

everyman&PLAYHOUSE

Transcript for Love, Liverpool: an A-Z of Hope - Letter 4: Goodbye, Liverpool... for now

This audio recording features the voices of ten people. Our Artistic Director **Gemma Bodinetz** gives us an introduction to a piece by Chloe Moss, read by **Helen Carter**. We then hear from **Paula Cullinan** and **P.E. Holdsworth** reading their own public submissions. **Gemma Bodinetz** then returns and is joined first by actor **David Morrissey** who shares his favourite poem and then after another theatre memory from **Gemma**, writer **Jonathan Harvey** shares his favourite joke. We return to our public submissions with stories from **Gerard Langton** and **Paula Hulme**. We end with a message from actor **Elliott Kingsley**.

The theatres' Artistic Director Gemma Bodinetz introduces this week's letter:

It's really wonderful to have as part of this letter to Liverpool, a piece by the wonderful Chloe Moss read by the equally amazing Helen Carter. And actually, this one is dear to me and so, so many levels. The very first play that I directed actually had, at the Everyman, had in its cast Nick Moss, a fantastic actor and now film director from Liverpool. And I hadn't made the connection but he also had a sister called Chloe, who was a wonderful playwright, and we've produced her work on our stages. *The Long Way Home*, some of you may remember was a very beautiful play at the Everyman written by Chloe. What Chloe, Helen and I have in common is that we all live in Waterloo/Crosby. And we've all enjoyed a drink in *The Volly*, which is for those of you from this part of Liverpool a rather, totemic pub, that is very, very ordinary on some levels very small, but very special. Chloe's piece is a beautiful letter to her father, and to a Liverpool pub that is dear to anybody who lives in this part of North Liverpool. I hope you enjoy this love letter from this wonderful city.

-end-

-Our first story begins

The Volly by Chloe Moss, read by Helen Carter

[there's pub sounds throughout this piece]

February 23rd 1976. Ten o'clock at night. Bells whiskey. Double probably. Always a double on a special occasion. Just the one... or two ... I mean, there's special occasions and then there's *this*.

A daughter.

Born a few hours earlier. Seven pounds, six ounces. Little sister to a four-year-old boy. A family complete.

I want to say he bought everyone a drink but that might be pushing it. They all raised their glasses anyway, shouted cheers and congratulations and someone pressed a silver coin in his palm. *"Give this to the baby. Make sure you put it in her hand now won't yer?"*

The Volunteer Canteen. Better known as The Volly. One of the backdrops to my childhood, a couple of hundred yards from the house I was born in.

Years later I'm lying on the big bed, chin cupped in hands watching mum get ready. High heels, lipstick and clouds of Rive Gauche. A night out with Dad. The Volly followed by the Golden Phoenix on Hanover street where they carve carrots into Lotus flowers to decorate the food with. Mini works of art to carry home, carefully wrapped in tissue. The smell of smoke, perfume and ale from a goodnight kiss delivered while we pretend to be asleep.

Sometimes on the way home from the park or shopping in South Road, we walk past and the door is open and I crane my neck to try and see what it's like inside. I hear laughing and I imagine cocktail dresses and glittery earrings, posh suits and cigars, songs and dancing on tables.

One day a man staggers out as we pass and instinctively my mum steers me out of his path. He looks like he might fall or be sick... or both. Instead he sits on the pavement curb and hunches over head in hands like he's expecting something to fall from the sky any second.

"I'm sorry. I'm not drunk. I mean I am a bit drunk but I'm not a drunk. I had a few drinks and now I'm... y'know what I mean."

What bothers me more than the man being drunk is the fact that I can see a pool of what looks like dog piss right next to him.

"I had some news. It's not great news. It's bad news... so I was just doing that...drownin' me... y'know what I mean... Sorrows"

In bed that night I imagine what might have happened and it dawns on me that the Volly isn't just for laughter and babies being born it's also for drunk men with sorrows.

February 23rd 1997. A family drink before a night out to celebrate my twenty first. The story of the night I was born *again* and... I'm itching to leave, waiting impatiently for the taxi to turn up and take me to Cream in town. I down two white wine and lemonades and check my make-up in the loo five times before rushing out of the door leaving a helium balloon bobbing above the table where my family are still sitting.

