Monday 30 November, 7.30pm Tuesday 1 December, 2pm & 7.30pm Wednesday 2 December, 7.30pm

Pod

Created and directed by Jamie Bradley and Vicki Igbokwe, devised with the Company

O SCHOOL

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Okunola, Sonny Pilgrem, Alyth Ross), Samuel Black (Dan
Wolff), Harry Livingstone (Nia Towle), Wolf Marloh
(Zachary Nachbar-Seckel), Clare Park (Grace Cooper
Milton), Phil Sharp (Kitty Hawthorne, Sam Thorpe-Spinks),
Michael Shelford (Levi Brown, Sheyi Cole, Aoife Gaston,
Brandon Grace, Conor McLeod, Hassan Najib, Millie Smith,
Tara Tijani, Dolly LeVack), David Stone (Justice Ritchie),
Faye Thomas (Caitlin Ffion Griffiths, Genevieve Lewis)

Pod

Created and directed by

Jamie Bradley and Vicki Igbokwe,
devised with the Company

Jamie Bradley co-director Vicki Igbokwe co-director Jess Curtis designer Matt Daw lighting designer Kweku Aacht composer Sam Levy sound designer

Monday 30 November, Tuesday 1, Wednesday 2, December 2020

Live performances broadcast from Silk Street Theatre

Recording of this performance by any means whatsoever is strictly prohibited.

This production contains strobe lighting, strong language and references to drug use.

Pod

The Idea

A Zoom chat about *Pod* between co-creators **Jamie Bradley** and **Vicki Igbokwe** in October 2020.

- **JB:** How would you describe this show we're about to make?
- VI: Well. Yesterday I was speaking to my neighbour and I tried out how I'd sum it up. I explained; we're taking the world of club culture, house music and the love of dance and putting it together with the world of wild orcas.

And that was greeted by a bit of silence as she thought about it, but then she started to share some orca facts from David Attenborough programmes she'd seen and we got on to their naturally occurring parties, the way their pods move in the water, the family structures etc. and she said she was starting to get excited by the idea.

It was a nice moment to have to share our concept with someone who had absolutely no knowledge of the show and who went from "What? How does that work?" through to; "When is it? I'm intrigued."

- JB: Yeah, it's definitely a tough one to describe, particularly when we haven't even made it! I feel I can talk about it with a natural flow in terms of the club world, then there's this weird gear change when the orcas come up.
 - I think what's interesting is how we will solve and embrace that jolt on the show; as it feels to me that the magic of

- working on projects like these is working out how to place two jarring elements together and what happens when they start to bleed into one another.
- VI: Yes and the magic is really also what the actors and the team bring to that mix. Any show takes a lot of faith and trust that we'll make something together in the time, but this particular moment makes those pressures even more heightened! I guess we've just got to lean into our creativity and practice some active surrender that something beautiful can emerge...
- **JB:** How does it feel to be doing a show about dancing in this crazy moment of 2020?
- VI: The club world we're looking at is that of house music (which obviously has many forms and communities) but also specifically a scene where dancing is really the thing. A place where that is medicine for people; food for the soul. Where people can really be who they want to be. This time clarifies how important those moments are.

I mean, just to clarify, I'm really not that much of a club-head anymore; I miss the clubs where people went to actually DANCE, all the great ones for me have closed down, so my living room is my club; unless it's a special night out for a friend's birthday. But! When the option of clubbing is taken away from you, it leaves a void. Now we have to be inventive to try and find that energy in our lives within restrictions, and that's powerful. Not getting that feeling of

- going to a club to dance, to release, to truly be themselves is actually a really big thing for certain people. Especially if it's how you recalibrate as a person.
- **JB:** So what aspects of your own clubbing experience do you think you'll bring to the show?
- **VI:** I think these spaces are where people can really find their voice. For me there was a crazy night in NYC...
- **JB:** That I definitely want to feature in the show!
- VI: Well, maybe! But that club moment was so powerful, so special it was like my rebirth; literally baptised on the dancefloor! It basically broke me all the way down and built me all the way up. It was so powerful.

It's mad what the ingredients of music, dance and a sense of belonging and being empowered can bring out.

It was also to do with a sense of being invited, and being welcomed with all that I had. There were no criteria for any of us and that brought the essence. The rebirth of SHE happened in that moment! So I suppose, on an energy frequency level, that's what I hope I'd somehow bring to the show! What about you?

