

Curve In Conversation – Episode Two

Transcript

[Fiona Moore] Hello and welcome to Curve In Conversation where we dive into all things Curve with the people who visit, work in, and are part of this theatre. My name is Fiona and in this episode we will be speaking to a number of different artists performing at our upcoming Inside Out Festival between the 17th and 27th of October and finding out what we can expect from a jam-packed programme.

[Fiona] Hello Suba

[Suba Das] Hello Fiona!

[Fiona] Thank you for coming in

[Suba] Thank you for having me

[Fiona] For the people who might not have heard of the festival before, what is the festival all about – what is Inside Out?

[Suba] Yeah, well, it turns my brain inside out every year! So Inside Out is our celebration of new and incredible work being made by artists in the region, going into its fifth year. Six years ago when I joined Curve, we were looking at what we did around talent development locally in the region - who our interesting artists and voices were - and how we as an organisation could be supporting that talent on its way up year round. So we set up a range of programmes that are all about bringing in extraordinary artists to come and use our spaces, to have feedback sessions with us to get funding, to support them making ambitious new work and so we started doing all of that activity. We reached a point where rehearsal rooms were so full and you could pop in the building on any given day and there would be somebody in the recording studio or somebody in the rehearsal room or somebody just using the corridor to make a show because we were sort of bursting at the seams. It felt like we'd reached the point where we should really start letting that work out, showcasing it and enabling our audiences to come in and see work that we're really proud of – artists on their journey up – to see stuff right at the start of its life as well and to have an opportunity to feedback, get involved and all of these things. That's how Inside Out was born. Over the last five years, wow, we have been consistently showcasing a range of amazing artists making work right here in this building year-round in a kind of intensive burst of madness. It's been really thrilling. One of the most important things that's come out of all of that is over the past five years the work that's been made through Inside Out festivals has now toured to over a hundred cities across the world – so it's not just that we're making work for here or just for this moment, or it's not just about simply the education or the development of those artists, this is work that is so incredible that people all over the world want to see it.

[Fiona] Well last year we had Poet In Da Corner here with Debris Stevenson which is now getting amazing reviews at the Royal Court.

[Suba] On the main stage of the Royal Court Theatre, one of the most important theatres in Europe. And that's been one of the really exciting things as well, Poet In Da Corner was with us last year as a work in progress and Debris has been one of our Breakthrough Artists which is our year-round talent development programme, so we've been supporting her through a range of projects and ideas over the last four

years. So now to see a piece fly to those heights is really exciting! I mean it means that we as an organisation have a great eye on spotting incredible talent – so if you want to see the future of British theatre you'd best get along.

[Fiona] It's a good place to be! Looking at the brochure which is a pretty-packed ten days, there are a lot of our own Breakthrough artists and Breakthrough companies coming back. There's a lot of people that people might have seen last year bringing full pieces of work back, like Rachael Young with Nightclubbing, which is really exciting.

[Suba] And that's again part of the thing. What we wanted to do with the Festival as well was to de-mystify how work is made for new audiences also, because everything goes on a journey, everything starts from an idea, is tested, developed with audiences. Everybody responds to feedback, so that final polished article that you might see could have been on a very long life before that. It's quite fun to be part of that process! It's just interesting to see how an artist focusses in and shifts the story or really gets to the heart of what's exciting to them and pushes and pushes and pushes. So with Rachael, another of our Breakthrough artists, this is the third piece of work of hers that we've supported through Inside Out. Last year we presented a little snippet of sort of very early kind of half an hour of the material that Rachael thought was going to this show – and it now returns to us fully formed having had the most triumphant response in London where it played at Camden People's Theatre, which is a really cool edgy venue I guess you'd say, just rave reviews from The Stage, from What's On Stage.

[Fiona] So as well as putting on the whole Festival together and a really packed ten days of a variety of different shows, you are also directing a play which is the forefront of this Festival which is The Frontline by Ché Walker. You are actually not in rehearsals right now but you are rehearsing over the next few weeks...

[Suba] I am, yes!

[Fiona] ..with the participants of our New Theatre Talent programme, which has been supported by the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation over the last few months.

