

PROFESSOR SURI KRISHNAMMA

The Way Out

ORCID Reference: 0000-0002-1928-0124

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1. SUPPORTING STATEMENT

Output title	The Way Out
Output type	Q - Visual Media
Output date	2020

Suri Krishnamma was approached by the producers of the project to collaborate in writing and directing the film at Battersea Arts Centre. Research, writing, planning, rehearsals and filming took place in January and February 2020. Krishnamma researched and developed the story, and worked with writers on the script, a designer, the producers, the camera team and performers to plan the filmed performance.

The film is a live action theatrical adventure in which a young person (The Outsider) escapes into a seemingly empty building at night and meets a mysterious individual (The Guide) who offers her an alternative way out. We follow the Guide and Outsider through the building, as the Guide urges the Outsider to explore deeper, to seek meanings in what they see. There follows a succession of performances by diverse performance artists appearing in a Dantesque labyrinth of rooms and corridors, each one communicating a life-lesson about the challenges they have faced and sought to overcome, enabling the Outsider to gain the strength to meet the outside world and escape from the labyrinth.

The work is innovative in that it was filmed in one continuous shot in numerous locations within the Battersea Arts Centre incorporating six consecutive live performances. The project was funded by the BBC and Arts Council England. The Way Out was broadcast on BBC 4, 9 April 2020 as part of BBC 4's Performance Live series and was available on the BBC iPlayer.

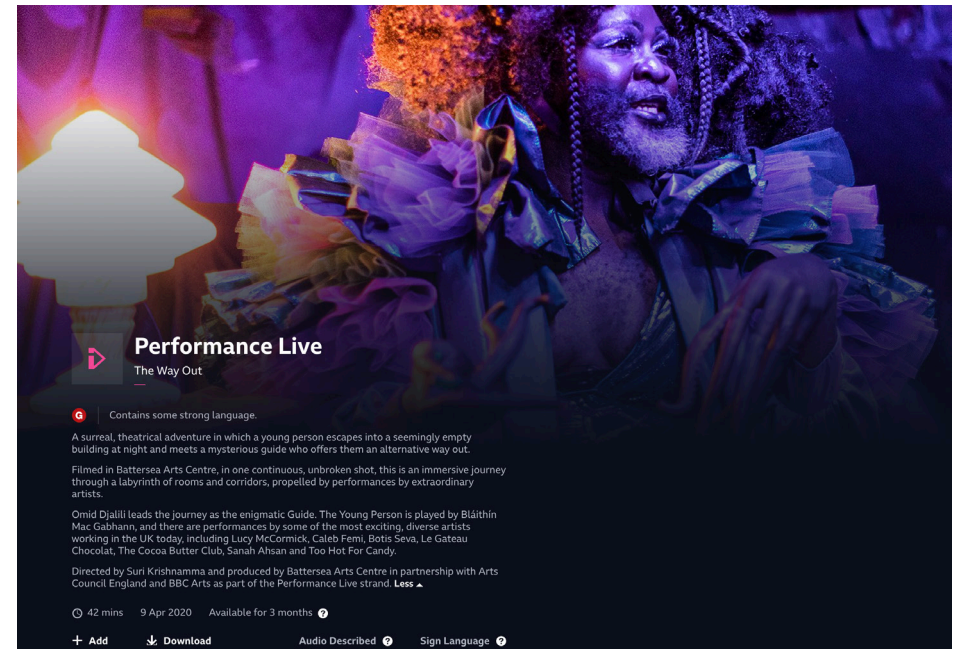


Fig.1 BBC iPlayer screenshot

2. RESEARCH PROCESS

Krishnamma started the process with extensive location research in the Battersea Arts Centre, the main lobby, corridors, theatre spaces, even the rafters to gather inspiration, as well as into the history of the building - the former Battersea Town Hall. Sokurov's *Russian Ark* (2002), shot in the Winter Palace, St Petersburg was a key source. Krishnamma wanted the story to involve a guide, to showcase a number of performance artists and to include a magical element. He began to draw on fairy stories and magical tales for inspiration, particularly *The Wizard of Oz* and *Alice in Wonderland*. A story developed where the central character was a 'Dorothy-figure' who, finding herself having 'fallen into' the building, tries to find a way out and embarks on a journey, during which she gathers other characters who are themselves lost in some way.

