



THEPOETRYSOCIETY



Celebrate Everything *About Us*: coming to Luton from 14 to 20 April

- A free open-air spectacular event in Luton exploring 13.8 billion years of history
- *About Us* is part of *UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK*, a once-in-a-lifetime celebration of creativity taking place across the UK in 2022
- Live shows created by the award-winning video artists behind the London 2012 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony, Stemettes and The Poetry Society featuring poems and Scratch animations by young people from across the UK
- B.I.G. Hat Factory Choir, with members of Luton Choral Society perform brand new original score by Nitin Sawhney CBE
- Register your interest now: Singers aged 18+ of all experiences and abilities can still apply to join B.I.G. Hat Factory Choir for the live performances of *About Us*
- *About Us*, in front of the Town Hall, Luton from 14 to 20 April

Thursday 27 January 2022: *About Us*; a spectacular, never before seen, free open-air event that combines live performances and multimedia installations to celebrate the entire history of the universe from Big Bang to the present day arrives in **Luton** on **14 April 2022** for one week only as part of its five-stop UK tour.

Featuring poems and Scratch animations from young people in Bedfordshire, across England and the rest of the UK, the 25-minute projection shows will immerse audiences in an exhilarating journey through 13.8 billion years of history since the dawn of the universe in a celebration of the infinite ways in which we connect to the cosmos, natural world, and one another.

About Us is the opening event for *UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK*, a once-in-a-lifetime celebration of creativity taking place across the UK this year; an unprecedented opportunity for people to come together and take part in a series of awe-inspiring major events and creative projects for free. *UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK* is funded and supported by the four governments of the UK and is commissioned and delivered in partnership with Belfast City Council, Creative Wales, and EventScotland.

At night *About Us* will transform the landmark Town Hall into a vast canvas combining awe-inspiring live projection-mapped animation with poetry, music, and beautiful live choral singing to create a unique spectacle. Positioned across the Square, a raft of freestanding plinths containing dynamic theatrical lighting and LED screens will offer the counterpoint of the human-scale narrative against the vast cosmic scale imagery of the video projection. The evening shows will feature winning entries from the *About Us* nationwide poetry and Scratch animation competition, on the theme of 'connectivity and the universe', selected by a host of distinguished judges: Poet Laureate, Simon Armitage; mathematician, author and broadcaster, Rachel Riley; Scots Makar, Kathleen Jamie; co-founder and CEO of Stemettes, Dr Anne-Marie Imafidon MBE; writer, poet, performer, educator, UK and International Poetry Slam winner, Keith Jarrett; National Poet of Wales, Ifor ap Glyn; co-founder and Creative Director of body>data>space and Stemettes Futures Trustee, Ghislaine Boddington; and award-winning Northern Irish poet, Stephen Sexton.

Acclaimed composer and musician **Nitin Sawhney CBE** has composed the original score which will be performed as part of the live shows by **B.I.G. Hat Factory Choir, with members of Luton Choral Society**. Choir performances of *About Us* are musically directed by composer, Osnat Schmool, who will conduct alongside local choir

EMBARGOED until 00:01 GMT on Thursday 27 January 2022

leaders. Sawhney has scored more than 60 films and his past collaborators have included Sir Paul McCartney and the London Symphony Orchestra.

There is still an exciting opportunity to join B.I.G. Hat Factory Choir for the live performances of *About Us*. Singers aged 18+ of all experiences and abilities have until Monday 14 February to register interest at info@bigmusiccompany.org.uk with your name, Voice part (if you know it) and the phrase 'About Us Luton: Yes' in the subject line.

By day pop-up multimedia installations will be open from 10am to 5pm to showcase the boundless creativity of local children and young people with poems and Scratch animations created in workshops in Luton and the surrounding area.

Lysander Ashton, Director of 59 Productions and Project Director for *About Us*, said: *"About Us has been a unique collaborative process bringing together poets, scientists, musicians, visual artists and school children from across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. All of these unique voices have contributed to create a dazzlingly rich composite view of the extraordinary universe we all share. About Us is an invitation to experience a world where you are made of stars, you're built from a trillion intricate cells working in harmony, you are related to dinosaurs and you can make a connection to a billion people with the press of a button; it's a celebration of some of the incredible things that make us, us, and I can't wait for audiences to come and see it".*

Martin Green CBE, Chief Creative Officer of UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK, said: *"UNBOXED is the UK's most ambitious celebration of creativity to date and this free spectacular performance will show us what can be achieved when we harness the creative power of scientists, technicians, producers, musicians, poets and mathematicians to produce and present a truly extraordinary and inspirational experience, that audiences, and the choirs and young people who have contributed, will never forget."*

Dr Anne-Marie Imafidon MBE, co-founder and CEO of Stemettes, said: *"STEAM allows us to look at scientific concepts through a brand new lens. There's more room for ideation and the freedom to create something new by taking an intersectional route to solving a problem. Building on tried and tested methods, STEAM supports the creative process so that people can help solve real-world problems. This multidimensional approach to creativity will be demonstrated through the use of Scratch animation projects in the About Us shows and installations which will provide a feast for the senses."*

Cllr Sian Goding, portfolio holder responsible for Arts & Culture at Luton Council, said: *"We are delighted that this outdoor spectacular will be coming to Luton and with the range of shows and installations taking place we know it will bring a real buzz to the town centre. It's also a great opportunity for local singers to get involved – we've got so much talent in our town and it will be wonderful to see them on show. About Us is just one of many events taking place in Luton this year including Chinese New Year celebrations, the Queen's Jubilee celebrations and Carnival and is something to really look forward to".*

About Us has been created by the award-winning **59 Productions**, one of the creative and technological forces behind the London 2012 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony; **Stemettes**, the award-winning social enterprise working to engage, inform and connect the next generation of women and non-binary people into Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths (STEAM) by showcasing a diversity of people working in STEAM; and one of the UK's most dynamic arts organisations, **The Poetry Society**.

