

# one under

by Winsome Pinnock



# One under 2019

## Education Resource

A world-class theatre company that is artistically led by disabled people, pioneering an inclusive new dramatic language that is unparalleled and unprecedented.

**‘Graeae rightly holds iconic status nationally and internationally for the innovation and quality of its work. It plays a vital part in the cultural life of this country.’ Ruth Mackenzie, Director of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad**

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## About the show and synopsis

An evocative play about the power of guilt and the quest for atonement, award-winning playwright Winsome Pinnock (*Rockets and Blue Lights*) and Amit Sharma (*The Solid Life of Sugar Water, Cosmic Scallies*) join forces to explore the fragility of human relationships in this reimagining of *One Under*. The play shifts between the prelude to and the aftermath of the suicide of a 30-year-old black man, Sonny who has thrown himself under a Tube train.

## Character list

Cyrus – train driver, 45 (black)

Sonny – 30 (black/mixed race)

Christine – 40 (white)

Zoe – Sonny's foster sister, late 30s (black/mixed race)

Nella – Zoe and Sonny's adoptive mother, late 60s (white)

In the present day, we follow the train driver Cyrus; impelled by guilt Cyrus desperately tries to atone and befriends Sonny's adoptive mother, Nella, helping her out around the house and garden, much to the suspicions of Sonny's foster sister, Zoe.

Cyrus is compelled to try and discover the reason behind Sonny's tragic death. His search for clues becomes more and more frantic and in the process of searching for answers Cyrus becomes convinced that the young man he has accidentally killed is his biological son, taken for adoption as a child. Cyrus believes Sonny has left behind a hidden message that only he can unravel. Eventually Nella reveals that Sonny is not Cyrus' son - she helped Sonny to trace his parents years ago.

Interspersed with the happenings in the present the audience glimpses a series of flashbacks to Sonny's last day. He invites laundry worker Christine on the strangest date of her life; flashing his cash as he treats Christine to a lavish hotel room and dinner.

Following his date with Christine Sonny pays a late-night visit to Nella and asks her to forgive him. Sonny reveals that he is of the belief that in a drunk driving accident he has killed a little girl who he is convinced is Christine's daughter.

In the final scene of the play Sonny and Cyrus encounter each other outside a tube station in London as Sonny is waiting for the trains to start running.

## Cast

**Cyrus** - Stanley J Browne

**Sonny** - Reece Pantry

**Nella** - Shenagh Govan

**Christine** - Clare-Louise English

**Zoe** - Evlyne Oyedoken

## Creative Team

**Director** – Amit Sharma

**Assistant Director** - Stephen Bailey

**Writer** – Winsome Pinnock

**Designer** – Amelia Jane Hankin

**Lighting Designer** - Tanya Stephenson

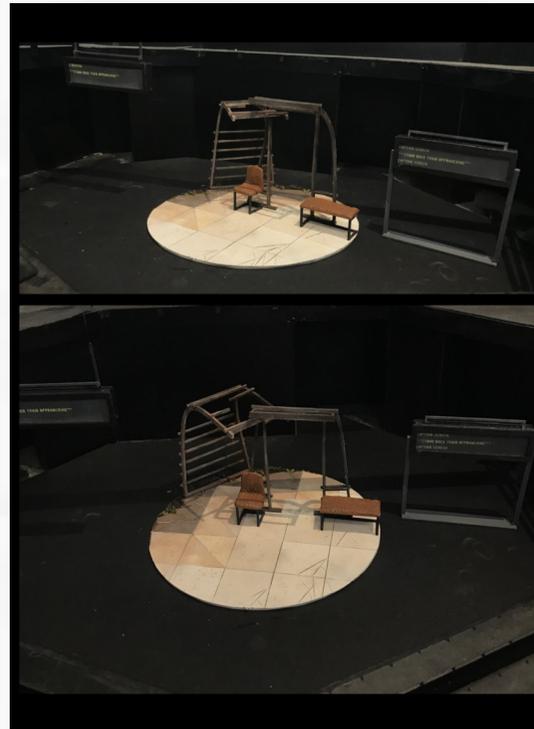
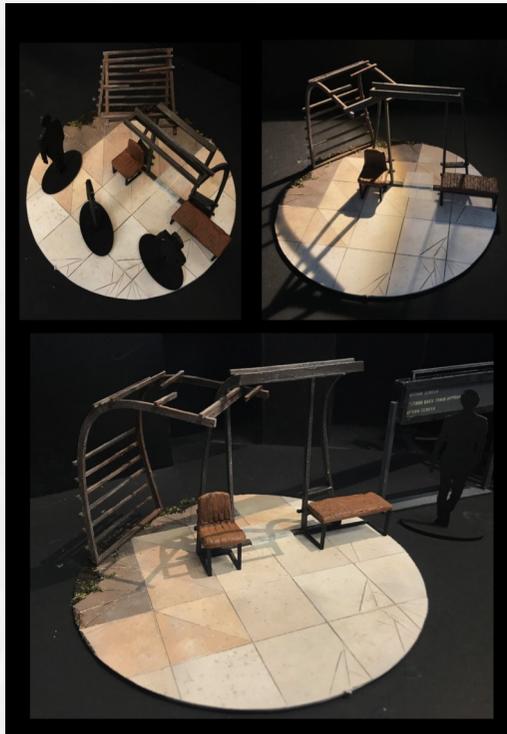
**Sound Designer** - Beth Duke

