

**HIDDEN  
SPIRE** 2017

# SAWDUST

## PROGRAMME

11 - 14 OCTOBER, 2017  
THE OLD FIRE STATION



# WELCOME

**KATE COCKER AND JEREMY SPAFFORD**

Welcome to our fourth Hidden Spire production.

If you've seen past Hidden Spire productions then you will know what a special moment this is for the Old Fire Station. If you haven't then you are in for a treat.

The project derives its name from a tower above the Old Fire Station which is hard to spot from the outside. We call it the Hidden Spire of Oxford. Beneath it is a building packed with extraordinary creative people facing huge challenges and making great art for the public to enjoy.

Over the past year 51 Crisis clients have worked with 21 professional artists as an ensemble to devise, write, design, build, rehearse and perform the show. This year, we are delighted to have included Crisis clients as trainees in design, costume making, lighting, movement, direction and stage management. We are also working with Jo Elliott of Moving Target Films to make a documentary about the process which will be released in 2018.

All of this is an extraordinary achievement made possible by the commitment of Crisis clients (some of whom have been involved throughout), the writer (Rowan Padmore) and the creative team led once again by director Lizzy McBain.

It is also a great tribute to the collaboration between the two charities that share this building. We're always looking for ways to support each other's work, and enable people from very different backgrounds to find shared purpose and friendship. We are really proud of what we've achieved since opening in November 2011 and equally excited about what more we can do with the support of you, our audience. Above all, we think we've made a great show which we hope you enjoy.

Do please tell us what you think by completing one of the forms available in the foyer or going to [www.hiddenspire.co.uk](http://www.hiddenspire.co.uk) to follow our blog.

Thank you for joining us tonight backstage at Viva Vintage Circus.

Jeremy Spafford, Director, Arts at the Old Fire Station  
Kate Cocker, Director, Crisis Skylight Oxford



# BEING A TRAINEE

**ALI LE GRICE**

I'm the costume trainee. I first got involved when I attended the Hidden Spire design sessions in the Crisis Art Room at the Old Fire Station over the summer. I already had an interest in fashion and design, and after being interviewed and offered the role I was a mixture of excited and nervous.

Since the rehearsal period began, I've been working with Suzie Burlton, the costume designer, to realise her designs which she developed with input from Crisis clients including me. Suzie has been amazing to work with as she's both kind and helpful.

During the production I've taken some of the responsibility for the lions, doing research and feeding in ideas before Suzie and Lizzy

McBain, the director, made the final decision. The lions have been complicated. How human are they? How and when do their lion traits come out? How much are they individuals and how much are they a pack? From a design perspective we went into rehearsals to see the work the three actors and the direction team were doing to help us nail down the final designs. We've tried to create costumes to show humans dressed as lions who have been in Viva Vintage Circus for so long, and been so disempowered within the circus hierarchy, that they're slowly becoming more feral. Alongside their individual fashion choices, they also each have manes, ears and tails of the animal they're pretending to be.

I've learnt a lot during my involvement with Hidden Spire - how to do measurements, fittings and make alterations. As well as a lot of adding glitz and glam to each of the costumes before breaking them down again to give them a more lived-in, downtrodden feel in keeping with the rest of the show.

For me, the overall look of the costumes is fading glamour. If it was in good condition it would be bright and worthy of being on any stage in the world but after we've taken cheese-graters, spray-paint and generally broken them down they're perfect for their home in the Sawdust world.

The project has meant that I have had an opportunity to gain experience in something I'd otherwise have little chance of getting into. This type of project is important as it's a different thing to be a part of. A lot of homeless charities solely focus on your current difficulties and the everyday struggles rather than nurturing what someone has the potential to become.



Imagine a world without homelessness. Crisis intends to put an end to the suffering and injustice of homelessness. We know it can be done. But we need **Everybody In** to make it happen. Join our **Everybody In** campaign through our website [www.crisis.org.uk](http://www.crisis.org.uk). We'll send you regular real life stories, and let you know about our work and how you can help us end homelessness.