[Suba] So with Inside Out being our celebration of talent in the region, it just felt like we should therefore put the outcome of one of our biggest programmes this year for talent development at the heart of the Festival. That did seem like a great idea in planning and in theory and I'm now living through the reality of it, which is having to direct a show which is not the hardest thing in the world actually. So the New Theatre Talent programme as you say is us being supported by the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation to develop sixteen incredible young people aged 18 to 25 who otherwise wouldn't have access to theatre training. That was about us acknowledging there are challenges around costs of fees, and awareness, and also for some young people, just feeling welcomed into a theatre space. There's a lot of misconceptions and preconceptions around the kind of person that goes to drama school and all these sorts of things. One thing we're sort of proudest of here is that we are so accessible and our audience so varied, it sort of felt like there might be that trust there with us to bring through a group of people who might have been a bit nervous about considering any of the other drama training that exists. We were kind of right because we have a brilliant group of sixteen young people from all kinds of backgrounds who have had a really intensive bonkers training journey over the last

six months. So at the end of the process we wanted to put them into a show so they can showcase themselves but also really importantly have that experience of going through a production process because that's where you really learn if you've got what it takes, you know there's a discipline, there's an intensity to that process, we wanted to give them that experience so that they could get that under their belts. So it was about finding a play that could fully showcase sixteen young people that had great parts for sixteen young people and would kind of give them each their moment to shine. The Frontline was it! This play that I first saw 10 years ago, which is terrifying as time flies, this extraordinary collision of this energy of diverse young people on a night out in Camden in London and it is about the waifs and strays, the hardships, it's a challenging play in lots of ways, it's about people who are having to deal with tough lives and having to deal with violence, drugs, and all these sorts of things but who actually have their own sense of community and joy. It's given me the chance to throw a Beyoncé megamix into the show!

[Fiona] Yes, actually, I was going to bring that up. There is a lot of fun in there as well, because we're working with Sheep Soup...

[Suba] Yeah, invited back to be part of the Festival again this year, and to give them a real composing commission as it were, to kind of go "hey guys, you're amazing music makers". Some of you might have seen their music of The Leftovers that was in Inside Out last year, or Mrs. Green the year before that, the most incredible contemporary musicality. They're just amazing and witty and fun, and it's just cool! We were like let's bring some of that energy into The Frontline so Rob and Nick from Sheep Soup have been driving the musical language of the play which means that we've got rap, we've got gospel, we've got some beautiful soul numbers and a Beyoncé megamix!

***Sheep Soup's music plays* [Lyrics]** We swagger and strut with broken bones, we rob and steal we're the invisible ones, we getting high 'til the eyes pop out and you ask us why we scream and shout. Invisible, invisible, we're desperate and we're invisible. Invisible, invisible, but you still don't hear us though. Jesus gave me water, Jesus gave me water, Jesus gave me water, I wanna live his praise as well.

[Suba] It's a bonkers play, sort of loads of overlapping street scenes and dialogue so it's like a whirlwind and the only way to rehearse it is to basically have everyone in the room all talking at once. It's sort of a bit crazy! You do really feel you're like in the midst of a crazy night out when you're experiencing the show.

***music plays*[Lyrics]** It's a party, it's a party, come and join us at the party, it's a party, it's a party, come and join us at the party, it's a party, it's a party, come and join us at the partyyyyyy.

[Fiona] We've got a bit of a party and it's right here! This is The Party Somewhere Else takeover and there are lots of different people in this room so I'm going to go round starting from my left to say who you are and what you do as part of The Party Somewhere Else.

[Tilly Branson] I am Tilly Branson and I am part of The Party Somewhere Else. I do bits of producing, all sorts of whatever needs doing, we're a collective so we don't have kind of defined roles really.

[Eleanor Field] And I'm Eleanor Field, I'm part of The Party Somewhere Else and I do the live mural-ing so when we're having our Open House parties and our discussions I'm live drawing visuals for what people are talking about.

[Fiona] Oh exciting!

[Eleanor] Yeah it's fun!

[Michelle Vacciana] I'm Michelle Vacciana and I'm a performer and I have been going through a development process as well which The Party Somewhere Else have really fantastically supported me with.

[Louise White] I'm Louise White, I'm also a performer, theatre-maker, I've been knocking around for a few years now and The Party Somewhere Else has been supporting me right from the very start of the performance I'm going to show on the day. Literally from the very start!

[Fiona] So we have really a fraction of The Party Somewhere Else here, but in essence what is The Party Somewhere Else – what's The Party and where is Somewhere Else?

[Tilly] Well the name came from an event, so there's 12 of us in total, 12 women who are The Party Somewhere Else collective, and two of us which is myself and Hannah Stone went to a conference ran by Sphinx theatre several years ago and someone asked a question at that conference about what do you do, how do you deal with that feeling when you keep knocking on the doors and you're not getting let into these spaces as female theatre-makers. The speaker, and I can't remember who the speaker was, but their response was stop knocking on the door, go and have the party somewhere else. So that kind of stayed with me and Hannah and that's where the name comes from. We are all about a bit of anarchy, a bit agitating, pushing at boundaries but our central ethos from the beginning has been celebratory, that we want to celebrate the brilliant work that we know women are doing in the region and the country. So it's always been about creating a party atmosphere, something really fun, so that people can go 'oh that party happening over there, I want to be part of that, I want to be invited to that party' rather than us all getting sore knuckles from knocking on doors that aren't opening. So women and non-binary artists and women however people identify as women, those are the artists we want to platform, but all of our events kind of have the tag line 'organised by women, open to all', so they are not in terms of audiences they're not just for women and actually our audiences at our events so far have been really mixed which is great, we've had a lot of male supporters.

