

FUEL PRESENTS IN COLLABORATION SHIPWRIGHT

# THE GRETCHEN QUESTION

BY MELLY STILL AND MAX BARTON  
DIRECTED BY MELLY STILL

CO-COMMISSIONED BY FUEL, THE ALBANY AND  
WE ARE LEWISHAM



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# **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Enormous thanks to Noemie Goudal, Terje Isungset, Dan Milne, Victoria Moseley, Emily Mytton, George Siena and Emily Wachter whose creativity in early workshops 2015/16 inspired this production.

We would also like to thank Neill Brinkworth; Mekel Edwards; Sam Evans; Ian Moore; Somerset House; Wellcome Trust; and the National Theatre Wardrobe, Hair and Make-up, drawing office and armoury teams.

# INTRODUCTION

The Gretchen Question, written by Melly Still and Max Barton, has developed side by side with the accelerating climate crisis over the past six years. The initial stages of the show began in December 2015, and by today the questions it asks about climate change, colonialism, and the relationship between humans and nature, have become the most urgent questions in our lives – in the lives of communities and nations across the Earth.

The Gretchen Question is a site-specific work: rather than playing at a purpose-built venue, it will be presented in the garden of the Master Shipwright's House. One of the few remaining parts of Deptford's royal dockyard, the House was founded by Henry VIII in 1513 and became one of the most important shipbuilding yards in the world before closing in 1869. Coming to watch The Gretchen Question, audiences will be greeted with a backdrop highlighting global tensions on a local scale. Across the Thames, the tall skyscrapers of the City of London, an international financial centre, meets the gaze of audiences sat in Lewisham, one of the London boroughs most affected by pollution. The Gretchen Question speaks to this reality. It maps the rise of the climate crisis across Britain's history of industrial revolution and the empire-building project, raising crucial questions about the welfare of its people, the Commonwealth, and the country as a home to some of the largest global corporations today.

We hope audiences will leave us empowered, inspired, and full of questions about the world, our history, and our responsibilities to future generations.

We're delighted to present The Gretchen Question as part of London Borough of Culture. The show you will see at The Shipwright is the result of a long collaboration and partnership between Fuel, The Shipwright, The Albany and We Are Lewisham. We thank the various partners and supporters of this work and the brilliant creatives that have collectively worked to bring this show to life.

We specifically acknowledge the status and role of the Indigenous people in the climate crisis, from the Inuits to the Māori. The Gretchen Question is an act of working together with stewardship for the Earth in their example.

## WRITERS NOTE

In Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's play Faust, the eponymous protagonist sells his soul to the devil. Among many other exploits, he uses his new powers to seduce the object of his affection, Gretchen. Unsurprisingly this has a catastrophic impact on her, resulting in the deaths of both her brother and child, and ultimately her own execution. But along the way she asks a question which completely destroys Faust. Within the context of the play, it seems to be a starkly simple one - "do you believe in God?" But it's bald plainness is what lends it the ability to tear down all his lies and self-deceit. In German literary criticism this gave rise to the word "Gretchenfrage" (Gretchen question), and it is now used to describe any question which succinctly cuts to the heart of the matter. Such questions are always notoriously difficult to answer.

When work first began on this piece, the aim was to seek out a Gretchen question for human- caused climate change. To attempt to strip away our defences and send ourselves to uncomfortable places. The shape of those questions felt very different six years ago. And even then the problem already felt so big, so unstoppable, and so impersonal that finding questions to move ourselves as individuals proved painfully elusive.

So we found ourselves changing the framework of this question-asking, and began instead to seek out the core human traits that have led us to this place. This journey led us to explore a basic human urge, which has been expressed in twisted ways throughout Western history and sits at the heart of many of our largest prevailing structures. It is the need to grow. The question is harder to express but somewhere along the line is just as simple - how might we tune in to expressions of this urge practised by many of the planet's most ancient cultures, instead of manifesting it through personal ownership and expansionism.