JB: Well, we've talked quite a lot about how our personal club experiences have been really different - yours was really about

dancing whereas mine was really about asserting my sexuality and experiencing hedonism!

The strange thing is that lots of my experiences feel historical today as the world has changed so massively (clubbing pre-internet was different!) but in another way lots of important intrinsic things are exactly the same. Clubbing is fundamentally about youth and often a specific time of abandon in your life, something we often crave to re-live or experience again on a deeper level. I'd love to try to capture that specific energy that I felt, and also incorporate the actors' updated versions of the feeling of club community. The origins and spirit of house music began with gay Black men, so it also feels important to me to honour that heritage in the show.

- **VI:** How do you want the audience to feel at the end of the show?
- JB: Hard question! I think I really want them to want to dance. My funtusy is that everyone will long to experience the sweat and beauty and joy and disgustingness of the dancefloor from what they've just witnessed. And I suppose I also want to highlight the complexity of these club spaces and what they offer to communities and that the loss of them is something to seriously consider. This moment when we're robbed of them hopefully allows us to look at them differently.

Pod

The Design Process

Jess Curtis ('Pod' Designer) on the design process and the physical setting of the show.

The world we have made for *Pod* is based on old abandoned swimming pools – the kind of building that might be taken over for an impromptu club night – the need to come together and dance forcing its way into a derelict room with the windows boarded up. Swimming pools have lots of useful characteristics – large rectangular areas to act as a dance floor, diving blocks to act as podiums and catwalks, and for our story, a way of connecting us with water, the natural element for the orca.



The surfaces in these rooms are very beautiful – crumbling tiling, stained concrete, chrome. They take light well and reflect sound.





Working on *Pod* has been an inspiring challenge on a number of levels. Firstly, we need to create a space that could hold a story about family, sound, movement and intimacy – that was still to be created by our ensemble. Second, that space needed to respond the changing context of GOVID: our cast and crew need to work in a space that is safe and allows for distancing, is a construction challenge worthy of the talent in all departments, but, crucially, is not impossible to achieve in socially distant workshops by smaller teams.

We also needed to creatively explore the commission to produce a live performance/film hybrid that stimulates the cast as well entertaining and moving our remote audience. These things are hard to keep a handle on, but we have seen in all our colleagues the ingenuity and good humour that typifies the making of theatre.

As I write I don't know where we will be and quite how we will be telling our story in a few weeks' time, but I know it is a beautiful story, and that the people telling it are passionate and committed, so it will be all right.

Programme Notes Edited by Andy McNamee

A conversation with Kweku Aacht **Composer on Pod**

By Andy McNamee

On 23 October I met Kweku Aacht via Zoom, me at home in the UK, him at home in Ghana. The conversation was supposed to focus on house music but it far outstripped that narrow remit and instead focussed on Kweku as an artist and his role in the Pod creative process, getting to know the history of a musician who has taken influences and inspiration from all over via a life that has crossed cities and continents. We even had time to swap notes on the metal music I grew up listening to which, of course, Kweku is also well versed in.

To start at the beginning, as Kweku explains, Kweku inhabited: music, dance, fashion, there is a long history for him with Vicki Igbokwe and Jamie Bradley, the co-creators/ directors of Pod. His association with Vicki has spanned 14 years, the last seven creating work together, pushing the boundaries of dance, music and theatre. Jamie meanwhile, unbeknownst to Kweku when Pod was first raised as a potential project for him, had been on the scene at the same parties as him in Hoxton in the late 90s and they still have friends in common from that time. The roots for this transcontinental collaboration on Pod were established more than 20 years ago, just around the corner from Guildhall at the bars, parties, hang outs and lock-ins of the East London art scene.

Kweku has such a varied, rich experience of life that to hear him talk about it, (born in Liverpool, raised in Kent, made a home in East London, now based in Ghana) is a pleasure. The reference points are varied and thrilling: from starting with underground raves, on to festivals and outdoor raves all around the home counties as a teenager before moving on to the

newly established super clubs of the 90s like Ministry of Sound. His is a life filled with music from the anything-goes-on-theradio as a child through to the energy and force of what house music became in the 90s, sweeping the UK (and the world) as a cultural movement for anyone between the ages of 10 to 30. Kweku notes the almost total universality of house music: 'Through these beats everyone can find a way to move their body.'