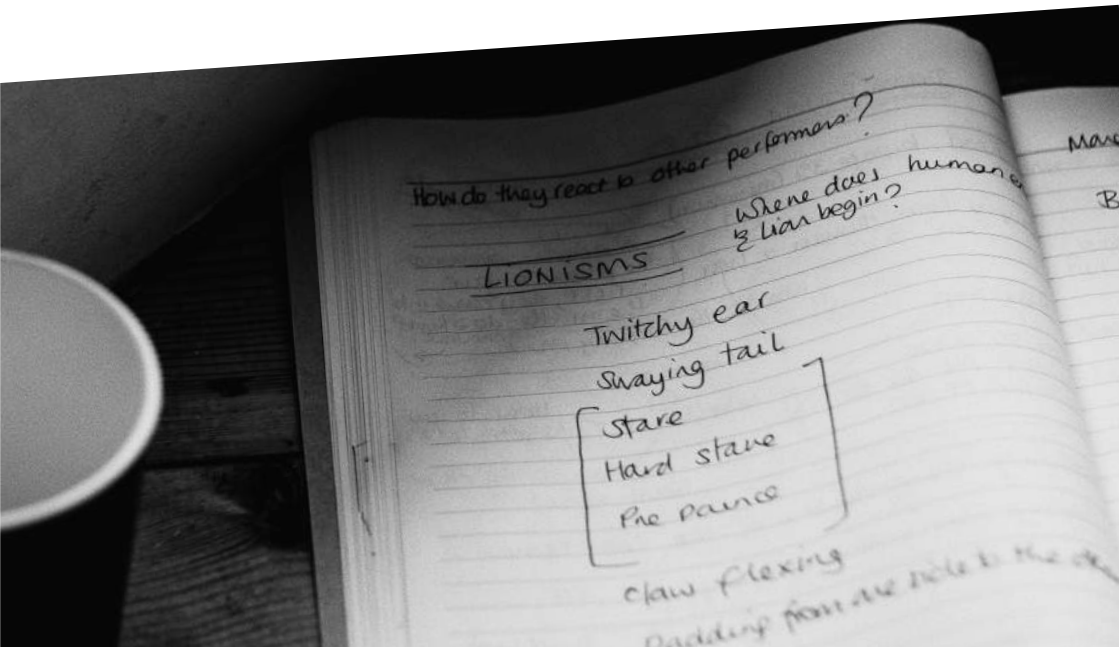
# WRITING

ROWAN PADMORE

All good stories should have a beginning, a middle and an end. Everyone knows that, right? Well this one has several beginnings, a very long middle and you are watching the end tonight. Our first beginning began more than a year ago with workshops bringing together artists from internationally acclaimed theatre company Complicite, Crisis clients and members of the public. Our starting point for this work was the phrase 'A Beautiful Mess'. We then worked with Crisis clients for a fortnight offering physical workshops with Emma Webb the movement director, and writing workshops with me.

Our second beginning began with weekly two-hour 'Writing a Play' classes for Crisis clients between October and December. We responded to objects, words and pictures. We read extracts of contemporary plays. We bravely read our own work to each other and shared ideas. We talked. Sometimes we disagreed.

In January, we started again – a third beginning – a new term with familiar faces and some new ones. By now we had a circus setting and characters with lives that we glimpsed through stories and snatches of



dialogue. We had an extended circus family emerging in the room. I'd never tried to write a play like this, and some members of the group had never seen a play, whilst others were experts. People came and went, as they do, but somehow we mostly stuck together.

And so, we moved into the middle stage. I wrote a script. I won't bore you with the detail, just imagine lots of anxious late nights on a laptop. And then I waited. I waited for the design classes, and the music classes, and the acting classes to begin, and end. I waited for the traineeships to begin. I waited for the music to be composed and the set to be built and the costumes to be made. I waited for the rehearsals to begin, and end.

And now tonight I'm waiting for the show to begin. Just like you. And I'm excited. I hope you are too.

# DIRECTING

LIZZY MCBAIN

It is August, and we have just started acting classes for Crisis clients who might like to perform in the production of *Sawdust*. There is a buzz in the room as we sit down and start to read the script aloud. The script is so rich with potential; there are so many layers to explore, dissect and play with.

People hold a special place in their hearts for the circus. The concept of running away with a troupe of performers to play the world has captivated so many of us. What would it be like to travel with your own circus family, touring from place to place, setting up camp in a new town or village every week, and performing to packed out audiences in the big top every night?