**Movement Director** - Angela Gasparetto



## The set and design (re-write and run by Amelia)

The designer Amelia Jane Hankin created the design for One Under. Amelia's creative process brought together moodboards of inspiration, which she drew from train stations, underground stations, train tracks as well as announcement boards. Alongside the physical space of inspiration, Amelia found that circles and cycles had an essential place within the design. There was an unmissable connection between the play and design focussing on circles and cycles, and Amelia started exploring themes around; life cycles, circles on the underground and how we go around in circles. This formed a springboard to looking at DNA double helix structures, the twisting and touching forms a nod to relationships between characters and DNA itself. Train tracks were immensely relevant too in terms of shapes of structures and the interlocking nature. The tracks formed inspiration for colour and materials and the floor is inspired by tube tile floors and the markings as you approach a platform edge. Stage right is designed to have a feel of being more broken and disjointed than the left - perhaps nodding to Sonny.



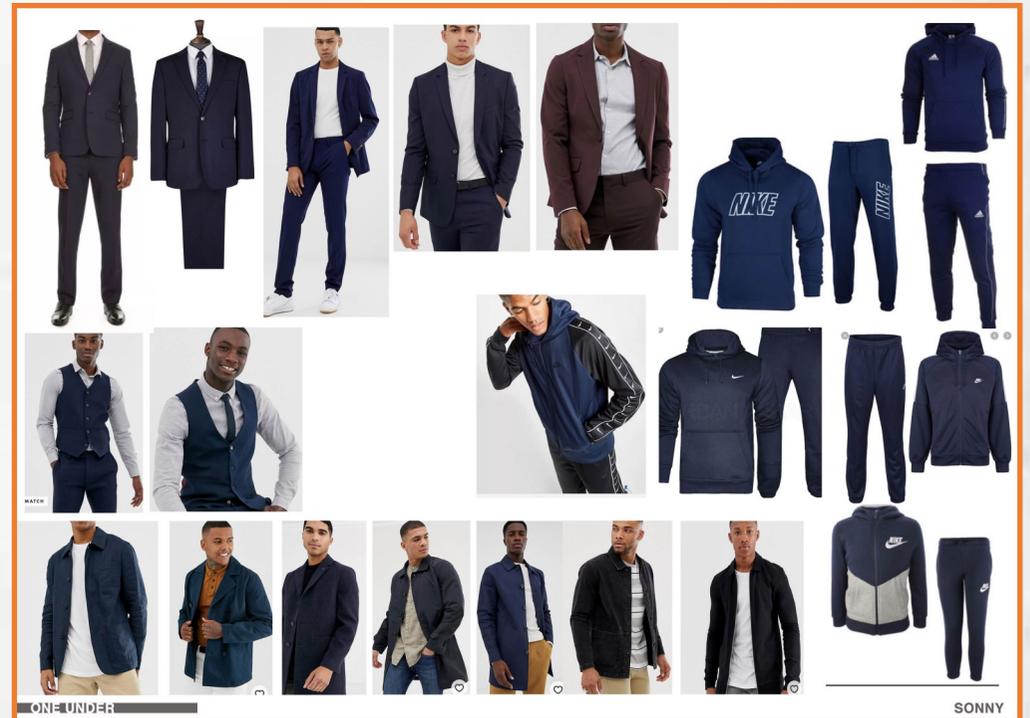


## The Costumes



## Nella

## Sonny



## The Costumes



Zoe

## About the writer



**Winsome Pinnock** is an award winning writer for stage, radio, and television. Her new play *ROCKETS AND BLUE LIGHTS* was the winner of the prestigious Alfred Fagon Award 2018. Most recently a revival of her 1987 play *LEAVE TAKING* played at the Bush Theatre to critical and commercial success. She is also the recipient of the Pearson Plays on Stage Award, the Unity Theatre Trust Award, the George Devine Award, and received a Special Commendation from the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize.

Theatre includes *THE PRINCIPLES OF CARTOGRAPHY* (Bush Theatre), *GLUTATHIONE* (Young Vic), *TITUBA* (Hampstead Theatre), *CLEANING UP* (Clean Break), *TAKEN* (Soho Theatre), *IDP*, *ONE UNDER, WATER* (Kiln Theatre), *THE STOWAWAY* (Plymouth Theatre), *MULES* (Royal Court/ Ahmanson Theatre (LA)/ Magic Theatre (San Francisco)/ Young Vic), *CAN YOU KEEP A SECRET* (National Theatre), *TALKING IN TONGUES*, *A HEROES WELCOME*, *A ROCK IN WATER* (Royal Court), *LEAVE TAKING* (Liverpool Playhouse / National Theatre), *THE WIND OF CHANGE* (Half Moon Theatre) and *PICTURE PLACE* (Sphinx Theatre).

