

Introductory notes to Lived Fiction by Stopgap Dance Company

Welcome to this introduction to Lived Fiction, a new inclusive contemporary dance work by Stopgap Dance Company.

I'm Lily Norton, Access Artist at Stopgap, and I'm a co-writer of Lived Fiction and an Audio Describer / Performer.

This introduction will share more information about Lived Fiction including what to expect, the integrated accessibility in the work, its set and design, and features introductions to each performer. There is also a word document version of this introduction, available on Stopgap's Lived Fiction webpage at stopgapdance.com/lived-fiction.

General information and what to expect:

Lived Fiction lasts for around 90 minutes with a short intermission halfway through.

The show is held in a relaxed performance environment, which means you can enter and exit the auditorium whenever you need to, you aren't expected to sit still and silent the entire show, we will keep the house lights on at a low level throughout, we'll have a quiet space available, and Stopgap staff will be on hand to support.

At every show of Lived Fiction there will be a touch tour prior to the performance, the timing of this will vary from venue to venue, but it will usually be an hour before the show starts and will feature the performers in Lived Fiction, who will introduce themselves and the work.

About Stopgap and Lived Fiction

Lived Fiction marks a new evolution for Stopgap, with integrated creative access as a core driver for the choreography, sound design and staging. In previous works from the company, narratives and characters have driven the choreography, but this time the work began with no seed of a story. Instead, it began with the desire to think about deaf, disabled and

neurodivergent audiences and how accessibility can be explored creatively with choreography.

Lived Fiction invites audiences to experience dance in new ways. With creative audio description, the inner worlds of each dancer are slowly revealed, and the role of an audio describer for dance is explored. The description is both live and pre-recorded, but it is integrated into the show, everything is played out loud, so you do not need to use a headset. Experimenting with different perspectives in the audio description, at times it speaks from the audience's perspective, at times it is poetic and from personal perspectives. In parts of the work the spoken description is minimal, and the dancers use the sounds of their bodies, their wheelchairs, and their costumes to convey dynamic movement qualities. Alongside audio description, creative captions are projected onto the stage at every performance, captioning the spoken audio description and interpreting the sound and music creatively.

The stage design:

The stage design for Lived Fiction is minimal, the empty space filled instead by movement and noise. Each theatre will differ in its specific set-up but here I will describe the general set. A smooth vinyl dance floor covers the stage floor, and it is usually grey in colour. The side and back walls of the stage will be exposed in theatres where this is possible. Only one or two wings (or black curtains) are used towards the back of the stage to conceal dancers, however for most of the show the dancers are visible onstage and do not go on and off. A white gauze screen hangs on the back wall, 8 metres wide and 3 metres tall, it fills the top half of the back wall. Creative captions are projected onto this screen.

Eight orange plastic chairs with black metal legs line up at the side edges of the stage, four on the left and four on the right. The chairs face into the centre of the stage, mirrored either side placed with equal space between them. These chairs are functional, allowing performers to come and go from the action and sit as observers, without completely exiting the stage. At times they are used in the choreography, with dancers jumping, standing, and throwing themselves onto them.

In my role as audio describer, I remain onstage and integrated into the work, and I sit in the first chair on the right side, closest to the front of the stage, and I sit at a desk. Constructed out of wood and painted a pale grey,

this sturdy desk has two solid sides and a thick top, it's on wheels which allow its position on stage to shift throughout the show. During the show I move the desk to other positions, and this is described. A nifty element of the table design are recesses cut into the tabletop - one shallow rectangular recess for my laptop to sit in, a large circle where a small orange desk lamp sits, and a deep small circle for my black water bottle. These recesses are helpful to keep my laptop and props stable when the table is being moved around. An adjustable mic stand is clamped to the table and the flexible arm is helpful for when I speak from different positions such as standing, I use a standard black handheld microphone and at times take this mic out of the holder.

