



GRAEae

BEYOND



SHOWCASE 2025

OCTAGON

Thursday 20th March

Hosted at

Octagon Theatre, Bolton

SCHEDULE OF THE DAY



- 10:30 AM Arrivals**
- 11:15 AM Introduction: Jenny Sealey**, Artistic Director (Graeae), and **Laura Guthrie** Artist Development Manager (Graeae)
- 11:30 AM Cocoon by Farrel Cox**
- 11:50 AM The Last Game by Emily Howlett**
- 12:10 PM Ayo by Sarah Kolawole**
- 12:30 PM Lunch:** A packed lunch is provided, feel free to eat anywhere in the building or outside.
- 1:30 PM Networking:** If you have a prearranged appointment with an artist, please make yourself known to them at the scheduled time. If you're looking for someone to speak to, Graeae staff will happily make an introduction.
- 3:00 PM End of event for guests**

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ACCESS INFORMATION



The event is BSL-interpreted.

There is one captioned film on loop at the event. This film introduces the Beyond artists.

All three live performances are BSL-interpreted, include audio description and captioning, and will be presented in a relaxed environment.

There is a quiet area and a well-being support team on hand. If you would like access to the area or team, ask a member of Graeae staff.

We acknowledge that this is a busy event, and safe distances may not always be possible.

We ask that all attendees are respectful of the need for some people to wear face masks and to remain at a comfortable distance from others. Face masks and hand sanitiser are available at the access table.

Refreshments are available throughout the day.



Welcome to the Beyond Showcase 2025

Thank you for joining us today, bringing your industry expertise, and showing a real commitment to furthering the careers of Deaf, Disabled, and neurodivergent creatives.

Beyond started life at the very beginning of the covid emergency, set up initially as a way to physically connect regional artists with our partner venues. On the surface, this appeared to be an impossible task. It turned out not to be, and 5 years on, at an incredibly vulnerable time for our industry, this second cohort of Beyond artists and our partner venues have proved that creativity and tenacity with accessible environments artists can expand their careers. These artists have, with an abundance of skill and creativity, explored untested ideas, connected with new venues, collaborated with unexpected creatives, and produced work that can excite and ignite audiences and funders alike.



I hope you enjoy meeting our second cohort of Beyond artists. This showcase is an opportunity for the artists to find out more about you, your organisations and venues, to see where their work and your ambitions might fit, and for you to connect with highly motivated and skilled creatives whose work you cannot afford to ignore!

Huge thanks to the Octagon Theatre for hosting this showcase and to all of the Beyond partners who have remained connected and committed throughout the programme. But, most importantly, huge thanks to the 18 Beyond artists who you are about to meet!

Laura Guthrie
Artist Development Manager, Graeae

WHAT IS BEYOND?

Beyond has supported over 60 Deaf, Disabled and neurodivergent artists in developing their careers, taking on new challenges & building successful connections.



Beyond helps to develop greater access to regional opportunities across England ensuring Deaf, Disabled and neurodivergent artists are at the forefront of new and emerging work. We recognise the immense value of our intersectionality across our communities, which includes Black, Asian, Global Majority, migrant, and LGBTQIA+ artists, which is why our approach is to be as bespoke as possible for each individual artist on the programme.

Graeae have teamed up with 7 leading venues across England; Octagon Theatre in Bolton, Nottingham Playhouse, Cast in Doncaster, Hull Truck Theatre, Shakespeare North Playhouse in Prescot, Everyman in Liverpool, Derby Theatre.

OCTAGON

NOTTINGHAM
PLAYHOUSE

CAST



LIVERPOOL
everyman&PLAYHOUSE



ABOUT GRAEAE

For over 40 years, Graeae has cultivated and championed the best in Deaf, Disabled and neurodivergent talent, locally, nationally and internationally.



Graeae is passionate about igniting artistic curiosity, championing accessibility, and providing a platform for new generations of artists through the creation of trailblazing theatre. It is also a human rights company, founded on the need to tackle social injustice, discrimination, and exclusion. Recent productions include, *Romeo and Juliet*, award winning *Self-Raising*, *High Times* and *Dirty Monsters*, UK Theatre Award winner *The Paradis Files*, *Kerbs*, Olivier Award nominated *10 Nights*, and two seasons of the digital new work programme *Crips without Constraints*. Since 1997, Graeae has been run by Jenny Sealey OBE, who also co-directed the London 2012 Paralympic Opening Ceremony.