[Fiona] And this is happening on the 20th October which is a Saturday and it starts at 2o'clock. As part of that you have lots of different performances as well, so, Michelle, talk to us a little bit about what your performance is, 'She Came From Inner Space' – what is She Came From Inner Space?

[Michelle] Okay so She Came From Inner Space is a philosophical and almost reflective piece and it's about a person who is stepping outside of their experience to commentate that there's a separation between her inner world and her inner thinking, and then the practical manifestations that are happening in what we call reality. So she's speaking about her world and her experience as though she's from somewhere else because that's how she feels, she feels like a visitor here, and so she's commentating on her experience of living on planet Earth – she's questioning

things and challenging things because there's a gap between how she feels and the experiences that she's having with other people and their behaviours and things. She's trying to make sense of that, so it's kind of like a long sort of narrative where she's vocalising and trying to make sense whilst she's exploring these series of events that have happened in her life because she doesn't understand them. Y'know, in life, always coming across experiences that in one context they're acceptable and then in another context they're not. If you see somebody walking down the road and they're having an external conversation with themselves then you might sort of think that you labelled them as well they've got a mental health issue or there's something different about them that I don't identify with, but then if we put it in another context such as going for a card reading or clairvoyance or psychic events and stuff like that when it's framed in that way, then it's given a type of a kudos or an acceptance or at least an understanding or appreciation. It's about sort of that part of that gap as well and then about the gap between dreaming and waking up and occupying those two different spaces as well. I've certainly had dreams where it is reality at the time that it's happening, it's reality, and then when you wake up - and I've tried to explain that in the writing - that there's that slippage of time between when you wake up and that first moment when you're in a slightly confused state because you're still kind of part in your dream-world and you've got that atmosphere around you but then you land back in your own space and your own bedroom. And what inspired the initial piece was just, well it's from personal experience, through the work that I do and it was a particular relationship, a friendship that I have with somebody who is diagnosed as schizophrenic and he would have all these different conversations – external conversations – and he was very clear about them and I completely understood that what he was experiencing was real. It's been described as hearing voices and then because you don't hear them there's a question as to whether you call it real or not, but it's a very very real experience for him and I was just really interested in that. I know I talk to myself when I'm at home, but it just looks different. You know when I'm washing up the dishes and it's one of the ways I can help to reason with things and stuff, we all have our sort of little internal conversations, so it was just about pulling out those strands and discussing them really. As the character is other-worldly, or she feels other-worldly, it's about laying that out and saying why are people behaving like this, why am I being treated like this, why is this happening, I don't understand. Because I feel okay and I feel in a particular way but I'm having these odd experiences that don't quite match.

[Fiona] And then Louise, you're also bringing your performance here

[Louise] I am indeed!

[Fiona] Can you talk to us a little bit about what that performance is?

[Louise] So it's called The Dead Sea (for the moment, I am changing that to a much friendlier name) and it's about a girl who has lost her sense of adventure. She is a Marine Biologist and she's always wanted to be a Marine Biologist even when she was really little, she would like play in the bath and she would love having adventures with her turtle that she's got, that it never entirely clear whether it is indeed a puppet that's alive or a real turtle – I like to keep that ambiguous. She grows up and she gets to go on lots of field missions but something happens that's quite tragic and traumatic and she decides she doesn't want to go on those field

missions anymore because she's scared of the ocean, she's scared of the water - which is awful for her. She ends up being stuck in a lab just doing lab experiments on some jellyfish which are very interesting for people who are interested in jellyfish but for everyone else, a little bit boring! Reggie has also somehow managed to become her lab assistant (it's a family show, it's fine, it makes sense) and Reggie is constantly trying to undermine her very comfortable experience in the lab where she's not pushing any boundaries for herself and he's constantly trying to eat the jellyfish as well. He is causing lots and lots of problems and basically the whole show is about her trying to find her courage again and go back to her passion and find that sense of adventure that she'd lost. It's got a massive ocean conservation message as well which was very well poised when Blue Planet came out and it's really born out of my passion for nature and my passion for the ocean – it's a very beautiful, wonderful, rare gem of a thing that we have and it's becoming less and less beautiful all the time sadly.

[Fiona] And that's nice it's for families as well.

[Louise] Yes, I think if you sew the seed of wanting to look after our planet young, it grows and it becomes hopefully an intrinsic part of living in this world by looking after it and hopefully we can get that message across.

