



The Performance Ensemble, Leeds Playhouse,
Leeds Older People's Forum and LEEDS 2023 co-production

THE PROMISE OF A GARDEN

Created by the Performance Ensemble

18 – 21 AUG

Is anything more perfect on earth than a garden?

I ask as someone who has come to appreciate gardens late in life, during the enforced solitude of lockdown, and without a scrap of the knowledge shared by those who know and nurture plants.

In a garden, there is balance as nowhere else, people and nature, human beings in—and of—nature. We can only work together to find where life will thrive and fulfil itself in beauty, accepting the myriad things over which we have no control. The climate, the seasons and the weather; the animals around, above and below us; the plants that will do what they will, perhaps with our assistance, perhaps not. Gardening teaches humility, if our hearts are open to learn.

During long, fearful months of confinement some were lucky to have a garden in which to rest and watch life grow, while we were in suspension. Others watched it in back yard pots or on a window sill: even a house plant changes through the days. More lessons for restless humans here: patience and care.

And anyone could hold on to the promise of a garden, like a seed or a bulb, life waiting to be released. The promise that spring would come back and, in the words of D. H. Lawrence, 'vindicate us against too much death'. The promise of sitting on a park bench to hear the wind in the branches, the snatches of passing conversations and children's play, the occasional bark, and the birdsong.

Because that is the promise of a garden: to be welcomed home, without cares or obligations, not to do but to be, an equal part of the long unfolding of life.

In this production, people who know something about life's long unfolding have come together to create — what? A garden, of sorts, filled with flowers crafted with care by people all over Leeds. A garden of words, and stories, seemingly natural in their planting, though it takes artifice to seem so causal. A garden of artists, musicians, and performers. Some have been doing this for 50 or 60 years; others are stepping for the first time onto a stage. Each has something to bring, all of their own, and the garden would be incomplete without any of them.

And so, as Leeds Playhouse carefully reopens its doors, we welcome you with the promise of a garden, a place to sit and enjoy the quiet spectacle of life unfolding, not for you but with you, at home here like all of us. A little out of season, yes, but this is art, after all, not nature: we can make up things that are true. We promise you – quite literally – hundreds of years of living on this stage, we promise you beauty, kindness and healing, we promise you a garden—though perhaps not as you know it.

François Matarasso, dramaturg

0113 213 7700

@leedsplayhouse

leedsplayhouse.org.uk



Taneesha Ahmed
Community, Collaborations and
Partnerships, LEEDS 2023

Zoe Arnison
Support Worker

Zoe Bailey
Producer Leeds Playhouse

Barney Bardsley
Performer/Writer/ Tai Chi

Peter Bartram
Performer

Margaret Bending
Performer

Wesley Bennett-Pearce
Senior Producer Leeds Playhouse

Christopher Benstead
Performer/Composer

Henry Bolton
Technician Leeds Playhouse

Lucy Campbell
Assistant Director

Peter Clarke
Performer

Judith Cloke
Technical Manager Leeds Playhouse

Lily Craig
Community Liaison and 5000
Flowers Project Manager

Steve Cressy
Company Manager Leeds Playhouse

Angela Daniel
Performer

Ethan Delgado
Student Intern

Machteld DeRuyck
Older People's Programme Manager
Leeds Playhouse

Mark Dobson
Executive Director The Performance Ensemble

Florence Dolan
Performer

Alex Elliott
Performer

Charlotte Fairclough
Community Artist 5000 Flowers

Peter Gray
Performer

Roger Harington
Performer

David Hamilton
Performer

Khadijah Ibrahiim
Writer/Associate Director

Liung Ip
Performer

Julie Issott
Stage Manager Leeds Playhouse

Villmore James
Performer

Ali Kaye
Leeds Older People's Forum

Debra Lane
Performer

Delaine Le Bas
Designer

Joyce Nga Yu Lee
Story Gatherer (Hong Kong)

Man Chiu Leung
Performer

Yanxian Li
Student Intern

Alan Lyddiard
Artistic Director The Performance Ensemble

François Matarasso
Dramaturg/Writer

Janetta Maxwell
Performer

Bill McCarthy
Performer

Tamara McLorg
Performer/Choreographer

Sonja Miller

Performer

Elle Money

Immersive Box Project Designer and Artist

Paulette Morris

Performer

Namron

Performer

Heather Newsham

Company Manager

Sally Owen

Performer

Samir Paudel

Photography (Kathmandu)

Dai Pritchard

Musician

Ben Pugh

Videography, Photography, Live Streaming

Atiq Rahimi

Writer

Wendy Reed

Performer

Monica Richards

Performer

Clementine Rimmer

Student Intern

Anne-Marie Sammells

Performer

Linyuan Sheng

Student Intern

Florence Simms

Workshop Assistant 5000 Flowers

Tim Skelly

Lighting Designer

Tom Spencer

Technician Leeds Playhouse

Hao Yi Song

Student Intern

Ellie Stephenson

Community Artist 5000 Flowers

Ann Stewart

Dry Stone Wall Consultant

Ed Sunman

Photographer

Helen Thompson

Performer

Mike Thompson

Performer

Colin Trenholme

Performer

Emma Truelove

Performer

Harry Venet

Performer

Pat White

Performer

Ginny Whiteley

Scenic Artist Leeds Playhouse

Sandra Whyles

Community Artist 5000 Flowers

Emma Williams

Model Box Artist

Maureen Willis

Performer

Marcia Wright

Performer

WITH THANKS TO

James Brining, Robin Hawkes and the dedicated production teams at Leeds Playhouse, including the scenic workshops, wardrobe, props, stage, sound and LX. Rachel Cooper and Ali Kaye at Leeds Older People's Forum; Mark Hollander and Kully Thaiari at LEEDS 2023 and their teams and trustees. The Board of The Performance Ensemble CIC. Peepal Tree Press. University of Leeds. Yorkshire Dance.

WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO

the people across Leeds, Yorkshire and beyond who have contributed their stories and experiences and to those who have hand-made the 5,000 flowers to make our garden bloom, including the huge contribution from Hookers and Clickers, Nicola Down and Flockton WI.

PRODUCTION FUNDED BY

Arts Council England, LEEDS 2023 and Leeds Playhouse

THE PERFORMANCE ENSEMBLE

creates art through the experience of age, for audiences of all ages. Our work is underpinned by a philosophy of ensemble, our belief in the value of lived experiences and that everyone has a right to participate in and to contribute to cultural activities. Some of us have trained and worked professionally as dancers, actors or musicians, others as teachers, nurses, scientists or textile workers. When we create together, we are all artists. Our next project with our partners at Leeds Playhouse, Leeds Older People's Forum and LEEDS 2023 is 'Bus Pass'; an epic production with 1,000 participants for 2023. To find out more or get involved please visit: www.theperformanceensemble.com