Artistic Director and Joint CEO: Jenny Sealey OBE.

Executive Director and Joint CEO: Kevin Walsh.

www.graeae.org

Performances



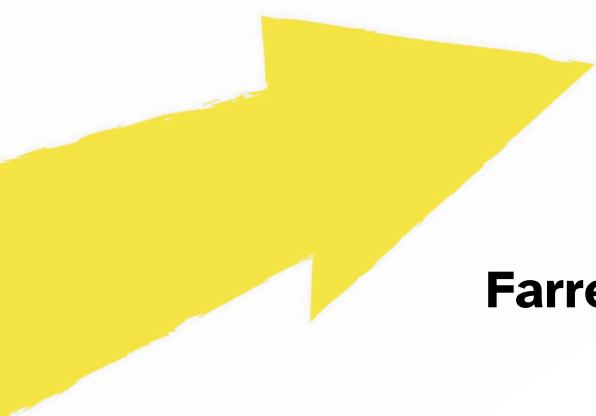
COCOON - Farrell Cox

A daring aerial theatre piece weaving black British salon culture with the complexities of disability, celebrating resilience and unapologetic joy.

Farrell Cox interweaves stories like braids, which navigate a gripping social commentary on disability, illness, community care, and healthcare.

Cox's narrative-driven aerial performance uses smells, circus, and the sound of noughties bangers to immerse the audience and bring all their senses into its world.

Content information: Sexual innuendo, medical discussion, audience interaction, and mild swearing



Farrell Cox



Performances

The Last Game - Emily Howlett

Set in an escape room, **The Last Game** sees a group of friends out for Ben's birthday trying to escape not only the room but the webs they weave around each other. The two scenes we will see are from the middle of the play. First, Ben's sister Fearne finds herself locked in a cupboard with her friend's partner. It's finally her chance to let him know how she feels... Secondly, we see the fallout between Ben and Fearne, after all is discovered.

Content Information: Flirting/adultery themes (mild), arguments/conflict



Emily Howlett



Ciaran Stewart



Dan Parr

Performances



Ayo - Sarah 'Rain' Kolawole

'Ayo' is a multisensory piece aimed at disabled children and their non-disabled siblings and peers. Ayo is a girl with cerebral palsy on holiday in Nigeria, she meets an enthralling butterfly in Lagos, who distracts her, and she becomes lost. They overcome accidents and the unfamiliar sights and smells. Ayo is eventually reunited with her family, as she makes it to the beach.

'Ayo' has been in a research and development phase, we are thrilled for the first official sharing to be happening today.

Content information: live music, audience participation.



Simi Roach



Trudy Ward



ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES



Alexandra Whiteley, she/her

Alexandra Whiteley is a director, dramaturg and facilitator with a specialism in Shakespeare and passion for creating radical adaptations of classic stories. She also has extensive experience in new writing and horror theatre, and in creative access.

www.alexandrawhiteley.co.uk



Ash Cox, she/they

Ash Cox is an activist, creative access producer and facilitator, from Salford, focusing on work that is reflective of their lived experience being a disabled, queer, working-class arts and science nerd.

<https://www.ashtronomy.co.uk/>

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/coxash>



Benjamin Wilson, he/him

Benjamin Wilson is a blind actor, director and audio description consultant. He was previously an Agent For Change at Sheffield Theatres and the trainee artistic director at Extant. In 2023 he was awarded a commendation at the Ian Charleson award.

<https://www.spotlight.com/1896-8946-5798>



Dale Edwards, he/him

I am a Director from Greater Manchester. My experience is text based work, I would describe my process as collaborative with a devised and playful approach. At this moment in time, I am most interested in making new work and working with new writers from unrepresented backgrounds.



Emily Howlett, she/her

Emily is a deaf, bilingual actor/writer, who has also been known to direct, consult or otherwise involve herself in any exciting projects.



Emily Webster, she/her

Emily Webster is a working class comedian, writer and theatre maker. Her stand up show Owt Bar an Office was featured as part of 2024's Leicester and Nottingham Comedy Festivals. She is now working on a spoken English and BSL integrated play based on her experiences with hereditary hearing loss.