The writing process included two other writers, Nick Mark Harding and Omid Djalili. Krishnamma drafted a detailed treatment of the story, then Harding wrote a first draft of the script, to which Krishnamma added some revisions. The writers then focused more on the idea of having a Guide leading an Outsider – someone fleeing from a danger and being taken on a journey through the building while they search for an exit. During this journey, they would meet a series of performance artists and learn things about life while passing through their performances. An underlying theme of the work was a response to Brexit, with the Outsider running into a seemingly hostile building searching for a way out but learning that the building isn't hostile at all but filled with a warm, welcoming, diverse and inspiring group of artists. Omid Djalili was approached to be involved as the guide figure and sent a script draft, partly because of his experience with live performance and improvisation. Djalili, subsequently added some dialogue. Bláithín MacGabhann plays the Outsider.

Using some research and ideas generated by Krishnamma and the producers, a colour palette and general visual document was created by the production designer, Soraya Gilanni, which informed development of the sets and costumes, designed by Lorraine Bhattachary.

A key element of the project was that it would be filmed in one continuous unbroken shot, so much research involved planning how this would be achieved. Krishnamma used the Movi system and the camera team at Motion 24. Planning enabled the team to attach and detach the camera from one piece of equipment to another without cutting, for example: from hand-held to using 'goalposts', back to hand-held, back to goalposts, then onto a crane, back to hand-held, onto a dolly, through a window and back to hand-held, back onto a dolly, then off the dolly to the final hand-held sequence. Moreover, Krishnamma wanted to capture and reflect the live performances with adventurous and unexpected camera rises and moves.

The selection of the performance artists was led by one of the project's producers at the Arts Centre. There were two weeks of rehearsal in the Battersea Arts Centre spaces and three nights of filming.

<https://bac.org.uk/the-making-of-the-way-out/>
(accessed 29 December 2020)



Fig.2 Suri Krishnamma and crew (© Battersea Arts Centre)

Camera Plan 1 Ground Floor THE WAY OUT Director Suri Krishnamma FINAL

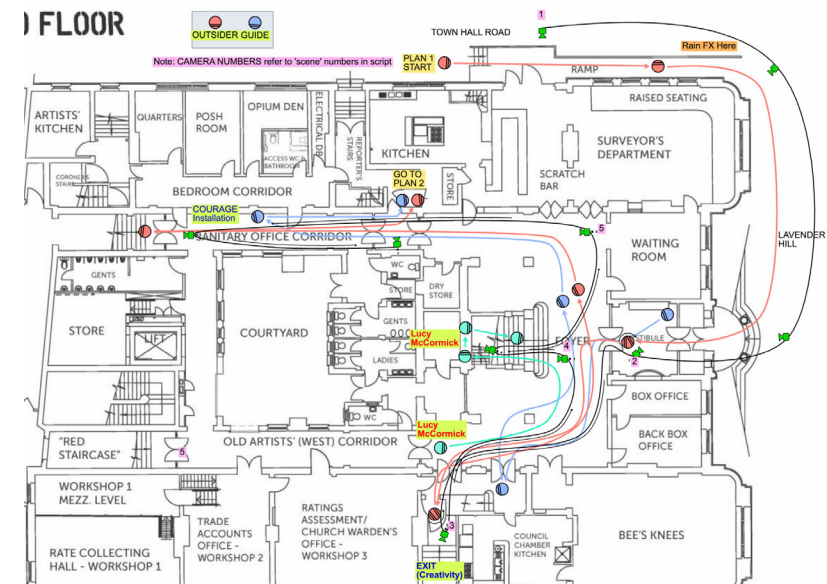


Fig.3 Sample Camera Plan (1 of 6)

Working titles: *Lessons for Life*. OR *The Way Out*

- Artists listed in current draft running order
- Draft of scripted journey of Guide and Outsider to follow. Any timings tbc




	ARTIST /COMPANY	Current <i>Lesson</i> / Performance idea	Where eg
1	 <p>Botis Seva – Far From the Norm renowned for experimenting with hip hop form whilst tackling socio-political concerns and committed to producing evocative, authentic work by taking audiences on visceral journeys whilst presenting conceptual yet compelling truths. http://www.farfromthenorm.com/</p>	<p><i>everything comes through struggle. Have courage</i> Explosive start - movement that cuts through the emptiness of the building - impelling the Outsider further inside / preventing them from leaving. The Guide then appears out of the darkness Piece riffs off latest production BLKDOG - A genre-defying blend of hip hop dance and free form antics, exploring the inner battlefield, searching for coping mechanisms in the ultimate hunt for acceptance. To backing track 5 mins</p>	the foyer and staircase
2	 <p>Gateau Chocolat work extends beyond the world of drag performance with career in the field of opera and theatre, and in his own devised solo work https://legateauchocolat.com/</p>	<p><i>Find a safe place</i> Song and spoken word. Devising a piece that includes them singing (with live or recorded accompaniment) either : Anchor Song https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17yWeynOfOI or: I Fell in Love with a Dead Boy https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H03VpvUtm6k 5-7mins</p>	Public space – eg descending a staircase. Or they have an idea about emerging from a corridor wall
3	 <p>Caleb Femi Poet and director featured in the Dazed 100 list of the next generation shaping youth culture. Using film, photography and music he pushes the boundaries of poetry both on the page, in performance and on digital mediums. has written and directed short films commissioned by the BBC and Channel 4 and poems by the Tate Modern, The Royal Society for Literature, St Paul's Cathedral, the BBC, the Guardian and many more. Between 2016-2018, was the Young People's Laureate for London https://www.calebfemi.com/about</p>	<p><i>You have the power to choose your own fate</i> Based on his poem Gentle Youth https://soundcloud.com/calebfemi/gentle-youth-ft-jordan-fc-prod backing track 5mins</p>	Possibly rooftop or courtyard