The intersectionality of culture was all around in the house music scene that storytelling and more. Living and growing in that world, mini-stories were unfolding all around Kweku (and the club) at all times: from hoodwinking (or sweettalking) door staff to get in when still underage to being employed as a dancer at Ministry and formally being welcomed into this world as a professional. With that said, Kweku keenly notes that the whole creative team bring references from all over (and their own club stories) into the score (and sonic energy) of Pod: house, acid house, disco, Detroit techno, camp house, Afro house to name just a few.

The decadence of it, Kweku says, is part of the music in *Pod*. Combining music from across the spectrum is what is needed to really emphasise the decadence of the club world; he talks with passion about the melody in disco – delicate strings, horns sections and melodic piano placed over an irresistible funk groove - this is the magic of a club night.

'The decadence of it, Kweku says, is part of the music in Pod. **Combining music from across** the spectrum is what is needed to really emphasise the decadence of the club world."

Of course, being based in Ghana, Kweku is also keen to bring together some of the best musicians in Africa to be a part of the score, using west African traditional music as part of the palette for what he is creating for the finale of *Pod* – a funky hybrid of cultures culminating in a glorious Afro-house explosion. Pod, sonically and musically, is about family, culture and community, says Kweku. This is paralleled with the world of the orca pod, a new challenge for him as a sound designer to capture the underscore of the show with sounds inspired by echolocation, the ocean, and the whales themselves.

Finally, in terms of creating a show and collaborating over Zoom - Kweku is far ahead of the curve there. Having worked on multiple shows cross-continentally, the idea of creating a world using only sound doesn't faze him. I have done several shows with Vicki like this before, including a remix of a show. We talked about it and when the invite came about to be involved, we knew we could do it and had to make it happen.'

Company

Justice Ritchie Mother **Umi Myers** New Girl **Dolly LeVack** Facts **Dan Wolff** Mr Science **Zachary Nachbar-Seckel** Doorwhore **Brandon Grace** Pecs **Alyth Ross** Ginger Diva **Lily Hardy** Hope Kenna Gabby **Aoife Gaston** Golden **Noah Marullo** Sunny Conor McLeod Ray Jidé Okunola B-Side Isla Lee Miss Beats

Musicians

Dela Botri Vocals, drums, percussion and attentaben

(wooden flute)

Worlali Konu Vocals, kalimba, percussion and xylophone

Emmanuel Paa Kewsi Owusu Keyboard (Accra Ghana Sessions)

Micheal Mezo Atentaben (wooden flute)

Nikisha Reyes* Vocals

Sam Levy Drums and Keyboard

Ralph PorettGuitarRory HudsonBass guitarAbbie JamesViolin

A listing of CVs for Guildhall School Final Year Actors may be viewed on the School's website: gsmd.ac.uk/finalyearactors

Production Team

Assistant Lighting Designer Eilidh Mackenzie	Production Assistants Georgia Bottone Eve Clayton	Camera Show Caller Chloe Jones
Associate Video Designer and Broadcast Operator	Prop Maker Max Rodriguez-Thorp	ASM & Book Cover Katherine Verberne
Scenic Carpenter Zoe Bridger	Assistant Prop Makers Mary Deakes Chloe Rushbrook	Assistant Stage Managers Kate Buxton Emma Peace Darcey Robinson
Assistant Carpenters Charlotte Cross Robbie Lynch India Mills	Scenic Artist Rose Bailey	Additional Production Star
Costume Supervisor Naomi Wright	Assistant Scenic Artists Dani Diego Allegra Totaro-Wainwright	Ola Animashawun Live Broadcast Director
Wardrobe Manager Lucy Lawless	Head of Sound Sam Ferstenburg	Akhila Krishnan Co-composer and
Costume Assistants Alexandra Rincon Lucy Rodgers	Sound Operator Guy Knox-Holmes	Consultant (traditional African music) Dela Botri
Production Electrician Finlay Anderson	Video Engineer Dan Light	Studio Engineer Emmanuel Paa Kewsi Owust
Chief Electrician Aled Roberts	Camera Operators Georgia Bottone Eve Clayton	Staff Production Manager Sam Bennellick Jones
Lighting Programmers Adi Currie Hayden Gurney	Stage Manager Rose Dayan	Staff Scenic Artists Danielle Barr Ellie Pitt
Production Manager Maisie Roberts	Deputy Stage Manager Ophir Westman	WHAM Supervisor Danielle Johnally

A listing of CVs for Guildhall School Final Year Production Arts students may be viewed on the School's website: gsmd.ac.uk/finalyearPA

^{*}Nikisha Reyes is a student on the BA (Hons) Performance and Creative Enterprise (PACE) programme. For more information about PACE, click **here**.