The night itself is... fine... but a bit of an anti-climax like most big events and the next day I can't help thinking that the best bit was the drink in the Volly before.

I'd happily die before admitting this though.

November 2013. I move back home after fifteen years in London, partner and baby boy in tow. From a second storey flat with no space to swing a cat to an actual house with stairs and a garden. A beach in front of our house and family five minutes down the road. We cheers to the future in the small pub that looks different now. Or it looks the same but feels different. I want to stay here around the table with no desire to leg it somewhere more exciting. My son takes uncertain steps, holding onto tables to steady himself while his cousin follows, arms outstretched ready to catch him.

My dad looks to my Mum smiling *"This is all because of us."*

February 23rd 2020. My birthday. Red wine I think but it's hazy. My dad isn't with us. He died two days ago. I sit forty- four years after that night with the whisky - make it a double, it's a girl - and the silver coin and the decades to follow where I go and come back and go and come back and go and come back and then stay.

The Volly feels dreamlike again but not the dream where the woman in a sequined cocktail dress, with earrings that bounce rainbows of light around the room laughs her head off and dances on tables. It feels like a recurring dream I had as a kid where although everything looked exactly as it should, something cataclysmic had changed and I couldn't fathom what it was.

Then my kids come and sit either side of me, snuggling in tight because they know this feeling. There's two now. A girl this time. Seven pounds and six ounces. Little sister for my boy. A family complete.

"We got a pound off the lady, mum"

The woman at the bar smiles and waves.

I smile back.

-end-

-A new story begins

Pier Head Memories written and read by Paula Cullinan

Fish and chips, fried donuts or a 10p mix and thirsty pack down at the Pier Head. Waiting for the Daffodil to bumper at the water's edge, the sun beams dancing across the clouds like paparazzi in anticipation. The excitement of boarding 'ship' holding the ropes and she sways, rushing for an upstairs open air seat. The sky wraps around you gently and joins you in your adventure across the Mersey.

-end-

-A new story begins

To the First City I Ever Loved by P.E Holdsworth

like an old love
i know your flaws
my hands slip over
familiar curves
rediscovering
your beauty
podgy and comforting
between my toes
your voice as
unnoticeable to me
as my own

i love you
but i don't want you
i love you

though i can barely
tell it anymore
i love you
because you are
doughy
flesh with a once
beguiling to me smile

you are
my first wife
to whom i acceptingly return
sighing and
slowly
shagging—
the missionary stance doing
a number on my worn
down
knees.

-end-

-Our picnic begins

An introduction to our picnic introduction by [Gemma Bodinetz](#)

It's a real treat for me to have the opportunity of creating part of these Love, Liverpool letters. My personal contribution has actually been, in some ways asking some of the hosts of our picnics to provide us with delicacies as we go around Liverpool and listen to these memories. And it's been really wonderful to hear what Frank Cottrell Boyce and Cathy Tyson, many of our wonderful alumni from the Everyman & Playhouse have given us and today we've got a really, I think, delicious picnic offered actually by two fantastic Liverpool people, both of whom have marked significant moments in my time here as Artistic Director. The first is a poem that is read by David Morrissey and interestingly, it's a Roger McGough poem. And of course, Roger provided us with another lovely picnic on our route. And Roger remains a friend but also marks a fabulous moment for me in the theatres when we actually produce three of his adaptations of Moliere's work beginning with *Tartuffe*, which maybe some of you

remember all the way back in the Capital of Culture. But when I spoke to David about what he'd like to contribute, he said, this poem meant a great deal to him and he'd like to read it for people to listen to as they ponder about this city and the great artists and moments that this city can give you.