[Fiona] And a really nice part of the takeover as well, I think when a lot of people think about the #MeToo movement and feminism, it's all this 20+ woman who want to go out and be a bit of a fighter, but it's so important that families get into that message as well.

[Louise] Yeah, yeah, I think as a woman you can do whatever you want to do, it's great when you do a piece of theatre where the content is very much 'let's empower women' and that's great, but you should also be able to do something silly and that be okay as well. You know, because everyone else gets to do that.

[Fiona] Great, and then Eleanor, what you do sounds really interesting - so drawing throughout and visualising the whole process. How did that come about, that you would do these drawings?

[Eleanor] It came about as a slightly mad idea that I suggested in a Party Somewhere Else meeting that we had, when we were discussing our Open House parties and different ways of documenting them. Years ago my dad, he's an electrical engineer and just works for a big company, they have these big meetings, and they were doing this random skill-share meeting and they had this live mural artist in. He came home and told me all about it because he spent the whole meeting making Star Trek references in the hope this guy would draw the Starship Enterprise as part of his very official documenting thing. We were discussing ways of documenting the Open House parties that we do at The Party Somewhere Else and I just said, well, I could have a go at live mural-ing it and then sort of realised that I draw all the time in my work, I sit in my studio and I'm always drawing figures and costume designs but not in front of people and not in marker pen on a wall! I just decided that actually it would be a really good challenge for myself as well to draw live in front of people.

[Fiona] It sounds like you've got quite a lot to draw in the time!

[Eleanor] And that's the interesting thing too because people are talking quite quickly and they get really passionate and they're coming up with really exciting

ideas and you sort of want to do them justice – so yeah, my drawings are very speedy. I feel like I've settled into quite a nice style of doing it now where I get really lovely gestures down of what people are saying, but it's doing what they're saying justice, but in terms of us as a collective and going back over these, we can lay them out on our tables and it sparks off memories of conversations like 'oh that's when that group were talking about that' because I've drawn that ridiculous thing.

[Fiona] It's a really nice record of the whole event – what do you do with them afterwards?

[Eleanor] Well we've started putting up ones along with the one I'm currently working on which is quite nice for me because it's less of a big blank canvas as I've already got loads up there from previous sessions but it's nice for people to come across and look and see ideas of what has been discussed before

[Tilly] Yeah so so far we've kept all of them, and there is a plan when we have the time and resources to put them on our website so people will be able to see them. Although if you go on our Facebook page or Instagram you could go back and see the live videos from the event we did in January of you drawing, but we're also doing our first schools event that's funded by Centenary Cities Nottingham also in this October that's not open to the public, it's a specific event about Centenary of Suffrage for some women, that we're doing in a school and doing a similar thing at that event, but we'll give it to the school so that the school will have a document in this visual material that is a record of the workshops and discussion of that day.

[Fiona] Oh cool, that's great.

[Tilly] So yeah, there may be some more opportunities in the future where people get to keep them

[Eleanor] Or maybe we just need a giant photocopier so we keep the mandated one! We'll think about that.

[Louise] Well I keep saying is that I'd like it turned into a tea towel.

[Fiona] Oh that would be great.

[All] *laughing and agreeing*

[Tilly] A tote bag! A tote bag would be good

[Louise] Of just highlights and we pull out some key ones.

[All] Yeah, yeah

[Louise] I was just thinking also because they're really long, I draw it on rolls of lining paper you can like pick up, they're 20 meters long, and they do get rather long so maybe like a banqueting table cloth. We could get it printed on one of them

[Tilly] I think we could do all sorts with them.

[All] *laughing*

[Eleanor] I think as well, I just want to acknowledge that within The Party Somewhere Else we've got directors, designers, performers, all sorts of different people – we've actually got two drama therapists within our collective and one of them in particular Nikki Disney at the moment is really spearheading this movement about artist wellbeing and acknowledging the importance of all that work around mental health or generally just the mental health issues that a lot of people working in the arts face, and because of her work that's always been kind of really threaded through the early days of The Party Somewhere Else, thinking about we need to have these conversations and we want to have these conversations, but how do we

also look after ourselves? It's something that I think we as a collective have really benefitted from Nikki's work in that area and hopefully the artists who've come via us have experienced that as well, that we want to provide a safe and healthy space for those conversations to happen in where people aren't going away thinking 'well I've put my story on stage and that's been great but actually I've gone home and suffered as a result of it.

[Fiona] Yeah. Well it's all the amazing conversations that works like this strikes up, but then for the performer its very draining, to put that on night after night and to really go deep into those issues, so to have people around like that and to be talking about that to be quite honest...

[Tilly] ...and how we can do better, there's still a lot of work to do in that area in the arts generally.