Radio includes *SINGIN' AND SWINGIN' AND GETTIN' MERRY LIKE CHRISTMAS*, *CLEAN TRADE*, *THE DINNER PARTY*, *INDIANA*, *SOMETHING BORROWED*, *WATER. HER FATHER'S DAUGHTER*, *LET THEM CALL IT JAZZ*, *THE BEAT GOES ON* (BBC Radio 4), *LEAVE TAKING*, and *LAZARUS* (BBC Radio 3).

Television includes *BITTER HARVEST*, *CHALKFACE* (BBC 2) and *SOUTH OF THE BORDER* (BBC 1).

Winsome is currently commissioned by the Royal Court Theatre, Bush Theatre and Blueprint Pictures.

## Matt Trueman talks to Winsome Pinnock and Amit Sharma about the reworking of One Under.

Some plays have prescience, some are ahead of their time. Fourteen years after Winsome Pinnock's puzzle of a play *One Under* had its world premiere, with Graeae's new version of the work about to embark on a national tour, this tale of Londoners that fall through the cracks has arguably never felt more of the moment. "The play had always left questions for me," the playwright insists, "I'd always wanted to return to it."

*One Under* starts with a suicide – its title being the term tube drivers use when somebody jumps in front of their trains – before tracing the impact of that incident on several Londoners whose lives criss-cross like tube lines: the train driver, convinced it meant more than mere coincidence; the deceased's foster mother, coming to terms with her grief; a local dry cleaner who met the man immediately before he passed away. In the process, *One Under* nudges up against a number of prevailing issues: mental health, urban environs, precarious existences and marginalised identities.

Most prominently, Pinnock's play captures something specific about city life: the way millions of us brush shoulders every day, co-existing across a vast shared space. "I'm a Londoner and that's how we live, isn't it?" Pinnock explains. "You're constantly colliding with strangers and there's a possibility for great intimacy in that, as well as explosions."

Those encounters, born out of physical proximity, tend to transcend the looser boundaries of identity. As such, Pinnock's play presents a cross-section of the capital. "It's completely intersectional," insists director Amit Sharma – and that's something that Graeae, the UK's leading D/deaf and disabled theatre company is perfectly placed to explore. The new version will feature a cast of disabled and non-disabled actors .