David and I first worked together in 2011. And it was the year when we were knocking down the Everyman and of course, that years sticks with me as much as any other maybe more than any other. It was a very moving experience and that 2011 production of *Macbeth* was the very last production on the old Everyman stage. And it meant a huge amount to David and I and all the cast, but I think so much for David. David had actually made his stage debut in *Macbeth* on the Playhouse stage, many years before, he'd been part of our Youth Theatre there. But here he was playing the Scottish King with all that entails and on his beloved Everyman stage for the very last time that anyone was to perform there. And it was a wonderful experience, a wonderful cast, many of whom still work with us now. And we completely reinvented the space, because we could, because we knew that really, the bulldozers were in as soon as the lights came down on the final performance. So any of you that saw it, remember that we knocked right to the back of the sort of scene dock and had stairs coming up from the basement. It was a wonderful production and David gave a very special performance in it. But I think for all of us, it was more than just a production it was a farewell to a much loved space before we even knew how beautiful and how much loved our new Everyman would be. David and I've remained friends since then. And in fact, he was up until very recently a very active board member for the theatres and still remains a close friend and one of the most generous and wise people it has been my pleasure to work with over my years in theatre. Anyway, here he is, as the first part of our picnic.

Mr. David Morrissey reading *Funny Sort of Bloke* by Roger McGough

Have you heard the latest scandal
About 80-year old Mr. Brown?
He stole from Matron's handbag
Then hitchhiked into town.

Had a slap-up meal at the Wimpy

Then went to a film matinee
One of them sexy blue ones
We're not supposed to see.

Then he bought some jeans and a toupee
Spent the night in a pub
Then carried on til the early hours
Dancing in a club.

They caught him in the morning
Trying to board the London train
He tried to fight them off
But he's back here again.

They asked him if he'd be a good boy
He said he'd rather not
So they gave him a nice injection
And tied him up in his cot.

He died that very night
Apparently a stroke.
Kept saying: 'come out Death and fight'.
Funny sort of bloke.

We return to hear from [Gemma Bodinetz](#)

Another significant person in my time with Liverpool, and actually in some ways prefiguring my time as Artistic Director of the Everyman is the playwright and all around brilliant human being Mr. Jonathan Harvey. I wanted him to be part of this series of letters to Liverpool because, well, when we closed for COVID-19 back in March, his critically acclaimed world premiere, *Our Lady of Blundellsands* was on the Everyman stage, actually, it still is. And we hope that when this very very extended interval is open, we'll be able to give you the second half of what was a run broken by lockdown. But Jonathan has been a friend to these theatres way before I arrived, he began, his very first play was performed in the Playhouse studio, where he won a playwriting prize back in the 1980s. Jonathan and I first met down in London before I became an Artistic Director here and he was by then already a Liverpool playwright, a national playwright of note he'd written the remarkable, *Beautiful Thing* that was

performed at the Bush Theatre back then, but also then became a film. I had directed a play by another Liverpool writer Helen Blakeman, and now board member called *Caravan* down at the Bush, the same theatre where he had done *Beautiful Thing*, and he saw *Caravan* and he really loved the play and he also said that he loved the direction and he asked me to direct what was then his new play *Guiding Star*, which was a co-production between the Everyman, before it was joined with the Playhouse, and the National Theatre. And that is one of the great moments for me that first reading of *Guiding Star* and my first introduction to the Liverpool Everyman as a director.

Some of you may remember that *Guiding Star* looked at post traumatic stress disorder in a father who loses his children during Hillsborough. And although he relocates them, there is a significant period of time where he can't find them in the panic that ensues and he's in a very complex place because he is grieving he has gone through something very traumatic. But of course, he can't, in some ways expect the support maybe that others who really lost their relatives are receiving, but it changes him. And Jonathan, who is known for many, many great plays, *Hushabye Mountain* that looked at the gay experience, many different things. This was his first look really at Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. It starred the wonderful Colin Tierney and it was a production I was very proud of and received great reviews and went on down to the National Theatre. So my relationship with Jonathan began then and then later we commissioned him at the Everyman & Playhouse to write a fantastic new play called *Canary* that was performed on the Playhouse stage. I'm very, very proud of that show. It looked at the issues facing the gay population from way back in the 60s where of course it was more difficult to come out and talk about your sexuality. And it was a very, very moving production that I think all of us remain very proud to have put on the Playhouse stage.