Well I am sure the reality is not always as romantic as one might dream. Certainly for Kristoff's Viva Vintage Circus, the cracks are showing. There is very little money left. Costumes and set have been patched up so many times that they have patched the patches. They have tried to reinvent themselves again and again; this time as a "vintage" circus, but how much longer will this trend for "vintage" last? Ends are starting to fray, and temperaments are frazzled. But still the performers are



dedicated to their art. Hamish continues to put his body through hell every night, to entertain audiences by eating obscenely metallic items, before regurgitating them in the privacy of his caravan, because he is an artist, and that is what he does. What else do these performers know? What else could they do, if the circus folds? Who else would employ them, and who would they be if there wasn't any circus to call home?

This is a question that torments many an artist, and this question of identity is something that many of Kristoff's company grapple with; whether it is being able to separate themselves from their act, and be accepted as a person in their own right, or learning to live with the reality that their dream of stardom hasn't quite delivered.

In a time of cuts and austerity in the arts, as well as in so many areas of society, this question of identity is even more pertinent. And when your place of work is also your home, and your family, well, then what? Should you be forced to work for free to be able to hold on to your sense of self, and even a roof over your head...?

I can see that we are going to have so many interesting conversations over the coming months. And a lot to work with in order to bring you our own little circus!

# SET DESIGN

## NOMI EVERALL

I joined the Hidden Spire team just in time to attend the first read-through of the draft script and I was immediately excited by the world in which the play is set – backstage in a run-down circus which, although fraying at the seams, retains the faded remnants of its former splendour.

What captured my imagination most was the opening stage-direction which asks for the circus world to be formed live on stage by the performers, in front of the watching theatre audience, from the blank canvas of a “bare stage”. Transformation is a wonderful design challenge and from the outset I was keen that the audience would not arrive into an empty theatre space, but into a completely opposite sort of world to the circus – more ordinary, more everyday – out of which the circus could, hopefully surprisingly, be constructed.

Working with Crisis clients over five weeks of design sessions we began by thinking about the shapes, structures, colours and textures that epitomise ‘circus’ – what was essential in the visual picture for







our audience to get a real sense of being backstage in a big top? We researched vintage and modern circuses and identified those iconic elements which most immediately place us in that world – the shape of the circular big top tent and its supporting tent poles; the prominent, curtained doorway to the circus ring; plinths and rostra emblazoned with stars and stripes; the ladders and high wires of the aerial acts; elaborate signs edged with lights; bunting and, of course, sawdust.

From there we began to work backwards – how could these circus elements emerge from a different type of place? And where or what would that different place be? We thought carefully about the opening scene, where we see characters swaddled and invisible upside down inside sleeping bags performing a surreal, almost dream-like, dance number. Where did that suggest we are when the play starts? Suggestions included a military encampment, a campsite in a field, a city street/wasteland, a shanty town. We thought practically too about how we could design and build structures that could be moved or changed by performers from one thing into another – one world hidden inside another, ready to pop-up, unfold, unfurl or be revealed. Some ingenious ideas emerged which were captured in drawings, story-boards and 3D 1:50 scale-models by the Crisis clients involved.

Inspired by their ideas, I then developed a final design in which we start from a world which is part makeshift encampment, part junk yard – a dumping ground in which our sleeping-bagged figures have made themselves tent-like homes from scrap wood and canvas. But amongst all the chaos, the elements of our circus are there already,

waiting to be hoisted up, thrown open, lit up or simply seen from a different perspective – in a different context. We hope you find the transformation as fascinating and surprising as we've imagined it to be and it fills you with a little bit of the wonder we all associate with going to the circus.

Crisis clients have been involved in the building, painting, set-dressing and stage-management of this set as well as in the design process and their imaginative ideas and hands-on hard work have been instrumental in the final set design as you see it today.

# MUSIC

## JON QUIN

When we think of the sound of the circus, a whole range of colourful musical instruments and noises instantly spring to mind.

All the music you hear in *Sawdust* is based on the creative ideas and input of Crisis clients over a series of musical workshops. Any ideas for vocal hooks or instrumental melodies, percussive rhythms - or even just a general sense of how the music should feel in terms of style and