MELLY STILL & MAX BARTON

# CREATIVE TEAM

WRITTEN BY

Melly Still & Max Barton

DIRECTED BY

Melly Still

MUSIC COMPOSED &  
PERFORMED BY

Second Body (Max Barton & Jethro  
Cooke)

DESIGNER

EM Parry

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Malcolm Rippeth

## CAST

YOHANNA EPHREM

Maisie

RYAN GERALD

Solander/Dave 1

TAMAIRA HESSON

Lulit

KATHERINE MANNERS

Davina/Goethe

LAUREN MOAKES

Gretchen

ALEX MUGNAIONI

Banks

AL NEDJARI

Spöring

CHRISTOPHER SAUL

Burrow

# TECHNICAL TEAM

PRODUCTION MANAGER	Vivienne Clavering
COMPANY STAGE MANAGER	Ella Corcoran
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER	Alastair Day
AV AND SOUND SUPERVISOR	Ross Light
LIGHTING PROGRAMMER	Gulika Nagpal
PRODUCTION ELECTRICIAN	Alex Hannah
SOUND NO 1	Aidan Good
COSTUME SUPERVISOR	Chantal Short
WARDROBE, WIGS, HAIR & MAKE-UP SUPERVISOR	Lauren Judd
LEAD IMAGE	Manuel Vason
REHEARSAL PHOTOGRAPHY	Alicia Clarke
PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPHY	Helen Murray
TRAILER FILMMAKER	Phoebe Fleming
FILMMAKER	Hugo Glendinning

# CREATIVE TEAM

## MELLY STILL

Melly Still has worked as a director, choreographer, designer and adaptor. Her work has travelled throughout the UK, Europe, Scandinavia, the Far East, India, US and Broadway. She has been nominated as Best Director and for Best Design at both the Olivier and Tony Awards for her National Theatre production of *Coram Boy*. Recent productions include Missy Mazzoli's opera *Breaking the Waves* for Theater St Gallen and Colin Teevan's play *The Seven Pomegranate Seeds* at the Rose Theatre. For Glyndebourne Festival's opening production in 2022, Melly directed *The Wreckers* by Ethel Smyth ("A thrilling epoch making production" *The Stage*). In November 2019, Melly's production of *My Brilliant Friend* - based on the acclaimed quartet of novels by Elena Ferrante - opened at the National Theatre, this epic production was first seen at the Rose Theatre, Kingston in 2017. Of the staging, Michael Billington of *The Guardian* wrote: "I am normally wary of novel adaptations but this version of Elena Ferrante's Neapolitan quartet is something of a triumph. April De Angelis has skilfully condensed the story into a two-part, five-and-a-half-hour play spanning nearly 50 years. But bald statistics don't do justice to Melly Still's production, which combines an intimate study of female friendship with a panoramic picture of postwar Italy." Other productions include *Cymbeline* for the RSC; *From Morning to Midnight* and *The Revenger's Tragedy* at the National Theatre; *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* in London's West End and a UK Tour of *The Lovely Bones* and *Rusalka* and *The Cunning Little Vixen* for Glyndebourne.

## MAX BARTON

Max Barton is a composer, director and playwright based in Kent, and one half of award-winning company *Second Body*. He trained in both music and theatre directing, and has spent his career exploring ways to fuse artforms in order to engage listeners and audiences in compelling new ways. This thread has run through all his work, from tiny experimental interdisciplinary gigs through to large-scale musical work performed internationally for thousands of people a night. He is a climate activist, who has made several projects on the subject and who has written music and led marches for *Extinction Rebellion*. His production of Philip Ridley's *Karagula* was nominated for eight Off-West End awards, winning three, and he is a long-time collaborator with Melly Still, working with her on a host of pieces in several different countries.



# CREATIVE TEAM

## **SECOND BODY**

Second Body is an experimental music and theatre collective founded by Max Barton and Jethro Cooke in 2019. Their debut show STYX has toured extensively internationally, won a Fringe World Award in Perth, and saw the company shortlisted for a Total Theatre Award for an emerging company in their founding year. Their as-yet-unreleased debut album Terra was an award-winning runner up at the 2022 Arts Foundation Futures Awards. As climate activists, science enthusiasts and multi-instrumentalists, the pair are dedicated to fusing music, theatre and cutting-edge science in order to shed new light on pressing socio-political issues. This year, their new show Concept for a Film will premiere at Edinburgh Fringe Festival, alongside Invisible Mending, which they have made in collaboration with theatre/maker musician Yoshika Colwell. This year, their new show Concept for a Film premiered at Edinburgh Fringe Festival, alongside Invisible Mending, which they made in collaboration with theatre/maker musician Yoshika Colwell.