Those of you that don't know Jonathan might not know that he is one of the most generous and one of the funniest human beings you will ever know. He moved up from London, back from London back up to Liverpool recently and I think that was a mighty cheer from a very large circle of people who are so pleased to have him back with us. His picnic includes, of course it does, a joke it wouldn't be Jonathan if it didn't have a joke, a very funny story about his grandmother's cooking and his favourite recipe at the moment, as he tries to live on a less carbohydrate based diet. I wish you all knew David and Jonathan like I did, and that's not

meaning to sound like a show off. But they really are two extraordinary men who both work an awful lot for charity and stand very strongly by their values. They live them every day of their lives. Anyway. Over to Jonathan.

Jonathan Harvey shares his favourite joke:

Very serious joke.

Two Baldy cats sit on the bus. The ticket inspection gets on and goes, "where's ya fur?"

-end-

-A new story begins

***Another Place* written and read by Gerard Langton**

The waiting actors with frayed temperaments.

The setting is about another place.

Theme as old as time, settling old scores.

What are the essentials of this drama?

Movement without motion, time and tide.

Rhythm without music, whooshing and splashing.

Language without speech, silent moodiness.

Staring without sight, symbolic meaning.

Drama without intent, aesthetic allusions...

of all of them who went to sea in ships.

Parties of migrants hoping to go West.

Units of soldiers Imperially bent.

Chained men, commoditised.

Thought provoking these silent metal men,

cast in the Mersey at the mercy

of the elements locked in History

In another place.

-end-

-A new story begins

***It's Not the Leaving of Liverpool* by Paula Hume**

Hi, my name is Paula Hume and I'm really pleased to be part of the Love, Liverpool project and I'd like to share a poem with you, which was just about the short time that I was away from Liverpool, and how much it made me appreciate it while I was away, and now that I'm back.

It's called, *It's Not the Leaving of Liverpool*.

It's easy to leave a great City full of life, love, family

And abundance of wonderful memories.

It's easy to forget how great it is, why you love it so much

From the changing seasons, to the architectures full of echoes

Of time gone, time standing still and time yet to come.

Dipping in and out of the world outside of my Liverpool

Afraid to go, afraid to be, but pushing my own boundaries with every step

And always glad to be back

It's easy to take it all for granted

It'll always be there

My rock, my Mersey

Enveloped in the warmth of its muddy waters

Even the 'scallies' and the 'kiddas' and the 'lahs' become endearing over time

And when you're a few hours out of touch on a daily basis.

But when the tide keeps bringing you back to the shore you started out on

Then it's not the leaving of Liverpool.....it's the coming back!

Thank you.

-end-

Gemma Bodinetz introduces our message of support:

Our message for support this week comes from Elliot. Elliot was part of Young Everyman Playhouse and one of our graduates that we're very very proud of. Some of you may remember Elliot was the first member of YEP to be part of the repertory company that we had. So you will have seen him perform in several of that first season of shows. He was in *Fiddler on the Roof*. But perhaps most notably, he was our Juliet in Nick Bagnall's wonderful production of *Romeo and Juliet*. He's now making a living as a freelance actor and running his own company that looks at New Writing. He's a phenomenal young man, and very much everything that we're about in these theatres. So over to you, Elliot.

-end-

Actor Elliott Kinglsey

Hi there. Thank you for listening to Love Liverpool, an A to Z of Hope.

My name is Elliot Kingsley and I'm an actor. I used to be a member of the Young Everyman Playhouse actors programme, and through their YEP graduate scheme, I became a member of the first rep company back in 2017, when the theatres returned back to the repertory theatre that they're so well known and loved for. YEP itself is one of the brightest youth theatres in the country, committed to developing, nurturing and really supporting new artists across the North West. For me, YEP was a second home and gave me a safe space where I could come and develop my craft. So I'm going to ask you that, if you're in the position to do so, would you please consider donating to the theatres that made this project possible the Liverpool Everyman & Playhouse via their website everymanplayhouse.com. Your donation means that the theatre can continue doing what it does best, entertaining us, challenging us,

supporting our communities and our young people. We hope to see you very soon. Thank you. Please take care.

We hope this transcript was useful. If you do have any feedback we'd more than welcome it.

Please email communications@everymanplayhouse.com

Thank you