What its characters share, however, is an economic situation. "It feels to me a play about class," Sharma continues. "It doesn't talk about the failures of structures in society. It talks about the consequences of them."

Pinnock picks up the thought: "When people talk about poverty, I don't think they talk about what it can do to people – physically, mentally; the sort of things people have to deal with as a result of living in poverty."

"That hasn't changed," she stresses. "It was the same when I was a child, when I was a teenager, when I went off to university. What happens is that it gets worse for people because governments make it harder. This government made it harder – and then blamed the people they'd made it harder for."

Sharma sees the erosion of the welfare state as having exacerbated the precariousness of life in poverty, sharpening the problems of an unequal society in the process. “I’m not saying that, in 2005 everyone else was doing cartwheels, but there was a level of support and, over the last 14 or 15 years, that’s gone.”

Partly as a result, Pinnock is having a purple patch, some might even say a renaissance. Having emerged in the late Eighties as a vital new voice, the first black British woman to be staged at the National Theatre, she had watched her work recede from mainstream stages in recent years. Fashions changed. Commissions fell away.

However, a pivotal intervention changed that. When Madani Younis revived her masterful full-length debut *Leave Taking* at the Bush Theatre in London, starting its *Passing the Baton* initiative to re-establish a black British canon of modern classics, it introduced a new generation of artists and audiences to her work. Pinnock has since won the prestigious Alfred Fagon award for her latest play, *Rockets and Blue Lights*.

That her writing has been neglected is, Sharma says, “a tragedy” – part of a wider erasure of marginalised voices in British theatre. “Winsome’s a hot new thing right now,” he jokes, fondly, “but Winsome herself has been here. It’s people’s perspectives and lenses that haven’t.”

Pinnock herself is more sanguine, suggesting that *Leave Taking*’s revival “really started a rollercoaster.” She believes *Passing the Baton* “has changed quite a lot” in itself, but thinks her playwrighting style might chime with the times. Her plays are about people more than they are plot. “I know it’s a bit contentious to say ordinary people,” she expands, “but they are exploring ordinary people and everyday lives, and showing them to be complex, intelligent and very interesting.” Her characters come with authenticity too. Born in Islington to working-class Jamaican immigrants, she’s always written the world around her. “I’ve lived with these sorts of characters, grown up with them,” she says. “They’re fascinating to me.”

With Graeae reviving *One Under*, it adds another layer of intersectionality. “Whatever marginalised group you’re in, disabled people are probably the very first group to be shat on,” Sharma explains. “It’s hard being a disabled person. In fact, it costs £500 more a month in this country.” That fact only exacerbates the poverty portrayed in the play.

“The reason this feels like a Graeae play is because the company’s most successful plays have been rooted in people,” Sharma adds – the point being that D/deafness and disability sits alongside and as part of the human experience. It affects everything: sex, communication, mobility – and mental health. “Mental health is absolutely part of the disabled experience,” he stresses. “Where the perception of Graeae revolves around physical and sensory impairment, it felt quite apt to put mental health front and centre.”

## One Under workshop programme

***What Connects Us?*** is a unique creative workshop programme linked to the tour [One Under](#), written by Winsome Pinnock and produced by Graeae and Theatre Royal Plymouth. This production is commissioned by Ramps on the Moon, presented in association with Curve.

The workshop programme is offered to local groups along the tour and is open to anyone aged 16+ and is free of charge once participants have tickets to the show. Through these workshops, participants use theatre conventions to explore social issues towards greater acceptance of the differences between people. The workshops explore themes in the play, including mental health, and the relationships between characters. Participants unpack the play and the strength in differences and belonging. The workshops are focussed on community cohesion and aim to bring hope and greater connectivity.

## About Graeae

Graeae is a force for change in world-class theatre, boldly placing D/deaf and disabled actors centre stage and challenging preconceptions.

### Graeae presents a unique approach which:

- Boldly places D/deaf and disabled artists centre-stage in a diversity of new and existing plays.
- Pioneers a radical dramatic language by exploring the “Aesthetics Of Access”, creatively embedding a range of tools such as audio description and sign language from the very beginning of the artistic process.
- Explores new territory and theatrical genres – from contemporary classics to musicals, to outdoor circuit... with sway poles and giant puppets!