## **E.M PARRY**

E.M. Parry is a transgender, trans-disciplinary artist and designer working across theatre, opera, live art, queer cabaret and drag, specialising in work which centres queer bodies and narratives. They are an Associate Artist at Shakespeare's Globe, a Linbury Prize Finalist, winner of the Jocelyn Herbert Award, and shared an Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement as part of the team behind Rotterdam. Theatre includes: Hamlet, As You Like It (Shakespeare's Globe); Translyria (Sogn go Fjordane Teater, Norway); Effigies of Wickedness (Gate Theatre/ENO); Rotterdam (Arts Theatre/Trafalgar Studios/Theatre503 – London, 59E59 Theater – New York, and UK Tour); An Improbable Musical (Improbable Co., Royal & Derngate Theatre), As You Like It (Northern Broadsides / New Vic Theatre, touring), We Dig (Emma Frankland & Co. / Oval House), Dorian (Reading Rep), Grimm Tales (Unicorn Theatre); The Strange Undoing of Prudencia Hart (New Vic Theatre); Here I Belong, Milked, Each Slow Dusk (Pentabus); Posh (Nottingham Playhouse/Salisbury Playhouse); The Miser (Watermill Theatre) and others. Their designs were recently included in Staging Places: UK Design for Performance (V&A Museum). They are currently artist in residence at the Triangle, Deptford. E.M. Parry trained at Motley and Wimbledon School of Art, and are currently a PhD candidate at the University of Brighton.

# CREATIVE TEAM

## **MALCOLM RIPPETH**

Malcolm has previously worked with Melly Still on *The Wreckers* (Glyndebourne), *The Seven Pomegranate Seeds* (Rose Theatre), *Breaking the Waves* (St. Gallen), *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* (West End), *The Mirror Crack'd* (Mumbai) and *My Brilliant Friend* (National Theatre).

He was an Associate Artist of Kneehigh Theatre, lighting shows including *Brief Encounter* (West End/Broadway), *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*, *The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk*, *Dead Dog in a Suitcase* (and other love songs), *Tristan & Yseult*, *The Tin Drum* and *The Red Shoes*. He was Lighting Associate of Shakespeare's Globe under Emma Rice, lighting *Twelfth Night*, *Boudica*, *The Secret Theatre*, *Romantics Anonymous* and many others.

His other theatre work includes: *Bagdad Cafe*, *Wise Children* (Old Vic); *Titus Andronicus* (Royal Shakespeare Company); *Songs for Nobodies*, *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (West End); *HMS Pinafore* (Guthrie Theater Minneapolis); *Malory Towers* (Wise Children); *Afterplay* (Coronet Theatre), *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (Chichester Festival Theatre); *The Birthday Party* (Manchester Royal Exchange); *The Threepenny Opera* (Graeae).

His opera designs include: *Capriccio*, *Alcina* (Santa Fe Opera); *Rusalka*, *The Turn of the Screw*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Don Giovanni*, *Falstaff*, *The Skating Rink* (Garsington); *Orpheus in the Underworld* (English National Opera); *War and Peace*, *In Parenthesis* (Welsh National Opera); *Stiffelio* (Opéra national du Rhin); *La Belle Hélène* (Opéra national de Lorraine); *Werther* (Opéra de Marseille); *Le Premier Meurtre* (Opéra de Lille); *Hercules* (Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe); *Madama Butterfly* (Oper Graz); *Ivan the Terrible* (Grange Park); *Pleasure*, *The Coronation of Poppea* (Opera North). Malcolm is the recipient of a WhatsOnStage Award and a Village Voice OBIE and has been nominated for Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle, New York Outer Critics Circle and Drama Desk Awards.



