

Gecko



The Sound World of a *little space*



Mind the Gap has been creating world-class theatre from its home in Bradford for over 30 years. The company has an internationally respected methodology and approach to its work and is considered a beacon for learning disability arts and artists; *a little space* is their first physical theatre production.

Founded in 2001, Gecko is an award-winning company, led by Artistic Director Amit Lahav. With an expanding ensemble of international performers and makers, they create work through collaboration, experimentation and play. Gecko shows are visceral, visual treats combining impressive technical design with striking physicality. *a little space* is their second associate production following on from the international success of *The Dreamer* in 2016.

a little space has been designed to engage with audiences on an emotional level. In the show we explore universal human experiences with the ambition that each person's response to the show will be a personal one, linked to their own life's journey, and therefore different from the meaning drawn by each of the audience members around them.

It is set in an apartment block and follows the lives of five people exploring what happens when they connect and disconnect from each other whether through choice or through isolation. Drawing on the performers' own experiences, *a little space* is a powerful piece of physical theatre, which uses physicality, imagery, sound and lighting to tell the story.

The show has been created over two years and each element of the piece plays an important role. In this type of performance style, where spoken language is not the main method of storytelling, music and sound become hugely expressive elements in how we interpret the narrative. The Sound world of *a little space* contains a rich mixture of sourced music pertinent to the world of the production combined with a specially created recorded score.

Gecko has worked with composer Dave Price from their first show 18 years ago and he has developed an intimate relationship with the company and a working method that allows him to create original music that perfectly suits the narrative and emotional tone of each show. Mark Melville, sound design, was integral to the devising process and worked in collaboration with the whole team to develop sonic worlds for each character that could be used as creative narrative tools through the show.

At the start of the show we see a mysterious character play a musical phrase on metal pipes that are part of the set. The idea here is to invite the audience into the world of our story and show them that this will be an unusual, entertaining and magical event. The music of the care-taker character, Alison, is made from metallic percussion instruments including vibraphone, dulcitone, bells and chimes with



flute whistle tones and bowed musical saw giving an eerie and intriguing quality. She acts like the guardian angel of the building and the characters, so elemental contraction sounds - pipes, bricks, metal, electricity follow her through the story.

The pipes connect different rooms in the apartment block and the mysterious voice of one character seems to be singing through them, inside the hidden infrastructure of the walls of the building and looking for a way into the story. When Charlotte appears, there is a scene with

atmospheric vocal music based around recordings of her own voice with choral singing joining as the scene develops. Charlotte's sounds are related to her isolation in her own little world where singing is her only release. The choral element to her music ties in with the idea that the group of individuals on stage represents us all.

Some of the music has a playfulness such as for Paul and Lorraine, which establishes them as a happy couple. This music becomes more turbulent in later scenes as cracks in their relationship appear. But they also have an optimistic theme that emerges as they work through their emotional journeys and find solace in nature together.

They each have a signature instrument; Paul has a trumpet because the iconic theme tune from TV soap opera *Coronation Street* is used to represent his addiction issues. Paul's sound world uses static and a huge collage of TV and film sounds to blur his reality and fantasy worlds. The sound of the trumpet pulls him towards the TV and eventually into it!

Lorraine's instrument is a saxophone. First played conventionally, it reflects her increasing unease using the technique of multi-phonics. This is where several notes are played at once producing a strange, almost animal like vocal quality creating a strange and unsettling atmosphere. Her sounds are related to her angst and how nature helps her overcome it.

JoAnne's music begins with a gentle harp melody describing her desire to move forwards in her life while strings playing soft harmonics show her fragility. Her anxiety is represented by music in a constantly shifting time signature, which never quite manages to settle. As she becomes more disturbed the music gathers momentum and is eventually dominated by overbearing, driving drums.



Later as JoAnne finds resolution her unsettled music finds a way to co-exist with its odd shifting time signatures and a beautiful euphoric flute solo describes her new-found happiness. There is a motif of a practical hand-held light which is used to represent inner-most thoughts and the true essence of the soul. Musically this is explored through harmonic overtone singing and drones.

Mumbles, murmurs and fragments of spoken language are used throughout the show but language is not the main method of storytelling.

Often words are muttered or sentences incomplete. Language becomes an equal layer of the soundscape with the intention of aiding the emotion of a scene rather than defining narrative or meaning.

Added to language is the use of breath, which is another integral element of Gecko shows. Breath offers a way for the performers to connect both to one another and to the choreography and acts as a universal form of communicating emotion – a guttural and instinctual human act. Language and breath both feature as recorded and live.



We hope that you enjoy being immersed in the world of a little space. You can find the cast and some of the creative team after the show to ask any questions. You can also write to us at arts@mind-the-gap.org.uk | info@geckotheatre.com

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