

THE ARTIFACT
THE PAST IS A FOREIGN COUNTRY
DOUBLE BILL



AVAILABLE FOR TOURING IN 2018 AND 2019

SOMEWHERE NORTH OF HERE



ABOUT THE SHOW

There's an unprecedented pride in being from the North. It often presents itself as someone knowing the history of their area, ferociously supporting the culture of that place. But sometimes that pride becomes dangerous. Where is the line?

In the early hours of the 24th June 2016, the world changed. With the result of the UK's EU referendum, many people began to reconsider their feelings towards where they are from. Online and in person, people are engaging in discussions that take note of how it feels like we've been here before. *Somewhere North of Here* looks at the cycles of political human behaviour throughout history, how a Northerner once ran North and is now noticing others running behind her.

It tracks a history that keeps repeating itself, a warning that the human race never quite seems to learn. It takes a look at the strangely familiar lies governments told us hundreds of years ago, and in the midst of all these discoveries, *Somewhere North of Here* asks just one question: why, when the world around us takes a dramatic turn, do we always run North?

View the trailer here.

"I was blown away by Gemma's proposal on how to create a new commissioned work on the themes of 5 SOLDIERS...*The Recovery Position* was a moving and articulate work that explored themes of injury, pain, loneliness and then working together and empathy."

THE CREATIVE TEAM

Choreographer and Performer: Gemma Connell
Props: Josh Cavanagh
Lighting Designer: TBC

AVAILABLE FOR TOURING

The Past is a Foreign Country double bill is available for touring throughout 2018 and 2019.

Running times:

Somewhere North of Here - 40 minutes
Lies My Parents Told Me – 25 minutes

CONTACTS

For all tour booking enquiries, please contact:

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Rosie Kay, Rosie Kay Dance Company

LIES MY PARENTS TOLD ME



Photo by Ian Abbott

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

The current state of global affairs make today an opportune time to consider that the world is not what we thought it was when we were young. In our former years, many of us were filled with hope that now feels like it's running out. One of the issues with our view of the world not being as it should be, lies in the stories that our parents told us; the advice that they gave. Some of these words now ring sourly false. Which of those stories were lies, and which of them were intended to protect us?

Lies My Parents Told Me will investigate the generation gaps that grow wider every day; how the words our parents used to keep us safe are actually no longer relevant in today's world.

As human beings, we tell stories to each other; stories that our parents once told us. Whether it's a carefully crafted lie to make a four-year-old eat her vegetables, or a terrifying story spun to keep you out of a questionable neighbourhood, this piece looks at how those stories now become politics and how they shaped our beliefs as young people. What's our relationship with the stories that our parents tell now? Do we believe them anymore?

Inspired by Gemma's own process of trying to understand the way her parents voted in the UK's EU referendum, *Lies My Parents Told Me* discusses the issues raised in *Somewhere North of Here* at a more personal level. Formed solely of spoken word and movement performed live by Gemma, the process of creating this work challenged the boundaries of Gemma's remixing practice. Gemma's words have been edited and remixed by other artists in different fields to create the narrative seen in the final performance.

"It was truly captivating."

Audience Member, work-in-progress sharing of *Somewhere North of Here*



"THE REMIX" PROGRAMME

"The Remix" is a dance education programme that runs alongside *The Past is a Foreign Country*. Adaptable for dance students, community groups and those with additional support needs, Gemma gives participants the opportunity to create their own "remixed" version of either performance.

Through a series of word-based tasks, participants develop their own spoken word on the themes explored in the work, and they then learn techniques for how to perform it. Through improvisatory activities, students then develop their own choreography, with Gemma's guidance.

Workshops last 1 full day. Further information is available from the company.

THE EXHIBITION

An additional exhibition can accompany this double bill of performances. The production and set up of these art works have been inspired by Gemma's practice in *The Remix*. Through this practice, Gemma engages in re-workings of existing works, objects and text to create new pieces. *The Past is a Foreign Country* exhibition brings Gemma's hip hop research and the performances of *Somewhere North of Here* and *Lies My Parents Told Me* together through a collection of broken, graffitied bookcases, publications, a live bibliography and an invitation for the audience to remix some of the words rejected from the performances. This exhibition is made on site and is unique to each venue.



Photo by Ian Abbott



Photo by Ian Abbott

ABOUT THE PROCESS

In 2011, The Artifact's Artistic Director, Gemma Connell, began experimenting with dance and spoken word. With support from Contact Theatre and the Manchester Literature Festival, *Flow!* was born – an event where dancers and spoken word artists who have never met are challenged to perform spontaneous duets live on stage. Gemma would throw tasks at her team of artists for an hour, asking speech to respond to movement, and movement to respond to speech.

Since then, *Flow!* has grown into an umbrella of research and has informed Gemma's choreographic practice. In 2015, she began to work with recorded conversations and other iterations of words that are spoken – initially improvising to the audio, before pulling out choreography from that improvisation. Her choreography always links back to her first instinctual movement response.

