was clearly drunk and sitting at a large table surrounded by a group of men with whom he shared no common language.

Somehow they had managed to entertain one another for quite some time. Brandy had been consumed. When they parted he embraced every one of them in turn, as if they were old friends. It was 1960 and Spain was under a fascist dictatorship. My grandfather was a secret member of the Communist party and yet in that bar they found a bond, a common sense of humanity, a desire to connect. They had in effect created a small, admittedly tipsy, community. All of us here are connected, we are becoming a community; we are beginning to understand one another and care for one another. We see this every day. We sense it in everything we do together.

We share our aches and pains and moments of laughter or frustration.

In these times when people are seeking to drive us apart, we simply refuse to be divided, separated; told we do not fit.

I am Antonio-José Elliott son of Harold and Margarita, a migrant who came to Leeds to train as a nurse, who never thought she would fit in, but who made lifelong friends. It didn't matter to her where they were from. She understood that our common humanity is far more powerful than any politician's will. We know this too.

Mrs Yip

Last March I was burgled in broad daylight. That day someone knocked on my door and asked if I need gardening service. I get someone to tidy up the garden every year, so I invited the man to come in and have a look. He had a quick look and said he would come back in the afternoon. About 5pm he was back, with a pen and paper in hand. We went to the garden and discuss details of the work. 15 mintues later someone called him from inside the house and said it's done let's go. I was surprised there was another person and how did he get in? But thought maybe it his colleague. I asked him for a quote he said £450, I asked him to make it cheaper and he said £300 before rushed off through the door. I thought they were in a hurry. When I went back inside, I saw how come there were so many dirty footprints in the house? My heart sank. I went into my room, they have taken all my cash and jewellery, including the jade bracelet my mother had left me for my dowry.

My husband has passed away for nearly 10 year now. It's not anything in particular, I guess he died of old age. He started to become forgetful and slow. I got people to renovate downstairs so he could live comfortably there without going up and down the steps. Then he started to struggle to speak





and eat. We had carers came for him 3 times a day, and two people came each time. I am on standby 24 hours. It lasted for about a year. The pastor from church came visit in the beginning, but I saw my husband looked upset after the pastor was gone, so I told the pastor not to come, I'd rather not get him emotional. One day when I got up in the morning, I heard my husband was wheezing for air, his mouth wide open. I called an ambulance. He spent one night at the hospital, next day he was gone.

Mary

I opened a take away business in 1988. It was quiet at first, then I brought my 3 children with me to distribute menu. Business picked up dramatically afterwards. It was draining with gang of youths. Once a stone was thrown through the back window. I called the police and it took ages for them to come. When they came the officer asked me, if I have seen with my own eyes that he had picked up a stoned from the floor and threw at my

window. The officer also said I was lucky to be in a posh area, he would have liked to move here himself. Another time when a whole gang of young people bang on my front window. I was so so mad and guess what, I drove my car and chased them down the street! They had to call the police then. Then I saw the take away business and started another one, sold it again and so on. After about 10 years I managed to retire. I love singing and dancing, and I walk my dog twice every day. I love the outdoors especially hiking, but I don't like gardening. It is astroturf in my garden! That's about it.

Director

Returns to the story of Atiq Rahman - where he is now - the other side of the fog? We see him on the screen or in the flesh? He tells us a story

Peter Bertram recites a poem or a piece from a philosopher on why a garden

The garden is built - there is peace and tranquility

The End

'The Garden will be dismantled after the final performances, scattered like seeds by people who take away something that they will care for in the months to come, planting its spirit of solidarity across the city until the next season, when the Performance Ensemble blooms again.'

'Everywhere The Garden goes will become a potential site for further creative work: a storytelling session in a residential home, a tai chi session in a social club, a micro-concert in a public garden. Perhaps in the autumn, The Garden will reappear as a harvest festival, gathering all the plants and art that have been nurtured since the spring'.