About Us is on a five-stop tour from March to May 2022, travelling to **Paisley** from 1 to 6 March (public preview: 28 February), **Derry–Londonderry** from 15 to 21 March, **Caernarfon** from 30 March to 5 April, **Luton** from 14 to 20 April and **Hull** from 30 April to 6 May.

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All *About Us* events are outdoor, free and unticketed, and suitable for audiences of all ages. **Find out more:** aboutus.earth

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Notes to Editors'

Accompanying press images can be downloaded here:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/8ojgbxj5xsiga9v/AACzIAHg2xBLf4ZCg90MG_vPa?dl=0

Press contacts:

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For *About Us* regional press enquiries, please contact Marcus Stanton: marcus@marcusstanton.co.uk

For UNBOXED, please contact Jeanette Ward: Jeanette.Ward@unboxed2022.uk

Listings:

***About Us* in Luton**

14 to 20 April 2022

Location: Front of the Town Hall, Luton, LU1 2AZ

Multiple live shows every evening – show times from 9pm to 10:30pm

Live show running time: 25 mins

About Us daytime installations are open between 10am and 5pm

All events are free and unticketed

To find out more, visit: aboutus.earth

UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK is a celebration of creativity taking place across the UK in 2022, designed to reach millions and bring people together. It features free large-scale events, installations, and globally accessible digital experiences in the UK's most ambitious showcase of creative collaboration. Produced by some of the brightest minds in science, technology, engineering, arts and maths, UNBOXED features ten major multi-site and digital creative projects that share new ideas and possibilities for the future. Events and activities take place from 1 March to 2 October 2022 – from the Outer Hebrides to Dover and from Omagh to Swansea, and across traditional and online media. UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK is funded and supported by the four governments of the UK and is commissioned and delivered in partnership with Belfast City Council, Creative Wales, and EventScotland.

unboxed2022.uk

1 March to 2 October 2022

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59 Productions is a design studio and production company that specialises in story-driven design. From architectural projection mapping to exhibitions; from Virtual Reality experiences to events; from theatrical design to technical consultancy, 59's company of writers, directors, architects, animators, visual artists and technologists produce artistic work that seeks to amaze audiences of all kinds. Building on more than a decade of experience making theatrical work for some of the world's greatest venues – including Olivier and Tony Award-winning work for the National Theatre, West End and Broadway, and for many of the major cultural organisations of the world – the company has more recently become renowned for creating spectacular public artworks, projection-mapping some of the world's most iconic buildings, including the Sydney Opera House, Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, the Washington Monument in DC and the United Nations Headquarters in New York. 59 Productions is also known for projects such as the *David Bowie Is* exhibition at the V&A Museum, which it designed, and for its own multi award-winning work in Virtual Reality.

59productions.co.uk | Twitter: @59productions | Instagram: @59_productions

Dr Anne-Marie Imafidon MBE created the **Stemettes** in 2013 to ensure girls, young women, and non-binary young people know that technical fields are for them. The Stemettes' mission is to inspire, encourage and support young people into STEM fields with their 'Free, Fun, Food' ethos. As of 2021, Stemettes has changed the lives of more than 55,000 young people across the UK, Ireland and parts of Europe. Stemettes run more than 50 interventions each year - a mixture of intersectional cohort programmes, impactful events and inspirational content platforms. These interventions improve perceptions of STEM, raise awareness of options within STEM, grow the network these young people have across STEM and improve their self and STEM confidence. The next steps for Stemettes lie in developing the reach and programmes they have across the country to STEM cold spot areas, extending the Stemettes provision to Parents, Guardians and Teachers (who the Stemettes call Influencers) and transitioning alumnae into STEM fields. Anyone wanting to help can donate to Stemettes Futures, spread the word about Stemettes as far and wide as possible, and volunteer on a Stemettes programme. For anyone already in the industry, the best way to support would be to ensure that Stemettes doesn't need to exist. Use your sphere of influence to be a good ally, ensure that equitable practice is employed in your work-place across hiring practices, promotion and the allocation of positions of responsibility.

stemettes.org | Twitter, Instagram, Facebook & LinkedIn /Stemettes

The Poetry Society is the UK's leading organisation for poetry. With innovative education and commissioning programmes, and a packed calendar of performances, competitions, and digital projects, The Poetry Society champions poetry for all ages. The Poetry Society was founded in 1909 to promote a 'more general recognition and appreciation of poetry'. Since then, it has grown into a dynamic arts organisation, representing poets and poetry both nationally and internationally. It has a thriving worldwide membership, publishes the UK's leading poetry magazine, *The Poetry Review*, and runs influential talent development schemes such as the National Poetry Competition and Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award. Every year people of all ages participate in Poetry Society activities from every single postcode area of the UK and more than 100 countries around the world. Experts in young people's poetry education, The Poetry Society organises poet visits in classrooms year-round, as well as creating trusted teaching resources, facilitating work in informal learning settings and running the vibrant online community Young Poets Network. The Poetry Society is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation and a registered charity.

poetrysociety.org.uk | youngpoetsnetwork.org.uk | Facebook & Twitter @PoetrySociety | Instagram @thepoetrysociety