With *Somewhere North of Here* and *Lies My Parents Told Me*, Gemma has taken this a step further, endeavouring to create dance theatre through a series of improvisatory experiments, including blindfolded improvisations that remove any visual stimuli in the studio, allowing for full concentration on the words.

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Capacity: 60 (chairs should be provided). Both performances are solos. There is a 15-minute change over period between the performances, during which the audience will need to leave the space. *Somewhere North of Here* is performed to a particular configuration of seats, based on the idea of the compass. You can view this [here](#). *Lies My Parents Told Me* is performed in the round. Get-in will take place on the day, and technical plans will be sent to each venue in advance of the show. The performance is designed for black box theatre spaces, museums and galleries, but can be adapted for most indoor spaces.

THE ARTIFACT HAS TOURED TO:

Contact Theatre, Manchester
24:7 Theatre Festival, Manchester
Pavilion Dance South West, Bournemouth
Lollibop Festival, London
Edinburgh Fringe Festival
Sweet Venues, Dundee
The Drouthy Cobbler, Elgin
Seventeen, Aberdeen
Hannah Maclure Centre, Dundee
Chapel FM, Leeds

“That was intense. I hovered between a happy place and a great anxiety”

Claire Brennan, Hannah Maclure Centre



Photo by Naoko Mabon

ABOUT THE ARTIFACT

The Artifact creates dance in reply to other art forms.

Choreographic Work

The Artifact creates choreographic work that aims to tell stories that have been untold or mis-told throughout history. The movement responds to conversations with communities. The work begins as an improvisation that is then re-ordered and related back to the rhythm of the speaker. For example; *Torry 24* in Autumn 2015 saw our movement response to conversations with residents of Torry, representing our experiences as artists navigating their way through a new place, in two 24 hour pieces of dance and spoken word. We blend commercial hip hop techniques with contemporary dance, synthesising their similarities and evolving their divergence to create a hybrid form. [Click here to watch our choreographic work.](#)

Events

The Artifact produces unique and challenging performance events that combine dance with other art forms. Our events bring the audience into the experiment, testing dance's reply to spoken word and live coding. *Flow!* sees dancers and spoken word artists who have never met come together to collaborate for one night only.



Photo by Ian Abbott

The artists are asked to perform spontaneous duets with each other; movement responding to speech and speech responding to movement. *Motion Capture* takes this a step further; instead of spoken word, this event brings live music coding into a collaboration that was previously undertaken by human beings. [Click here to watch our events.](#)

Education

We deliver innovative workshops across the UK, working with young people, performance students and older people. Our workshops take The Artifact's concept of dance and "the other" and teaches techniques for responding to other art forms through dance. Through these techniques, which have been born through our events and choreographic work, we use the tools of improvisation to introduce a new way of thinking, moving and doing. The Artifact's workshops are an outlet for expression and are accessible to all. We have delivered workshops at Scotland's National Festival of Youth Theatre and at The Space (Scottish School of Contemporary Dance) in Dundee.

"Something so unique, that you are left feeling as if you have witnessed something truly magical."

Audience Member, *Flow!*



Photo by Sarah Darling

ABOUT OUR ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Gemma is a Choreographer, Dancer, and Creative Producer, who has worked across the UK for the past 8 years. She enthuses all kinds of people to get excited about, participate in and invest in the arts, and believes in developing the artistic workforce with the ideas of the next generation.

She graduated from The University of Warwick with a BA in English Literature, and launched herself into a career in the performing arts. Whilst at university, she trained in a variety of hip hop styles under the guidance of one of Kanye West's former dancers. As an independent dance artist, she has supported internationally renowned rappers Kano and Wiley. Her artistic practice has evolved to form a blend of commercial hip hop and contemporary dance, with a penchant for collaborations with spoken word artists.

Gemma has worked with hip hop theatre godfather Jonzi D, and has been mentored by both Gwen Van Spijk and Vocab Dance's Alesandra Seutin. In 2014, she served as Shadow Movement Director on the rehearsals of John Berkavitch's *SHAME* which toured across the South West of England.

“An incredible artist.”

Giulia Montalbano, Co-Artistic Director of Fuora Dance Project, and collaborator with The Artifact



Gemma has also performed with Community Arts North West, Exodus, Global Grooves and Cheshire Dance. Her time with Contact Theatre extends to performing to audiences in New York, via telepresence. From 2010-2014, Gemma lead experimental Dance and Spoken Word ensemble, Broken Rose, to great acclaim, working with Breakin' Convention and touring across the UK. Broken Rose's first show, spoken word and dance open stage event *Flow!* debuted at Contact Theatre in Manchester in October 2011. Broken Rose's first children's show, *Spooked*, debuted with a 6 show run at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in London in August 2013, as part of the Lollibop Festival.

Gemma has guest lectured at Bournemouth and Poole College of Higher and Further Education and The University of Winchester, specialising in Dance for young people with additional support needs and Community Dance Facilitation. Recently, she curated an Independent Dance Artists' Day at The Space (The Scottish School of Contemporary Dance) at which she taught classes in Commercial Hip Hop, dance and spoken word, and describing your own practice.