[Fiona] Well thank you so much, thank you for talking about this takeover - it sounds amazing - which is on the 20th of October, Saturday starting at 2 o'clock, it can be very fun. Thank you very much for joining.

[All] Thank you!

[Fiona] So hello Kesha Raithatha

[Kesha Raithatha] Hello!

[Fiona] Nice to have you here. So you're a dancer and choreographer and you're pretty much taking over the Inside Out Festival this year!

[Kesha] *laughs* So it seems this year, yeah, definitely.

[Fiona] So you're here for The Party Somewhere Else, where you're doing 'Traces'. What exactly is Traces?

[Kesha] So Traces in a really tiny nutshell is my first contemporary solo that I've taken on. I started the process in 2016 with a commission from Akademi in London and this year I've been developing it even further with an Arts Council grant. It's a very personal journey based on my travels in and around my work I would say and my personal life as well. It just kind of discusses things that are to do with abandonment, loss and rejection and how that kind of stores in your memory as you go through various things in your life and how you get out of that, and you reboot until you kind of start this process all over again. Everything is very circular in our life, we start from one place and you go through something but then you always have to go through another thing. So you're always constantly just going through learning your lessons through life. So that's what Traces is, and how you retrace those things and you never really forget them.

[Fiona] And then to jump along to the next thing that you're doing which is 'Woven' with Subhash...

[Kesha] ...yes, a good friend of mine. So 'EKA' is actually all of our initials, so Emiko, Kesha and Anaya and EKA translates directly in Sanskrit as the number one, but there's three of us so it's a trinity that becomes a unity.

[Fiona] Oh that's really cool!

[Kesha] Yeah, we had a lot of fiddle around this name but it makes sense for the concept because it is very abstract take on a very old mythological idea of the three goddesses from Hinduism – one who represents abundance and wealth, one that represents art and knowledge and the other one that embodies the female power

(Shakti as they call it) – and how these attributes are still very relevant to today's woman and how you have to be all three of these things to be one entity. How we battle through that and how we come together is really what EKA is about in a very contemporary context.

[Fiona] Yeah

[Kesha] A little bit of nuance of Indian classical but it's quite interesting.

[Fiona] And then talking about Indian classical, then you are part of Yuva Nartan with Nupar Arts and that's sort of on the final day which is the Diwali Family Day that we've got that closes off the Festival. So then that's completely different to this contemporary style. Tell us a bit more about Yuva Nartan and what you're doing.

[Kesha] Absolutely. Well I'm really excited about that because I love going back to the absolute traditional work that I do, it's an evening of pure classical where I get to go back to pure Kathak. I'm actually working on the piece right now, it's a very technical piece which kind of uses absolute true nuances of Indian classical dance and Kathak and going into how you see pieces that are about story, this is more about an emotion that hasn't really got a name, you just kind of work with the technical aspects and the rhythmic footwork. I'm working to a fourteen beat time cycle which is strange because everyone is used to working in fours and eights, so playing with rhythm in very different ways and I'm really excited about that. A lot of my friends are part of that evening.

[Fiona] I was gonna say, there are so many different people part of that evening, so many amazing different talented people

[Kesha] They're amazing, honestly, they're beautiful dancers all representing various forms of classical dance and there's also live music I think going on as well that day by a colleague of mine and just really really rich work that's kind of going on with people in their mid-careers I would say.

[Fiona] Yeah and sort of from the time that you start the festival you kind of go back in time from the contemporary to the really classical, you've got a lot to get in.

[Kesha] Yeah I can't breathe just talking about it right now actually, it's exciting, it's exciting, I just hope that I can do the week justice and switch on and off as and how I need to. The Kathak one is probably, not putting it into a different space, it's just it is a very different one because usually I do a lot of narrative based Kathak pieces. There's various ways to perform Kathak and various musical repertoires that you can use and this one doesn't have any words, so it really is just me in the space owning it with that rhythm and having that command over that rhythm because you should be able to be as strong as the music. It's not about the music being stronger than you, so that one takes you into a completely different kind of challenge.

[Fiona] Yeah, and it's not just Inside Out that you're part of here at Curve. We've seen you a lot of different times here, you're involved in a lot.

[Kesha] Oh gosh yeah, the theatre's probably fed up of me *laughs*. Myself and a few of my friends here are part of the Curve Creative Leadership Programme which has been going on since end of 2016. We're actually closing it this year – we're the first cohort to take part in it – and it's been a beautiful journey with that as well because that's got us involved in more things with the theatre and challenged us to make more assertive decisions in our career as future leaders of the creative arts around the city and the country because we all have these big dreams but

sometimes how to channel them has been difficult but with the means of things like the Curve Leadership especially in the first year where we were like thrown in lots of discussions and seminars with various people – the cream of the crop if I could say – and talking to them and experiencing things with our placements and secondments and having our mentors has really helped us to kind of navigate our way through what it is that we want to do. Of course that's always going to change because we're artists, but having a better clearer idea of what we can contribute has been really good.