The costumes:

Designed by Ryan Dawson-Laight, the costumes of Lived Fiction are inspired by Northern Soul; a sound and dance movement that emerged in Northern England and the midlands in the 1970's. Its influence on the costume style is shown in the baggy wide leg trousers some dancers wear, and a crossover between sporty styles with zipper jackets and nylon fabrics, and high fashion with chiffon blouses and structured trousers. The performers are all dressed differently, but they are unified by the colour palette of sepia tones of browns, golds, pinks, and light yellows. There is also a tactile element to each dancer's costume, sound and touch were really considered. The fabrics Ryan has chosen really amplify sound, for example the rustling and crinkling of noisy nylon trousers. Some costumes also feature extra noisy elements, such as zips, Velcro and keys attached to the costumes. In places during the work, the dancers explore how they can get as much noise out of their costumes as possible. In our pre-show touch tour, there will be opportunities to feel fabric samples and the dancers will demonstrate some of their movements.

Meet the performers:

There are seven performers onstage during Lived Fiction. They are going to introduce themselves to you now.

Hi, I'm Christian, I'm a performer in Lived Fiction. I'm a tall white man, with broad shoulders and a big smile! I love the energetic journey of Lived Fiction, from delicate and detailed to loud and dynamic. Dancing with everyone is the most enjoyable thing for me.

Hi my name's Hannah. I'm a performer in Lived Fiction. I'm a small, petite, standing person with Down syndrome. I have blonde hair and blue eyes. My favourite section in Lived Fiction is the evensong.

Hello! I'm Jannick, a performer in Lived Fiction. I'm a white standing dancer, with light brown hair and bright blue eyes. I like to surprise. Sometimes, I make my way to the audience and join in watching the show. Looking forward to meeting you there.

Hello, I'm Monique, but I'm also known as Mo' in the show, and I'm a performer in Lived Fiction. I'm a Disabled black short statured woman, with my hair slicked back and I have sweeping brown eyes. I'm sat in my blue and black, slender dance chair. In the piece, I love discovering and playing with different movement styles. And my favourite part is Tight Textures, for its speed and dynamic movement.

Hello, I'm Emily, a performer in Lived Fiction. I'm a non-disabled East Asian woman, with straight black hair and freckles on my cheeks. I like to slip, slide, and glide with boundless energy across the space.

Hello, I am Nadenh, I am a performer in Lived Fiction, and I play as myself. I am a British-Cambodian male contemporary wheelchair dancer with light brown skin, not much hair and tattoos on one of my muscular arms. I really enjoy doing my solo in Lived Fiction, its make me free to move and move for freedom.

And hey, it's me again, Lily. My pronouns are they/them, I'm a white person in my mid-twenties, I have curly coppery brown hair, which is down past my shoulders, I have lots of tattoos covering my arms, legs, and chest. I also have a lot of face piercings. For me Lived Fiction is about exploring new ways to make dance, led by access for Deaf, Disabled, and neurodivergent people and it's been an exciting process.

Cast and Production Credits:

Lived Fiction was conceived, written, and devised by Stopgap's Deaf, Disabled, neurodivergent and non-disabled creatives.

The process was facilitated by Stopgap's Co Artistic Director Lucy Bennett.

Dancers: Christian Brinklow, Monique Dior Jarrett, Emily Lue-Fong, Jannick Moth, Nadenh Poan and Hannah Sampson.

Audio Describer, Lily Norton.
Voice of DAN, Dan Watson.

Director & Co-Writer, Lucy Bennett.

Access Artist & Co-Writer, Lily Norton.

Rehearsal Director, Amy Butler.

Composer & Sound Designer, Dougie Evans.

Digital Artist & Creative Captions, Ben Glover.

Lighting Design, Jackie Shemesh.

Costume Design, Ryan Dawson Laight.

Props Designer and Builder, Colin Holden.

Access Guide, Lauren Trim.

Production & Stage Manager, Ethan Duffy.

Production Manager, Emma Henderson.

Technical Manager, Francois Langton.

Lighting Associate, Joe Hornsby.

Costume Associate, Rosie Whiting.

Project Manager, James Greenhalgh.

Access Workers, Abbie Thompson, Laurel Flatley.

Executive Producers, Sho Shibata & Lucy Glover.