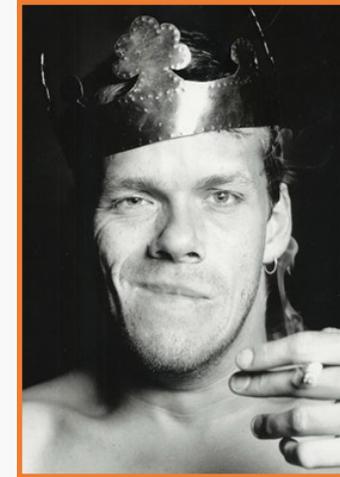
### Graeae champions the inclusion of D/deaf and disabled people in the arts through:

- Intensive actor and writer training initiatives.
- Access support for creative and learning situations.
- Empowering workshops and training programmes for young artists, led by inspiring role models.
- A range of training models for the creative sector – from inclusive practice for drama schools, through to accessible e-marketing for theatre venues.

Artistically led by **Jenny Sealey**, Graeae’s signature characteristic is the compelling creative integration of sign language, captioning and audio description, which engages brilliantly with both disabled and non-disabled audiences. Championing accessibility and providing a platform for new generations of artists, Graeae leads the way in pioneering, trail-blazing theatre. The original disabled-led theatre company, Graeae remains firmly rooted at the forefront of its field in the UK, with the valuable patronage of many high profile artists, directors and actors, including **Sir Peter Blake**, **Jenny Agutter**, **Richard Wilson OBE**, **Sadie Frost** and **Dame Harriet Walter**. Not only does Graeae produce outstanding theatre, but the company delivers extensive training programmes and opportunities for aspiring and established actors, directors and writers. A recognised authority in accessible aesthetics, Graeae works closely with client organisations to inspire and lead best practice - creating, supporting and advising on the development of accessible environments for all theatre lovers, everywhere. Based at Bradbury Studios in Hackney, East London, it is no surprise that Graeae’s home sets the benchmark for inclusive practice. The award-winning building, the first of its kind in the UK, has creative access at the core of its design. From tactile flooring to sensitive heating systems, the Graeae offices and studio space are sophisticated and urban... a world away from the kind of institutional buildings often associated with access standards.

## Our History

Graeae was founded in 1980 by Nabil Shaban and Richard Tomlinson. Having met at college in Coventry, creating productions involving disabled people, their shared vision was to dispel images of defencelessness, together with prejudices and popular myths, around disabled people... through theatre, workshops and training. By May 1980, a company of disabled performers was established to perform the first ever Graeae play Sideshow. Writing in *Disability, Theatre and Education* in 1982, Richard Tomlinson said 'The story (of the Graeae) appealed to both of us. We were happy to concoct morals on the subject of disabled people supporting each other.' Since 1980, Graeae has achieved an international reputation as a pioneer of accessibility in world-class theatre, with the original impetus of its founders still at its very core. Nabil Shaban remains a patron of the company.



## The Graeae Myth

The three wise Graeae sisters of Greek legend shared one eye and one tooth. Perseus stole them, vowing to return the eye and tooth if the sisters revealed how to kill Medusa. But he broke his oath, throwing away their life source. The Graeae ethos is grounded in working together and sharing resources.



## The Social Model of Disability

### About the Social Model of Disability

The Social Model of Disability is a way of understanding how people become disabled by inaccessible surroundings and attitudes, rather than by impairments or conditions.

For example, a train station with information boards but no audio announcements will stop a blind passenger from receiving information that everyone else can access. This is what disables that passenger, not the fact that they're blind.

The Social Model is an alternative to the Medical Model, which works on the idea that it is people's impairments or conditions that disable them, and the answer is to fix disabled people so they are no longer disabled.

People can be disabled in a range of ways. By inaccessible environments, by people's attitudes and behaviours, and by the way society is set up. Understanding this helps work out ways to change things to be more accessible.

### Social Model Language

It is essential to recognise that being disabled impacts hugely on who someone is but it is not the only thing that defines them. Disabled people's understanding of their own impairment will inform their performance style but it is their creativity and passion to be an actor which brings them to the training arena. Here are some basic guidelines of acceptable language to use.