[Fiona] And you're local to Leicester

[Kesha] Yeah I'm Leicester born and bred!

[Fiona] And what has Curve meant to you since it's opened up?

[Kesha] I was super excited when Curve opened up, I just saw it as a place of opportunity – that's a really typical thing to say but it was the truth, you know, this big building was being constructed over such a long period of time and I was like wow, I wonder what we will be able to do here. It was always a curiosity and that curiosity is really being fed, especially over the last four or five years! I'm really really grateful for it because it's opened its doors up to dancers like myself and other creators that I know from the city and the local area. I know we have these really big musicals here that go on but it's nice that we can also step into this place and say that we have something to do here, not just kind of just watch the shows but also be a part of all the outreach work that goes on and have our space here so honestly it's been great!

[Fiona] Amazing, thank you so much for coming in

[Kesha] That's okay, thank you for having me

[Fiona] Thank you Kesha

[Kesha] Thank you

[Fiona] Hello Jack Britton

[Jack Britton] Hello!

[Fiona] Thank you very much for popping in

[Jack] That's alright

[Fiona] So you are here with Mighty

[Jack] Yeah

[Fiona] What is Mighty, what are you doing and what's it all about?

[Jack] I've started describing this show as like a weird TED talk *laughs*

[Fiona] Okay, that sounds good

[Jack] It's like a weird TED talk with a loop peddle, some songs, some music, some rapping and spoken word-y type bits. I mean you look at me and you don't think rapper. There's a lot of beatboxing in it, which is quite fun. So yeah basically it is a weird TED talk about kind of opening up the discussion of whether or not we should take heightism more seriously. It uses a mixture of statistics and research and comedy and music to explore that question basically and different examples that you can see it across the world and what effect it has and how it manifests in different ways.

[Fiona] So yeah, initially it's from what we've seen from it in the brochure it's a bit of a comic piece but it has a real serious side to it and a real serious conversation to start as well. A perfect example, yesterday I was rehearsing and they'd warned me

they're doing a tour so there'll be a bunch of like Loughborough University students coming in. They all came in, I was in the middle of a run and because I'm quite self-conscious that I had to carry on as if they're not here but it's very hard to carry on but they came in at quite an interesting point because there's a bit in the show where I have all these bits of card with tweets, like real tweets from real people, about short men. A lot of them are just things like 'death to all short men', there's about like twenty in a row that are like just that and basically I was at a point in the show where they get lobbed all over the stage and all over the floor, and they said 'what's the show that you're working on' and I was like 'oh it's whether or not we should take heightism more seriously' and every time I say that it does generally get a laugh weirdly which is kind of like 'oh haha that's a bit silly' but then I was like well do you want to have a look about some mean tweets about short people and they were all looking at me like oh my god, there's some really horrible short people trolls out there that like 'death to all short men', 'LMAO I hate short men', 'don't try to talk to me if your height is under five foot', there's all sorts of things like that. But yeah it's just kind of showing different examples of how it's weirdly manifested.

[Fiona] Almost I think it's sort of flippant comments but then they really do matter

[Jack] Yeah

[Fiona] And then they make such a difference and a lot of it is looking at male mental health as well.

[Jack] Yeah there's a male mental health angle to the show definitely which kinds of bubbles under the surface a bit throughout and then kind of comes to a bit more of a fruition towards the end and I guess it kind of deals with a lot of ideas with masculinity and what our perceived idea of height is as a man like it's almost an agreed thing that you should be tall. It started from writing a piece of spoken word because my girlfriend at the time was a little bit taller than me and she would get really annoyed at people pointing that out. So from that I kind of wrote a bit of spoken word about how since I was like little (pun intended) I've always had flack for being shorter. So anyway I wrote this bit of spoken word about it and then I did like a ten minute version of it at a thing called 10 Minute Tales at Story City a few years ago, that was like a summer performance theatre festival that Leicester did a while back and then from there I've kind of scratched it here and there on various platforms and then got funding to make it a full show and yeah, now I'm here basically!

instrumental music playing

[Fiona] You've just listened to some music from 'Phrases', a new piece by Curve Breakthrough Artist Lewys Holt and now here he is to tell us more about it. Hello Lewys Holt.

[Lewys] Hello!

[Fiona] Hello, thank you for joining me in this Inside Out spectacular podcast.

[Lewys] It is my pleasure

[Fiona] I've just caught you in rehearsals actually, you're here at Curve at the moment working on 'Phrases' and 'Footnotes' as part of Inside Out Festival. What exactly is Phrases and Footnotes?