◀-----▶

Farrell Cox, she/they

Farrell Cox, theatremaker and aerialist. Creating work inspired by lived experiences that pushes boundaries, and invites audiences to be immersed in the theatrical narrative. Having a passion for bridging gaps between cultures, identities and experiences and centering marginalised groups.

www.farrellcox.com



Finch Murphy, they/them

I'm a multidisciplinary artist who works at the intersection between non-binary identity, autistic and disabled experience, and as an estranged care leaver. My work focuses on radical neuroqueerness, trauma and ultimately, healing.



Helen East, she/her

My name is Helen East.

My writing involves believable characters, realistic, well researched worlds and engaging stories.

Credits Include:

**Ripples in concrete (long listed Bruntwood Award),
there be dragons (longlisted Verity Bargate Award),
ROOTZ (short listed Shelagh Delaney Award).**



Helena Ascough, she/her

Helena is a northern performer, maker and facilitator. Helena produced and facilitated the Access All Areas project for disabled young people in Lancashire. Spoken word performances; The Lancashire Fringe and Lancaster Arts, Helena was Headlong's Origin Director cohort 2024.

<https://www.facebook.com/HelenaLouiseAscough>

<https://www.spotlight.com/1899-1271-2843>



Jonny Leitch, he/they

Jonny (Musician, Aerialist & Co-artistic Director of Head over wheels) has worked for Graeae, Extraordinary Bodies and Paraorchestra. Performing at the National Theatre, Barbican, and Glastonbury Festival. They're passionate about disability representation, Creative access and exploring body identity/movement through circus.

<https://leitchdrums.com/>



Kao Hove, they/them

Kao Hove is a theatre director, maker, and facilitator, as well as a multi-disciplinary artist in dance, poetry, and music. Their focuses are care as creative practice, accessibility, and agency. They're currently exploring technology to build immersive, 5D theatre.



Lee Shannon, he/him

Equal parts neurodivergent, writer, performer and Clown. A pinch of Bouffon when he wants to stir some questions into his comedy. Liverpool-based: Solo (AKA Leebo Luby), With others (Teatro Pomodoro). Interests: Embedding BSL/VV organically into clowning.



Rebecca Glendenning-Laycock, she/they

Rebecca Glendenning-Laycock is writer for stage and screen and actor. Their work is bold with a tender middle. In 2024 she was awarded the Channel 4 Writing for TV Award and is currently developing her play ‘Chained Reaction’.

Photo credit TJMOV



Sam Jamil, he/him

My name is Sam Jamil. I am an actor, writer and access consultant from Greater Manchester. I've written a few biographical plays, one of them Ward 76 which got commissioned by Arts Council and another which I am currently writing at the moment called God's Gift that is being supported by Graeae. In terms of my acting I've trained with theatre companies across the country, including National Youth Theatre and New Earth Theatre.



Sarah Kolawole, she/her

Sarah 'Rain' Kolawole is a playwright, published poet and facilitator. Her work is influenced by her poetic beginnings and she is drawn to telling stories which explore the untold sides, true representation and themes around relationships, family and identity.



Stephen Crofts, he/him

I am profoundly deaf and communicate in BSL. I studied BA Technical Theatre at University of Derby. My ambition is to be a Technical/LX Designer. I have gained really valuable new skills in the last 18 months on Beyond.

www.stephendeaflighting.com



Stevie Cairns, she/her

Stevie is a South Yorkshire based theatre maker, writer and stand-up comedian. She received a DYCP grant in 2023 and toured 'Bee Kind', a commission for Barnsley Libraries as writer and performer. She is currently supporting Effectus Theatre and facilitating the National Theatre's Speak Up project on behalf of Cast in Doncaster. Stevie regularly performs comedy across the UK.

Additional Performers



Dan Parr

Contact:

**India@cam.co.uk
(agent)**



Ciaran Stewart

Contact:

**leah@mcewanpenford.com
(agent)**



Simi Roach

Contact:

simoneroach1@gmail.com



Trudy Ward

Contact:

trudyward59@gmail.com

Who I've met:

Contact details:

What we talked about:

What we will do next:

Who I've met:

Contact details:

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from**



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ENGLAND**

**Katie Bradford Arts Trust
Joseph and Annie Cattle Trust
Keith Howard Foundation
Sir James Reckitt**



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