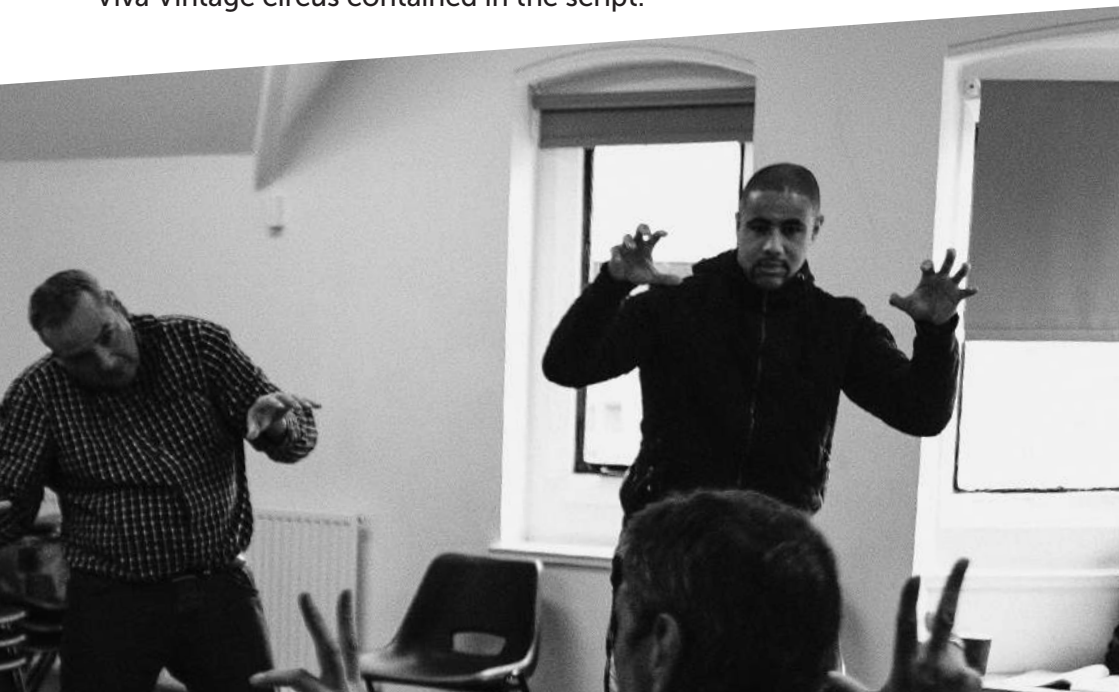


atmosphere - were captured as we went along and thrown into a large melting pot of musical ideas using laptops, phones and scraps of paper.

One of our first tasks was to settle on the kind of musical instruments which we could use which were practical (as in, not a full-sized calliope organ, for example) but which could still create the right musical atmosphere.

Nearly all the characters in the play had a song - or a 'suggestion' of a song - written into the script at one point or another. At these points, it's a real opportunity for the audience to enter the headspace of, say, Pierrot or Lena, to scratch beneath the surface and encounter their 'inner voice', perhaps a bit of their backstory and their aspirations for the future. So we started by reading through these short pieces of text, maybe chopping them up and playing around with the emphases. We quickly discovered that thanks to the way the words were written, they had a kind of inbuilt, poetic rhythm which lent themselves to certain musical styles or sounds. Another approach was to record noises which we might associate with that character (the sound of bottles or metallic clunks, for example) which could then be used as samples to be triggered by the performers.

Over the course of the music workshops, we worked hard to represent each character's traits and quirks, and give them a kind of musical identity, all within the framework of the specific, wonky world of the Viva Vintage circus contained in the script.



# CREDITS

## CREATIVE TEAM

Writer

Director

Assistant Director

Set & Lighting Designer

Assistant Lighting Designer

Assistant Set Designer

Costume Designer

Assistant Costume Designer

Movement Director

Stage Manager

Deputy Stage Manager

Composer & Musical Director

Film Maker

Technical Manager

Makeup Artist

Rowan Padmore

Lizzy McBain

Codi Tupence

Nomi Everall

Terry Carson

Tony Walker

Suzanne Burlton

Ali Le Grice

Emma Webb

Jude Thorp

Mark Jackson

Jon Ouin

Jo Elliott

Steve Coe

Daisy Oldershaw



# PERFORMERS

Lion 1  
Lion 2  
Lion 3  
Kristoff  
Marionette  
Eric  
Sophie  
Pierrot  
Lena  
Insect Girl  
Hamish / Double bass & percussion  
Samson / Accordion, brass & percussion  
Keyboard

G-Luv  
Richard Jones  
Angie Jones  
Doug Lucie  
Abi Hood  
AJ  
Codi Tuppence  
Martin Blackwell  
Emma Webb  
Rowan Padmore  
Chris Michael  
Miles Russell  
Jon Ouin

# COLLABORATORS

Angharad	Les
Bea Pemberton	Liliana
Catherine	Liz Courakis
Conor	Lucy
Derek	Lyn
Dot	Mark
Egor	Mark
Eric Mallett	Matthew
Hannah	Megan
Heather	Mo
Hope	Noureddine
Jo	Paul
Jonathan	R
Joyce Henderson	Rachel Bavidge
Katariina	Rachel Mae Brady
Laura	Rafal

Richard  
Rob  
Rob  
Robert  
Sam  
Sean  
Shaun  
Sergio  
Sheldon  
Stephen  
Trudy  
Vanessa  
Wesley

# THANK YOU!

We would like to say a big thank you to all the team who have brought this production together – especially our volunteers.