[Lewys] Oh my word, what exactly is Phrases and Footnotes. That's a timeless question and that's been bugging me for I think about two years!

[Fiona] Okay

[Lewys] What am I doing?

[Fiona] Right

[Lewys] Why am I doing it? Who's it for? Who will watch it?

[Fiona] All very important questions I think in this process

[Lewys] Yeah, exactly, yeah! And also why to get up in the morning? That's a big one I find

[Fiona] Yeah, you do need that. Maybe if we break it down, they're quite different halves I think, the Phrases and the Footnotes. So Phrases, how do you bring that to life and what is that going to look like when people see it?

[Lewys] So Phrases is, well they're both dance theatre performances I've landed on that and I'll commit to that. Dance theatre performances, because I'm a dancer and I also like to do kind of talking, scripting stuff and talking to the audience, stand-up comedy, things like this, that's what I do. So Phrases is a show which is quite, this is the harder one to pin down. It's some improvised dancing

[Fiona] Okay

[Lewys] Pairing that with some stream of consciousness writing that I've done, so kind of improvised writing, and also kind of a deconstruction of the catchphrase 'an apple a day keeps the doctor away'

[Fiona] Okay

[Lewys] So kind of taking that to its logical conclusion – what happens if I don't eat an apple a day, is the doctor going to come after me or something or what's going to happen, kind of just taking it way too seriously and deconstructing it in that way.

[Fiona] So it seems like an exploration of language and miscommunication and communication.

[Lewys] That's bang on!

[Fiona] Yeah

[Lewys] Wow. Could you write my copy for me? *laughs*

[Fiona] Of course! *laughs*

[Lewys] We'll work this deal out later!

[Fiona] Yes, we'll do that at a later point. So that's Phrases

[Lewys] That's Phrases

[Fiona] So that's part one, and then you go to Footnotes

[Lewys] Ooh well so I think I'm going to do Footnotes first.

[Fiona] Okay

[Lewys] Because I think Footnotes is a bit easier to get on board with. So I think it's good to go in through the door with Footnotes. Have I've called it Phrases and Footnotes then?

[Fiona] Yes

[Lewys] Ohh god

[Fiona] Well that's fine since we're exploring miscommunication then that seems the perfect play.

[Lewys] Seems appropriate doesn't it!

[Fiona] It does a bit!

[Lewys] Give me the other thing first, just swap it round. Footnotes is a lot easier to describe. Footnotes is a parody of an academic lecture. So it is a very verbose, quite

highbrow lecture about, well it's unspecific what it's about, but this character is delivering it in a very kind of highbrow way, very over the top and then the script that he's reading from has footnotes attached to different words in the script and the footnotes they trigger a kind of a shift into a very different performance space where suddenly he's dancing, suddenly he's doing something a bit weird, what's he doing?, oh my god he's shouting at someone but that person isn't in the room, oh the lights have changed what's going on, music's come on, he's flirting with someone. So yeah, then back to the main text dry reading.

[Fiona] Ooh I was going to say, how do you convey a footnote in performance?

[Lewys] Exactly, exactly, that was my question. Like how to bring that idea from a book or a page or a lecture into a live performance space and treat it a bit differently.

[Fiona] What made you want to look at footnotes? Because they're a funny thing, when you read a book you either are really into it and want to know everything and what does that footnote mean because I really want to know exactly what that means, or you think oh it's fine I don't need to really know about that word it's alright. Why did you want to bring that into a performance piece?

[Lewys] So I spent about four years trying to finish this book called Infinite Jest by an author called David Foster Wallace, my brother gave it to me for my birthday in 2013 and it took me ages. It's about a thousand pages long, very very small text but there's about, well there's certainly a large number, maybe about 200 footnotes in it.

[Fiona] Okay

[Lewys] The footnotes, they're not footnotes, they're notes so they're kind of at the back of the book so it's really...

[Fiona] ...oh so it's not even easy, you have to really go for it

[Lewys] Yeah

[Fiona] That's almost a book on top of a book then!

[Lewys] Exactly! Yeah and some of these notes go on for about five pages so you kind of depart from where you were in the main book, go into this rabbit hole in the back of the book for ages, forget where you were, and then you kind of turn back to where you were in the main text and you're like oh god yeah. So I kind of wanted to bring that idea of like delving deep into a tangent or something almost unrelated to what you were experiencing before and then kind of just snapping back, to back to what you were getting on with in a way.

