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CONCORD
THEATRICALS

FUNERAL FLOWERS

by Emma Dennis-Edwards

SAMUEL FRENCH

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Power Play is a think-tank and theatre company that uses guerrilla-style immersive theatre and data activism to examine and expose gender inequality in UK theatre.

We combine new writing programmes with data research, using narrative and numbers (the qualitative and the quantitative) to challenge the performing arts industry to diversify the stories it tells!

In 2018, *Funeral Flowers* by Emma Dennis-Edwards was part of our promenade, immersive showcase of radical plays by women, staged in a real flat in the heart of Edinburgh. Audiences were taken on a journey – in all senses – through a flat transformed by four teams of female writers and directors; reimagined in each case as the domestic backdrop to a woman's life.

This was not only a performance space, but acted as a hub for the first statistical study of gender at the Edinburgh Fringe: in fact, we think, the first research globally into gender at Fringe level theatre. The data is currently being processed, and in 2019 we are extending this research further, to update studies that look at gender inequality within the UK's most funded theatres. These studies begin to piece together insights into how women's theatre careers progress, and the systemic barriers they face.

Board of Directors:
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Power Play Theatre is a Community Interest Company
(registration number 11361707).

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Funeral Flowers began life as 10-minute play commissioned by the Royal Court Theatre as part of the Tottenham Festival in the summer of 2016. My brief was to write a short play working with a member of the local community and I was fortunate enough to work with Gina Moffatt, a business woman who runs the café at The Bernie Grant Arts Centre, as well as her floristry business Blooming Scent. Meeting Gina was incredible; she is full of light, love and is an exceptionally intelligent businesswoman. Gina spoke candidly about her time at HMP Holloway where she served a six year sentence. It was during her sentence that she was able to get a Prince's Trust grant to start her own business and the rest is Pride of Britain History.

Angelique's story grew from this conversation. Gina left two daughters when she went to prison, that were cared for by her family, but some young women (like Angelique) are not as fortunate and end up in the social care system.

I wanted the story to be truthful and not shy away from the realities of growing up within the care system, but I wanted people to see Angelique in all her dimensions: intelligent, ambitious and funny and like so many young women all over world she is just trying to make her own way through life. I would implore anyone taking on this play to always keep Angelique's unique light present as you tell this story.

Funeral Flowers has always been performed in a site-specific way and should bring the audience into an immersive experience. Angelique talks directly to her audience, they guide her, and this should be part of the playing of this character. The play is based in Tottenham, North London and the characters in Angelique's world are reflective of the diversity of people that inhabit the area.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are so many amazing people to thank for helping to bring *Funeral Flowers* alive, it really has been an incredible journey. I will start with Gina Moffatt for inspiring Angelique's story, thank you for sharing your experiences with me, and for everything you do. Our meeting wouldn't have been possible without the hard work of Chris Sonnex and Hamish Pirie, thank you for giving me the opportunity to create my own narrative and for your love and care of Angelique and the world of *Funeral Flowers*. A huge big up to the incredible Faith Alabi who first breathed life into Angelique, you're a star babygal! Thank you to my agent Kat Buckle at Curtis Brown for all of your support as an agent and friend, I really appreciate you being on this ride with me.

To the incredible Power Play Theatre Activists who took a chance on me and *Funeral Flowers*, especially Sophia Compton and the Compton clan for allowing me to complete Angelique's story in your home and garden. Rachel Nwokoro, it was a dream working with you, what a blessing of a rehearsal period, I am indebted to you.

Thank you to *The Scotsman* for seeing the potential in my show and awarding it a Fringe First Award and also to the family and friends of the late Filipa Bragança, I am so honoured to be the second actress to be awarded the Filipa Bragança Award for best solo performance. May her memory live on. And I want to especially thank Henry Naylor and Maria Luisa Bragança.

I want to thank my family and friends for always supporting my work, especially Janet, Dad, Donna, Maya, The Gilletts, Kaila, The Little Bears, East London's Finest, Shereen, Ann, Somalia, Tom, Rachael and my late grandfather Richard Edwards.

To my cousins Finley and Jaigo Edwards I think about you all the time, I love and miss you both, and I hope in the future you will come and see your big cousin's little show.

The audiences that have come to see *Funeral Flowers* who have laughed and cried with Angelique, I love each and every one of you, thank you so much for being part of this story with me and Angelique and lending your ears and eyes.

And Black Women, we always thank Black Women.

Funeral Flowers was first performed at Power Play HQ, The Pleasance at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival 2018.