Fig.4 Outline of artists/ lesson/location

COLOUR PALETTE + GENERAL

The building has a beautiful sandy patina, and presents the opportunity to compose some very painterly frames.

Palette starts simple, e.g the sand of the walls with the red of The Guide's costume or the red walls with little other colour injection.

The palette can develop later in the lavender of the rafters, the silvers, reds and burnt oranges of the Cocoa Butter Club's speakeasy, the glowing yellow of the Octagonal Dome, perfected in the metallic gold heart of the finale.

Sand juxtaposed with red, bleeding into the finale's pink, metallics, greens, yellow, gold.

Conceptually: idea of nature either in rain, wind, flowers, plants, or the moon, highlighting the beauty of the building, and hinting at ways out.

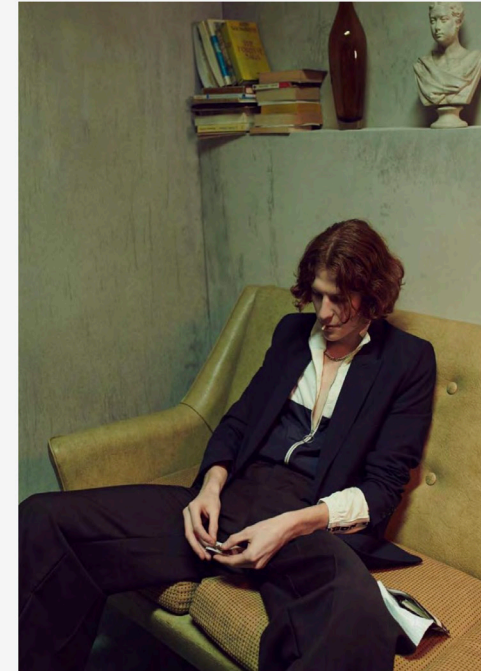


Fig.5 Sample colour palette/mood board

3. RESEARCH INSIGHTS



Fig.6 The Guide and The Outsider (© Battersea Arts Centre)

The Way Out is a 42-minute, one shot film of live performance. Krishnamma and the producers wanted to create a narrative that could bring together some of the most innovative artists, reflecting different voices representing the breadth of current performance in the UK and set the task of how to film a number of live performances in different locations within the Battersea Arts Centre building using one continuous shot. As the Director, this was principally Krishnamma's creative and technical achievement for which he received a Royal Television Society Craft and Design Award.

Artists

Lucy McCormick

Botis Seva

Le Gateau Chocolat

Caleb Femi

Sanah Ahsan

The Coco Butter Club

Production Team

Director – Suri Krishnamma

Writers – Nick Mark Harding & Suri Krishnamma

Producers – Thea Jones (for Battersea Arts Centre), Andrew Fettis (for BBC4)

<https://vimeo.com/504801607/0469a4bacf>



Fig.7 Lucy McCormick Rain Song (© Battersea Arts Centre)



Fig.8 Botis Seva Have Courage (© Battersea Arts Centre)

4. DISSEMINATION

The Way Out was broadcast on BBC 4, 9 April 2020 as part of BBC 4's Performance Live series and was available on the BBC iPlayer and to download from April 2020 to March 2021.

The film is available at:

<https://vimeo.com/504801607/0469a4bacf>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p0892kzy/performance-live-the-way-out>
(accessed 29 December 2020)

Reviews

The film was reviewed in The Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2020/apr/14/the-way-out-review-battersea-arts-centre-omid-djalili>
(accessed 12 March 2021)

Awards

The work received a 2020 Royal Television Society Craft and Design Award for Multicamera Work to Suri Krishnamma & Camera Team for Performance Live: The Way Out

<https://rts.org.uk/award/rts-craft-design-awards-2020>
(accessed 12 March 2021)



Fig.9 The Cocoa Butter Club (© Battersea Arts Centre)



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