Final year actors 2020/21



Charlie Beck



Levi Brown



Sheyi Cole



Grace Cooper Milton



Aoife Gaston



Umi Myers



Zachary Nachbar-Seckel



Hassan Najib



Felix Newman



Jidé Okunola



Brandon Grace



Caitlin Ffion Griffiths



Lily Hardy



Kitty Hawthorne



Hope Kenna



Sonny Pilgrem



Justice Ritchie



Alyth Ross



Millie Smith



Sam Thorpe-Spinks



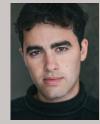
Isla Lee



Dolly LeVack



Genevieve Lewis



Noah Marullo



Conor McLeod



Tara Tijani



Nia Towle



Dan Wolff

Biographies

Jamie Bradley co-director

Jamie Bradley is a director, actor and visual artist.

He studied acting at Guildhall School of Music & Drama and fine art at Chelsea College of Arts.

Recent directing work includes; *Provok'd:* A Restoration and Life Songs (Guildhall School); Crackpot (Folkestone Quarterhouse/Living Words). Other projects include The Country Wife (LAMDA) and Women of Troy and Fen (The Fontainebleau School of Acting). His short film The Full Cup was shown in the official selection of the Mexico Film Festival, 2015.

As an actor he has extensive experience in theatre, television and film and has performed with Complicite, Kneehigh, Transport and Fevered Sleep, as well as several shows at the National Theatre, most recently in Ella Hickson's *ANNA* in 2019.

Vicki lqbokwe co-director

Vicki Igbokwe is a Choreographer, Movement Director, Facilitator and the Founder & Creative Director of Uchenna, a London based touring dance company. Her mission is to *Empower*, *Entertain and Educate* through dance and movement, enabling each person she engages with to *Think Fierce*, *Be Fabulous and Live Free Spirited*.

Her work in theatre as a Movement Director and Choreographer includes: *The Woods* and *A Kind Of People* (Royal Court); *Princess and the Hustler* and *The Gift* (Eclipse Theatre); *Red Dust Road* (National Theatre of Scotland); *Midlife* (Diverse City); *The Seven Ages of Patience* (The Kiln); *The Tale of Little Bevan* (Pentabus); and *Provok'd: A Restoration* (Guildhall School).

As Choreographer for Uchenna, she has created their four touring shows Our Mighty Groove; The Head Wrap Diaries; Hansel and Gretel - A Fearless Dance Adventure and The Head Wrap Diaries - Fierce and Free.

Vicki is a Trustee for *One Dance UK*, the UK Body for Dance and an Associate Consultant at *People Make it Work* who help cultural organisations and leaders to change and develop.

Internationally, she has worked as a Mass Movement Choreographer for Olympic and Paralympic Ceremonies including London 2012, Sochi 2014, Glasgow Commonwealth Games 2014 and the Islamic Solidarity Games in Baku, Azerbaijan 2017.

She graduated from Middlesex University with a BA in Dance Studies and an MA in Cultural Leadership from City University.

Jess Curtis designer

Jess Curtis trained at The Motley Theatre Design Course.

Recent work includes: Provok'd: A Restoration (Guildhall School); Genesis Inc. (Hampstead Theatre); Loosing Venice (The Orange Tree Theatre); Uncle Vanya (Almeida Theatre); Villette and Dangerous Corner (West Yorkshire Playhouse); Kiss Me Quickstep and Haunting Julia (The Queen's Theatre); One for the Road, Glass Cage and Follies (Royal and Derngate, Northampton); The Holy Rosenbergs (National Theatre); Hotel Cerise (Theatre Royal, Stratford East); Another Door Closed (Theatre Royal Bath); *Endgame* (Liverpool Everyman); Dangerous Corner (West Yorkshire Playhouse/West End); Frankenstein (Frantic Assembly/Northampton); Burial At Thebes (Nottingham Playhouse/Barbican/US Tour); Rhapsody and Fantasy (Royal Opera House).

She has also designed the Grovesnor Park Open Air Season 2013–2016, the opening season for Storyhouse and bar interiors for Underbelly Festival, South Bank, Hyde Park and Leicester Square.

