

Home From Home

Lakeside Theatre / Essex Fund Report

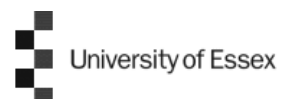
Peirson, Barbara

6/6/2015

LAKESIDE THEATRE

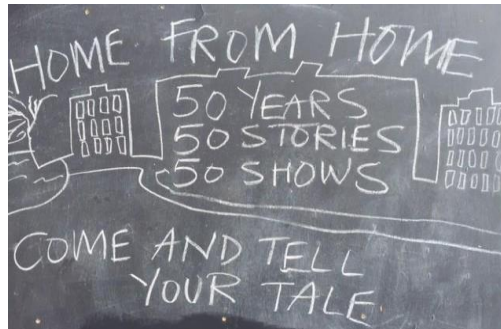
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Home from Home

In response to the 50th Anniversary and with the support of the **Essex Fund**, the Lakeside Theatre mounted a year-long project: **Home From Home** and made **50 plays about the 50 years of life at Essex**. The project was launched at the **Homecoming Weekend** where several plays were piloted. Over that weekend and also during **Welcome Week** stories from imagination and memory were gathered from current students, staff and alumni.



The stories 'grew' on a 'memory tree' situated in the Lakeside Theatre Café. Visitors were invited to share a memory of their time at Essex by writing it on a tag to hang on the tree. People passing through the cafe could read them and be inspired to contribute more. When the stories 'blossomed' they were 'harvested' and throughout the year they were transformed into performances, written and devised by students, staff and graduates.



Assisted by **The Grand Theatre of Lemmings** and **Frequency Theatre**, the plays were created throughout the year culminating in a mammoth short play festival at the **Alumni weekend** in May 2015.

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The architecture of the buildings on campus and Wivenhoe Park served as a backdrop for the site specific performances.

Fresher 87 was written and performed by Essex alumna Fiona Mason in the North Towers car park during the Homecoming Weekend. She recreated her first arrival on campus, as a Fresher in 1987, in her Wolseley 1100 by using a 1:50 scale model and a box full of keepsakes. Rooted in personal memory the performance glimpsed and shared a poignant moment of an arrival, a new beginning and a leave-taking that resonated with graduates and undergraduates throughout the 50 years who have all made similar journeys into a new life at Essex.



Wednesday, 7th October 1987 – fresher's week.

My 23yr old self arrives on campus in a 1967 Wolseley 1100. My first car.

Within: worn blue leather and walnut. Damp and rust.

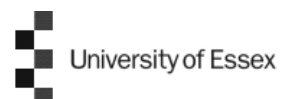
Without: towers and squares, concrete, utilitarian. The mothership. Home.

Me: black dress, blue boots, purple sweater – my self-prescribed uniform.

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*In the grey squall a patch of estuarine sand spirals into life.
Cold hands clasp the wheel. Chin to knuckles.
I'm an uprooted midland's girl and by some miracle I'm here.
I breathe and look out of the windscreen through brimful eyes.
My tongue breaks the salt flow in its tracks but cannot stem the source.
Endings. Beginnings. My heart beats a quickstep through time.*



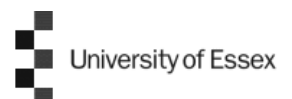
“Making the performance for the Homecoming weekend was a very rewarding experience and has been a catalyst to me applying for and being accepted onto a PhD programme at Goldsmiths to research memory through life writing, fine art, philosophy and performance. I am a philosophy alumna of Essex and so in some ways the performance for Homecoming weekend helped me to focus on my own notions of home and belonging, both themes that are pertinent to my research.”

Fi Mason.

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Professional **writing and devising workshops** were provided by industry specialists to stimulate ideas and encourage creativity, so that even people who had never considered making a play were given the confidence to develop their ideas.



The performances took many different forms, from **monologues to large cast plays**, verbatim plays to puppet theatre. They took place in a host of different sites on campus: there were plays on stages, in the squares, in the parkland, in the car park, some in the very smallest theatres in the world and several were recorded as radio plays. .



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Thanks to a previous donation from The Essex Fund the Lakeside Theatre was able to offer the facility to invite script for **radio plays**, some of which can be downloaded and listened to here:

<http://www.frequencytheatre.co.uk/home-from-home-50-second-plays-2/>



The following text was written by Scott Osbon, 2nd year undergraduate and recorded using a mix of 20 voices of students, alumni, staff, associate artists and passers by:

UNIVERSITY

Earth. Mud. Grass. Trees. Wind. Air. Rain.

Gravel, tarmac, roads, concrete, wood, plastic, glass, bricks.

Brick by brick by brick into towers and buildings that extend far into the sky,

And roam deep in the layers of the valley.

Silent rooms with the taste of drying paint.

Embryonic.

The sudden clap of footsteps reaching a crescendo.

Strangers.

People.

Coursemates.

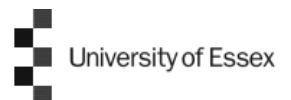
Friends.

Lovers.

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A centralised hub of new living, combined with the emergence of the new enriching and affirming the old. New ideas, new concepts, new imaginations, bristling and bustling out of the fabric of every place.

Doing more, getting better, doing worse, getting back up again, walking and talking and listening and thinking and connecting and working and trying and failing and trying and failing and trying and succeeding and succeeding again, and standing, taller, getting taller, climbing and running up the face of even the mighty walls of Bertand and Eddington and Independent.

A different face in the mirror today.

A better face.

“The opportunities the Lakeside offers are amazing; I now have a play published on a website and on iTunes after deciding to follow an email on a whim. I've learned to recognise opportunity.”

Scott Osbon, 2nd year undergraduate

Lakeside Youth Theatre

The Lakeside Youth Theatre also participated contributing 7 plays devised by 7 – 17 year olds, facilitated by current students and alumni and performed at the **Homecoming Weekend**.

Back stage

For those interested in back stage craft there was the opportunity to be involved with costumes, make-up, props and set building.

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University of Essex



Sometimes very small set building ...



In all the 50 performances engaged with an estimated **2,000 participants** including: playwrights, performers, back stage crew, youth theatre, facilitators and audiences.

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