<b>Acceptable</b>	<b>Not Acceptable</b>
Disabled	Handicapped, cripple, invalid
Disabled people	The disabled
Has... (an impairment)	Suffers from..., victim of...
Non-disabled	Able bodied, normal, healthy
Has learning difficulties/ is learning disabled	Mentally disabled, retarded, backward
Wheelchair user	Wheelchair bound, confined to a wheelchair, in a wheelchair
Deaf, deafened or hard of hearing people	The deaf
Deaf sign language user, BSL user	Deaf and dumb, deaf mute
Blind or partially sighted people, visually impaired people (VIP)	The blind

## **Mental Health signposting and wellbeing guideline**

**If you, or someone you know, needs urgent medical help and is in a mental health crisis:**

**Call 999 (emergency services)**

**Go to the nearest A&E (Accident and Emergency services)**

**The helplines below offer emotional support for people affected by mental health. You can get in touch with them about anything you would like to talk about and they will be there to listen.**

**Samaritans** is **for everyone** and offer a safe place for you to talk any time you like, in your own way – about whatever's getting to you.

**Call** 116 123 (it is free, it is 24 hours 7 days a week)

**Email** [Jo@samaritans.org](mailto:Jo@samaritans.org)

**Hopelineuk** is **for young person at risk of suicide** or for someone worried about a young person at risk of suicide

**Call** [0800 068 41 41](tel:08000684141)

**Text** [0778 620 9697](tel:07786209697)

**Email** [pat@papyrus-uk.org](mailto:pat@papyrus-uk.org)

**The Silver Line** **for older people** is a national confidential and free helpline open every day and night of the year.

**Call** 0800 470 8090 (it is free, it is 24 hours 7 days a week)

**SANeline** **for anyone aged 16+** is a national out-of-hours mental health helpline offering specialist emotional support, guidance and information to anyone affected by mental illness, including family, friends and carers.

**Call** 0300 304 7000 (open between 4.30pm to 10.30pm)

## c and wellbeing guideline

**C.A.L.M.** aimed at men with a helpline open between 5pm and midnight every day of the year.

**Telephone (outside London)** 0800 58 58 58

**Telephone (London)** 0808 802 58 58

**Webchat** [www.thecalmzone.net/help/webchat/](http://www.thecalmzone.net/help/webchat/) (5pm – Midnight every day)

**Sign health** is a deaf mental health charity that provides psychological support and therapy services.

**Email** [therapies@signhealth.org.uk](mailto:therapies@signhealth.org.uk) for more information.

Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide, Our helpline is available between 9am and 9pm Monday to Friday, **0300 111 5065**, <https://uksobs.org/>

The **Learning Disability Helpline** is a free helpline service offering advice and support for people with a learning disability, and their families and carers

**Call** 0808 808 1111

**Email** [helpline@mencap.org.uk](mailto:helpline@mencap.org.uk)

**Shout** for anyone in crisis anytime, anywhere. If you're experiencing a personal crisis, are unable to cope and need support, text Shout to 85258

**Text** Shout to 85258 (Free of charge 24/7 text service)

**Email** [info@giveusashout.org](mailto:info@giveusashout.org)

Switchboard the **LGBT+ helpline** for anything you want to talk about, a place for calm words when you need them the most and nothing is off limits.

**Call** 0300 330 0630

**Email** [chris@switchboard.lgbt](mailto:chris@switchboard.lgbt)

## **Further helplines providing advice and information around mental health**

**Rethink Mental Illness**

**Call** 0300 5000 927

**Mind Infoline**

**Call** 0300 123 3393

**Email** [info@mind.org.uk](mailto:info@mind.org.uk)

**Text** 86463

## Discussion

- What does accessibility mean?
- In what ways are your local arts facilities accessible to disabled people? Who are they not accessible to? How could they be improved? (Think beyond wheelchair access.)
- How many famous disabled artists can you think of? Do you know any disabled artists?
- Is it acceptable when non-disabled people play disabled characters also known as 'cripping up'?
- What have you learned from the show *One Under*?
- What are the stigmas around mental health and why is it important that we challenge this?
- How can we look after each other and be supportive of mental health?

**For more information contact:**  
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