Matt Daw lighting designer

Recent theatre credits include: The Wolves In The Walls (Little Angel Theatre); The Last Ship (Toronto and UK/US Tour); The Snow Queen (Royal Danish Opera); Troilus and Cressida (Royal Shakespeare Company); Kuwait Calling, Memoirs of a Sailor and Black and White (National Theatre of Kuwait); St Nicholas (Donmar Warehouse and Goodman Theatre Chicago); *The Rink* (Southwark Playhouse); The Shadow Factory (Nuffield Theatre); In the Night Garden: Live, Bing Live (UK Tour); Rapunzel (Theatre Royal Stratford East); Rules for Living (English Touring Theatre); The Hartlepool Monkey (Gyre and Gimble); City of Glass (HOME Manchester and Lyric Hammersmith); Death takes a Holiday (Charing Cross Theatre): Wasted (West Yorkshire Playhouse); Beacons (Park Theatre) and The Elephantom (National Theatre and West End).

Matt's work in live music includes: The xx (2018 European and US tour); Jamie xx, Damian Rice's My Favourite Faded Fantasy world tour; Sigur Rós's Kveikur and Valtari world tours (with Bruno Poet) and Björk's Biophilia world tour. Work for film includes The French Dispatch directed by Wes Anderson and Pride directed by Matthew Warchus.

Kweku Aacht composer

Kweku Aacht is a British born Ghanaian Performance Artist, Music Producer and Learning & Development Specialist.

For the past 20 years he's been using his passion for music and interdisciplinary performance making to create soundtracks for dance, theatre, short films, audio books and podcasts.

The self-proclaimed bedroom producer's roots lie in early 90s electronic dance music. The homemade sounds that along with Hip Hop, shifted music making deep into the independent space, meaning ground-breaking, far reaching music could be created and distributed without intervention from major corporations.

Pod provides a perfect opportunity for Kweku to go back to his dance music foundations, while weaving a tapestry of his eclectic influences.

From the traditional music of his homeland Ghana to classical, pop, soul, left-field sonic art and cinematic sound design, Kweku is known for his seamless threading of a diverse sonic fabric.

Kweku's passion for facilitating group process creates a unique experience for the teams of creatives he works with. In the COVID era this includes working across continents from his base in Ghana.

In many ways Kweku's journey has prepared him for now. An era in which what's required is fashioning new horizons in uncertain times.

Sam Levy sound designer

Sam is currently in his third year of the BA (Hons) Technical Theatre Arts (Theatre Technology) programme at Guildhall School.

Sound credits include: Production Sound Engineer *Provok'd: A Restoration* (dir. Jamie Bradley & Vicki Igbokwe); Production Sound Engineer *Guildhall Live Events*; Sound Engineer *Opera Makers 2020* (dir. John Ramster); Sound Engineer *Vault Lates* (Vault Festival 2020); Venue Sound Technician *Edinburgh Fringe – Pleasance*; Sound Designer *Rapunzel* (Wyllyotts Theatre).

Other Guildhall credits include: Notch Programmer Opera Double Bill (dir. Olivia Fuchs); Lighting Programmer Antigone (dir. Orla O'Loughlin); Assistant Stage Manager Earthquakes in London (dir. Abigail Graham); Production Assistant Red Velvet (dir. Wyn Jones).

Other Professional credits include: Grandpa's Great Escape (Arena Tour); Snow White (London Palladium); Rugby X (O2 Arena); Cricket World Cup Opening Ceremony 2019; MiSST Concerts (London Palladium, Cadogan Hall); Beautiful Thing (Greenwich + Docklands International Festival). The School would like to thank Guildhall's Audio Visual Department for their technical support on this production.

Guildhall School Scholarships Fund

Each year the Scholarships Fund enables talented young actors, musicians and theatre technicians to take up their places or continue their studies at Guildhall School. We are extremely grateful to many trusts, foundations, businesses, City livery companies and individuals who make annual donations to the Scholarships Fund, and to those people who make provision for legacy donations in support of the School in their wills. Students involved with our 2020/21 theatre productions who have received support from the Scholarships Fund and from external donors are as follows:

Acting

Guildhall Scholars

Sheyi Cole
Caitlin Ffion Griffiths
Lily Hardy*
Hope Kenna
Isla Lee
Dolly LeVack**
Hassan Najib
Jidé Okunola
Alyth Ross
Sam Thorpe-Spinks

The Damian Lewis Finishing Fund Scholar

Justice Ritchie

Tara Tijani

City of London Scholars

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City of London Scholars

Sophie Bramley Dani Diego Reuben Cohen Sam Levy

Leathersellers' Scholar

Kate Stockwell

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