Fuel leads the field in independent producing in the UK's live performance sector, working with brilliant artists to explore urgent questions, to shine light on how we relate to each other and the world around us, and to tell untold stories by under-represented voices. From theatres to car parks, from schools to public spaces, Fuel produces high quality new theatre that reaches diverse audiences across the UK and internationally. Fuel collaborates with outstanding theatre makers with fresh perspectives and approaches who produce shows, performances or experiences which have direct and playful relationships with their audiences.

Fuel is celebrated for its pioneering producing model that develops innovative ideas through attentive collaboration, a spirit of curiosity, and an emphasis on trust. Fuel has developed a reputation for spirited and surprising new theatre, deep relationships with a wide range of artists, and passionate commitment to inclusion and care for young and diverse audiences.

Fuel was founded in 2004 and is led by Kate McGrath. Since its story began, Fuel has produced shows, festivals, films, installations, podcasts, apps and books. In doing so, Fuel has supported the artistic development of over 120 lead artists or companies and reached more than 1.5 million people, live and digitally, hosted over a hundred internships and been recognised with awards for its work. Fuel is currently working with artists and companies including Will Adamsdale, Travis Alabanza, Common Wealth, Inua Ellams, ESKA, Lewis Gibson, Alan Lane, Hannah Lavery, Pauline Mayers, Racheal Ofori, Toby Olié, Hema Palani, Jenny Sealey, Melly Still, Keisha Thompson, Uninvited Guests and Melanie Wilson. Fuel is supported by Arts Council England as a National Portfolio Organisation, Fenton Arts Trust, the Garrick Trust, the Backstage Trust, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, and the Garfield Weston Foundation.

Twitter: @fueltheatre

Instagram: @fueltheatre

# FOR FUEL

EVA BRADY

BELISA BRANÇAS

ANGELA BRYAN-BROWN

IRENE BUTERA

ANTHONY GRAY

ISOBEL GRIFFITHS

STUART HEYES

LUKE HOLBROOK

GREG HOWE

JULIA LEINO

DAVID LEWIS

CHARLOTTE MAFHAM

KATE MCGRATH

MOLLY MCPHEE

TODUN ODUYAMADE

MAGDA OSMAN

SHAMIMA NOOR

MARINA SACCO

TANYA STEPHENSON

INES TERCIO

RACHEL VAN ECK

SARAH WILSON-WHITE

BERNIE WHITTLE

JOANNE WILLIAMS



Image Credit Helen Murray

# shipwright

From our unique riverside home in Deptford's Master Shipwright's House, we produce live performances which put the audience at the heart of the action.

Our intimate indoor spaces offer our guests an extraordinary shared experience and an unforgettable connection with performers.

Our outdoor riverside stage welcomes thousands of visitors a year to enjoy epic theatre, live music and raucous cabaret at the water's edge, with food, drink and entertainment all in one spectacular place.

The development of new work at the Shipwright is made possible by the generous support of the John Hodgson Theatre Trust and the Donald and George Society of Friends Award.

## About the Building

The Master Shipwright's House is one of the few remaining parts of Deptford's former royal dockyard. Founded by Henry VIII in 1513 the King's Yard became one of the most important shipbuilding yards in the world before finally closing in 1869.

The Tudor house was rebuilt in 1708 for master shipwright Joseph Allin who, dissatisfied with his existing house, persuaded the Navy Board to invest in a remodelling. However, Allin overspent on the house and, amidst rumours of corruption, he was dismissed in 1715. After the dockyard closed, the house was used by the superintendent of the Foreign Cattle Market that occupied the yards for a time.

It was bought and restored by its current owners, Willi Richards and Chris Mažeika, in 1998. Since then they have made it a home and creative space for artists, performers, and audiences from around the globe. In 2020 Joseph Winters founded The Shipwright, the exciting next step in the long history of creative arts at the Master Shipwright's House, bringing together generations of inspiring work, and welcoming in new audiences to this remarkable space.