[Fiona] Well thank you very much, that's brilliant

[Lewys] Absolute pleasure

[Fiona] Very nice to speak to you, thanks for joining me

[Lewys] Yes, cool, see you later

[Fiona] Thank you

***choral music playing* [Chorus lyrics]** Votes for Women, Votes for Women, Votes for Women, Votes for Women, Votes for Women, Votes for Women, Votes for Women, Votes for Women, Votes for Women, Votes for Women

[Fiona] It's Elaine Pantling, who's bringing back her sell-out performance of Alice...in her Shoes to Curve for the Festival.

[Elaine Pantling] Well Alice...in her Shoes is all about the suffragette Alice Hawkins which as many people know, or you might not know, she was a Leicester suffragette,

she was a working-class women in her forties, she had six children and she was pretty amazing actually! It sort of tells her story and sort of reveals this strength of character that have sort of helped us women have a voice today, so that's what it's about.

[Fiona] Quite nice as well, she was from Leicester

[Elaine] Yeah she was, yeah, so she was from the Mantle Road area which is sort of Narborough Road, around that area

[Fiona] What really struck me just looking at Alice's life was that she set up with the Pankhursts, she set up the women's social and political union in Leicester in 1907 and then it wasn't until 1918 that women got the vote. So that was eleven years of struggling towards something

[Elaine] Well interestingly enough, what happened was she became a suffragette in 1907 and she would have been in her forties, and then she's got six children, all grown up children as well, so from 1907 to 1914 that's when they really fought for it because then the First World War started so they were all asked to stop their militant action and help the war effort instead. So lots of women put down their toffee hammers and stopped doing their marches and protests and helped the war effort. Bu yeah, so 1918, which the war had not ended because it was February 1918 and the war didn't end until November, I think I'm right, I'm no historian, but I think that that's it.

[Fiona] And then the actual play itself, Alice...in her Shoes, you are Alice or speaking as Alice and you have the choirs around you. How does the choir fit into that?

[Elaine] Well the choir, they respond to what Alice said during the piece so they're like a sort of Greek chorus as it were, but not quite because they're singing. It just adds a bit more depth to the story and they help to bring certain scenes alive where Alice is doing one of her speeches and of course they sing the protest songs which are just so fantastic. The choir are just brilliant, I've loved working with them

[Fiona] and they're all local women from local choirs

[Elaine] Yeah all local women and men, so there are you know men were suffragettes as well, because Alice's husband Alfred she would not have been able to do any of the stuff that she did without Alfred's support. So you've got the Red Leicester Choir, it's not the whole of Red Leicester Choir it's just some of them, and then there's the DMU Square Mile Choir and also the Fosse Singers. I went to different choirs as Alice and gave speeches trying to encourage them to join the show. It's been an amazing journey and so people have sort of got hold of it and said yeah we want it be part of it. I've worked with Jane Bursnall, she actually leads Red Leicester and DMU Square Mile so she's an assistant MD and then Janet Wood she's the musical director and she's written some original songs as well within the show, plus arranged the music for the other songs as well.

[Fiona] Last year when you were here for Inside Out Festival in 2017 you marched through the city of Leicester, there were roads closed, a big event. It's not quite the same this year.

[Elaine] It was a big event, and of course it sold out last year very quickly so that's why they've put it on for two nights this time. No we're not marching through the

streets this time but we will be marching through the streets next year in 2019 so you'll just have to look out for that.

[Fiona] So you're here on the 25th and 26th, that's Thursday and Friday, of October

[Elaine] Yeah that's right

[Fiona] So towards the end of the Festival and I think it's going to be incredibly popular because last year as you said, it did sell out, there were people asking for tickets. It's a really interesting story as well about the history of Leicester and a woman who not maybe everyone knows about. There's certainly a lot more about her now, but she's still a figure that could do with being shouted about more.

[Elaine] Absolutely! Absolutely, I think that if you've not seen it then you really ought to get down and see it because her story is absolutely fascinating. You know, this little woman with a big voice and somebody that we should be very very proud of in Leicester. I think that one of the things we don't do enough of here in this city is celebrating the greatness that we've got around us, not only then but now. You know if we look around our city at the moment, the new work that's been made, it's just fantastic and I think the Inside Out Festival really does go a long way to show that so it's important that we do celebrate all that we've got. People go on about the diversity of the city and it is, it's rich and wonderful and I think we do need to fly the flag for Leicester more.

[Fiona] Yeah

[Elaine] I think Curve does that very well. I'm very pleased that we've got Alice coming back here, really really pleased.

[Fiona] Brilliant, well I can't wait to see it, and thank you very much for coming in today and talking to me

[Elaine] It's a pleasure

[Fiona] So there you go, a whistle-stop tour of just a fraction of Curve's Inside Out Festival 2018, our celebration of new work from the most exciting artists in our region. To find out more about the full line-up, ticket bundles and the free events that also form part of the Festival, head to our website www.curveonline.co.uk. Thanks for listening. Until next time!