Special thanks to the main funders of Hidden Spire:



Supported using public funding by

**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**



We are also grateful to St Michaels & All Saints Charities and Oxford Theatre Guild for their donations.

Thanks to Rob Nisbet at  
Event Production Services.



## SUPPORT US

The Old Fire Station opened in November 2011 and houses two very different charities working together in a unique and extraordinary way. If you would like to support the work we do together then please give generously. All donations made this evening will be divided equally between the two charities. Please use the envelope provided to make a donation (and don't forget to Gift Aid it!).

Donations made to AOFS will be matched by Arts Council England.

Many thanks.

And if you'd like to know more about what we do, please get in touch. We'd love to hear from you.

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[info@oldfirestation.org.uk](mailto:info@oldfirestation.org.uk)

Crisis  
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Photos: Josh Tomalin & Rachel Harrison  
Poster design: Rebecca Lee

# THE OLD FIRE STATION



We are an arts centre offering great art to the public in our theatre, gallery, shop and studios and support for artists to help them make and showcase their work. We also help to build the confidence and skills of homeless people and offer a public space within which all sections of the community, including those facing multiple disadvantage, can meet, learn, create and change.

[www.oldfirestation.org.uk](http://www.oldfirestation.org.uk)



We are the national charity for homeless people. We are dedicated to ending homelessness by delivering life changing services and campaigning for change. Crisis Skylight Oxford provides practical and creative workshops and formal learning in a supportive and inspiring environment, helping homeless people to restore their well-being, build their basic skills, gain qualifications and raise their aspirations. We also offer a motivational employment service, a housing service, a café training scheme and personalised support to address each person's needs. Our aim is to help people leave homelessness behind for good, whatever their situation. [www.crisis.org.uk](http://www.crisis.org.uk)

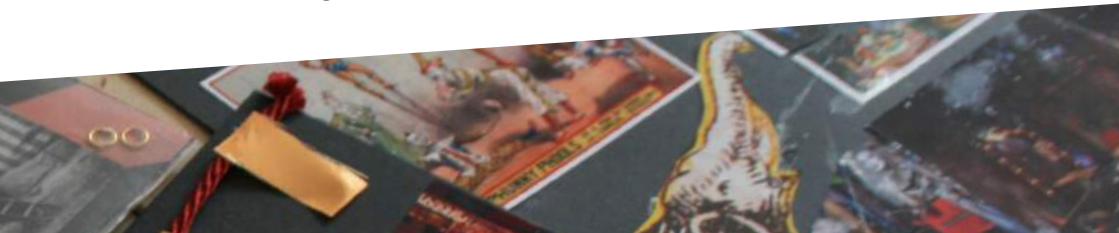
## HOW WE WORK TOGETHER

By bringing homeless people, artists and the public into the same spaces, we can have a deeper impact together than we could separately. Although we bring different contributions, together we aim to help end homelessness in Oxford, support excellence and participation in arts and culture and be a real place of change. We do this simply by sharing space but we also create projects, such as Hidden Spire, to have a greater impact. You may want to look at two other examples in our foyer:

**CHANGE** – the mirrored installation climbing three floors created by Barbaresi and Reynard with people living in hostels;

**FLOW**– the light sculpture near the entrance created by Retallick and Branson based on work with people sleeping rough.

In addition, Crisis clients volunteer with Arts at the Old Fire Station on a regular basis as ushers and we provide a training scheme offering an opportunity to learn transferable skills through the arts such as customer service, stewarding, retail and administration.



# VIVA VINTAGE CIRCUS

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By permission and under the immediate patronage of  
**Arts at the Old Fire Station**

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**Wednesday 11 - Saturday 14 October 2017**

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FOR THE BENEFIT OF MR

# KRISTOFF

Ringling's celebrated equestrian  
Previous to his departure for "Coventry"

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