Twitter: [the.shipwright](#)

Facebook: [the\\_shipwright](#)

# FOR SHIPWRIGHT

JOSEPH WINTERS

EMMA HALSTEAD

DANIEL EMERY

LUIS GALLO MUDARRA

SACHA SPENCE





Based in the heart of Deptford, the Albany is a performing arts centre that exists to inspire, develop and support creativity in South East London. With year-round activities and events including award-winning programmes for young creatives and adults over 60, music, theatre, spoken word and family performance, the Albany is led by the talent and imagination of its local community.

With four performance spaces and a range of rehearsal space, meeting rooms and offices for community and creative businesses, the Albany is underpinned by a commitment to collaboration and artistic excellence. In a normal year 80,000 people attend performances or take part in projects at the Albany, and a further 100,000 attend events.

The Albany has 26 resident organisations based in the building, and manages and programmes Deptford Lounge and Canada Water Theatre on behalf of Lewisham and Southwark Councils. It is co-lead of the national Future Arts Centres network and lead partner of the Family Arts Campaign. In September 2020, the Albany was appointed Lead Delivery Partner for the Mayor's London Borough of Culture 2022 in Lewisham. They are taking lead responsibility for key strands of the programme and working closely with the team at Lewisham Council on the overall direction of the year.

Facebook: Albany.Deptford

Twitter: theAlbanySE8

Instagram: TheAlbanySE8

# FOR THE ALBANY

ALISON HAMILTON

AMY VAN ZYL

ANGEL DUST

BEN STEPHEN

CAITLIN CROSBY

CAROLYN EHMAN

CATHERINE NICHOLSON

CERI PAYNE

ED BURTON

FARUQ ADIGUN

GAVIN BARLOW

HAYLEY MURPHY

HELEN BROOKER

KIRSTY COLLANDER-BROWN

MARK ALLAN

MARK BLAY

MARY NRI

MATTHEW COOK

MEG HENDRICKSE

MIMI FINDLAY

REBECCA MOYNES

SAMMY LIZON

SHENAY GAUL

SOPHIE WADDY

TENDAYI MUTONGERWA

VICKI AMEDUME

AND TO COLLEAGUES IN  
FINANCE, VISITOR SERVICES,  
ADMINISTRATION, CREATIVE,  
COMMS AND TECHNICAL  
PRODUCTION.





## **ABOUT WE ARE LEWISHAM**

Lewisham is the Mayor's London Borough of Culture 2022. The year-long cultural programme, We Are Lewisham, is a celebration of our history, people and place, with hundreds of events happening across venues, parks and street corners. Led by Lewisham Council and the Albany and created by and with the people of the borough, the programme is inspired by Lewisham's history of activism and standing up for equality. It celebrates the borough's diversity and trailblazers past and present, highlighting the power of culture to create change.

## **ABOUT THE MAYOR'S LONDON BOROUGH OF CULTURE AWARD**

London Borough of Culture is a Mayor of London initiative, launched in June 2017. The award puts culture at the heart of local communities, where it belongs. It shines a light on the character and diversity of London's boroughs and brings culture to everyone, so that all Londoners have the chance to be part of something extraordinary.

## **ABOUT LEWISHAM COUNCIL**

Lewisham is a vibrant and culturally diverse borough. This is reflected in all aspects of daily life, from the response to the pandemic where the community rallied to support our most vulnerable residents, to the 170 languages spoken in our homes, schools and businesses. We have a rich history of welcoming people from all over the world and are proud to be recognised as the UK's first Borough of Sanctuary, for our work in championing the rights of refugees and migrants.



We are committed to tackling inequalities so that everybody has the opportunity to succeed. The pandemic has shone a light on the disparities experienced by those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds in all areas of their lives. In November, Lewisham became the first local authority to commission a headcount study of high streets to better support our BAME independent retailers through Covid 19 recovery and to champion the diversity of town centres.

As we plan ahead, we are working towards a fairer, greener, healthier and more economically sound future for all in Lewisham. This means continuing our efforts to tackle climate change for generations to come; ensuring that good health and wellbeing is equally accessible to everyone; and safeguarding local jobs and upskilling residents with tools they need to succeed. Building on the community spirit and activism that has helped us through the pandemic, we are committed to creating a Future Lewisham we can all have a part in.

Facebook: [WeAreLewisham](#)

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fuel



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FOUNDATION

the space