**Park People**

Meetings, interactions, and transformations.

V.3 University Parks 26/08/23

The focus of the performance is a park bench (see map and photo) on North Walk (inscribed ‘Cholmondely’), but the routes to the bench are also performance areas, and half the time should be used for the initial approach. The performance time is about an hour in total.

We will set off as a neutral group from the parking spaces at South Lodge. When we reach the intersection of Oak Walk and the central path that leads to the cricket pavilion (see map), we will split up, begin to embody our ‘characters’ and take varying routes of different lengths, so that we don’t arrive at the same time.

The bench has magical powers, as do any items left on it. To begin with, one of the musicians occupies the bench, and plays as if busking, but as the first dancer approaches, he moves away, leaving behind some object. The other musician approaches randomly, like the dancers, from a distance.

Each dancer embodies and is dressed as a different character (*a ‘ghost’, rather than a normal person*). These characters should remain recognisable throughout the performance, but can evolve. Each character has a story. Each has a piece of clothing and/or an object that can be discarded.

The characters enter the space (i.e. the area from which the bench is visible), either solo or in pairs. They meet (or do not), interact (or do not), sit or lie on the bench (or do not). *Only one or two people should be on the bench at a time, or three at the most. Sometimes it should be empty (except for an object).* You can leave the bench, move away, and return later.

At the bench, some transformation takes place and a garment and/or object can be both taken and left behind. This should not, however, change the essence of the character. (*It could be understood as either the outward appearance changes while the internal landscape stays the same or vice versa*. *Remember that this is dance, not theatre, so the ‘story’ is embodied rather than acted.)*

***Random examples of characters/secrets/dilemmas***

*1: Last embers: an elderly tramp, carrying a plastic bag with all their past mistakes, disguised as newspapers, has received a letter from an unrequited long-ago love, saying they are returning to the city. The park is where they first met.*

*2: Lost innocence: Adam (or Eve) cast out from the Garden of Eden, perhaps carrying an apple. They are exposed and bereft and ashamed, having to deal with Eden transformed, dressed in whatever is left behind or taken from others. How do they view the people they meet, based on their limited experience so far (God, Eve/Adam, the serpent, angels)?*

*3: Burden: A child who possesses all of human knowledge seeks solace in a piece of string. They have been dressed by their blind grandmother and know something isn’t quite right with their appearance, but what?*

*4: (from Nathalie, 12/08): Blossom: A woman, who yearns to be a flower, carries great sorrow for all flowers. She looks for somewhere she can grow.*

*:5 (from Ayala 12/08): Exoskeleton: A ‘debutante’ in her first ball-gown, feels that she may really be a deep ocean creature, an extinct arthropod perhaps.*

A character can enter, leave, and re-enter the main performance area more than once, making sure that space and time is given to each story / interaction / transformation and there is an interesting texture to the choreography (melody / countermelody / harmony) and variety of pace.

The characters and interactions should develop gradually and not too much should be happening at once, though the scene can gradually become more chaotic.

**Finale**

The park people gradually accumulate together on/under/against the bench until all but one are there. Individually, they start to speak, to tell their story – to each other, to the audience, to the sky, etc., until all are speaking at once. This could be in ‘gibberish’, rather than actual language. Again, give this process time to develop. Eventually the last person enters – the ‘park keeper’ (*need to decide who this will be*). They clean the bench, displacing the people, who move away as vociferous group. The ‘park keeper’ leaves an object on the bench and exits also.

*Costume*

Please decide in advance which ‘ghost’ you might like to inhabit and what your ‘back story’ might be and bring appropriate ‘dressing-up-box’ clothes, plus props.

We have decided against white make-up, so that we are less obviously performers.