Written and Performed by Emma Dennis-Edwards
Director Rachel Nwokoro
Associate Director and Stage Manager Sophia Compton
Producer Harts Theatre Company and Power Play

Funeral Flowers transferred to The Bunker Theatre, London on 15 April 2019 with the following cast and creatives:

Written and Performed by Emma Dennis-Edwards
Director Rachel Nwokoro
Associate Director Sophia Compton
Lighting Designer James Dawson
Stage Manager Anna Sheard and Rike Berg

Funeral Flowers was performed at The Roundhouse on 5th February 2020 with the following cast and creatives:

Written and Performed by Emma Dennis-Edwards
Director Jessica Edwards
Lighting Designer Pete Rickards
Sound Designer Nicola Chang
Stage Manager Rike Berg

Funeral Flowers is written to be performed by a solo performer, with the performer taking on the parts of all the characters in the text.

ANGELIQUE	Actor
WILL'S WIFE	Actor
MUM	Actor
CAROL	Actor
MICKEY	Actor
SAM	Actor
RAMPAGE	Actor

Written and Performed by Emma Dennis-Edwards

For Janet and Dad, the best parents in the world.
In loving memory of Richard Edwards.

CHARACTERS

ANGELIQUE

WILL'S WIFE

MUM

CAROL

MICKEY

SAM

RAMPAGE

ACT ONE

Tulips

ANGELIQUE My Mum is mad about Tulips.

Da way dey look, smell, feel.

Da tell stems and da elegant buds.

She lives for it.

Me? I don't mind dem, der versatile and come in lots of colours and dat.

In fact, did you know dat dey originated in Persia, which is modern day Iran?

Most people look at Tulips and fink about Amsterdam.

But der wrong,

My knowledge about Flowers is bare strong.

Cos dat's what I'm doing at college.

I can talk about flowers forever.

However, I share a name with dese... Angelique.

Not on purpose doe.

Da sperm donor AKA my Dad wanted me to be called Willow.

Da sperm donor's name is Will.

Dat's why he said Willow to name me after him.

Which is stupid cos he's never around.

But basically, when Mum went inside for da first time.

I stayed with him and his wife.

Truss' me I tried to nice.

But she didn't like me much.

Kept saying I was "aggressive".

I weren't...she just like, asked me too many questions.

WILL'S WIFE Does your mum let you dress like that?

When was the last time you spoke to her?

Have you asked your Dad if that's ok?

ANGELIQUE In da end I left, ran away.

No one wants to stay where dey don't feel wanted.

Mum was only inside for five weeks dat time, so it was alright in da end.

Stayed with dis Jamaican lady down in Southend.

Aunty Ava her name was and she was proper nice,

Fed me chicken and rice, pretty much every day.

But back to my name...

I'm called Angelique cos Mum wanted something dat sounded a little bit more...French.

She's what is known as a Francophile.

MUM We'll go der one day.

Just da two of us.

I've got it all mapped out in my head darling.

Da Eiffel Tower,

Gard du Nord,

Laudrée.

We'll visit 'em all.

ANGELIQUE Dats da fing about Mum, her heads in da clouds.

She won't be allowed to go nowhere.

Not till her probation is up and dis time dat's not gonna be for a while.

So, it's just foolishness for now.

A bit like how, when I told Mum what Red Tulips symbolised – true love – she was like proper haps.

MUM Yeh darling that's why I called you Angelique.

ANGELIQUE Which is lie.

Cos she only knew cos I told her.

She lies all da time,

Like I told you with France and dat.

But she's still my Mum and ders always someone worse off, I guess.

Like, der's one boy at college his name is Osama Al Suq.

Didn't get much luck when it came to names.

But he's just came from Iraq dis term

So, everyone's gotta be nice to him, true he's seen a lot.

And he ain't got a Mum or a Dad.

He's deaf in one ear because of an IED

Which I fink is proper sad.

Cos even doe da sperm donor is wotless and Mum's inside at least der not dead, you get me?

But basically, on my last visit, I upset my Mum.

I messed up and said some fings I shouldn't have said.

I said it'd be easier if she was...

You know what I'm not gonna repeat what I said, cos I didn't mean it.

See Mum ain't da strongest and I hadn't seen her in da longest,

So it was dumb of me to act like dat.

See at da moment, I'm living with Sam she's my carer and she's cool, but it's not da same as having your Mum around.

It was great when she was around, but when she weren't it was scary.

It was scary being left in da house by myself.

It was scary working out what lies to tell da social workers.

It was scary when I was six and I burnt myself trying to make a fry up, cos Mum was too hungover to help.

Being "looked after" and being looked after are two different fings.

I just feel like…I dunno.

It's just kind hurts here in my chest y'know.

But dat's why I love flowers doe,

Cos dey pretty much make everything better I reckon.

A lot of da girls on my floristry course ain't serious.

Der mainly here cos dey got kicked out of school.

Behavioural reports and all sorts of mad stuff like dat.

But not me, I'm here cos I want to be.

I don't really chat to dem to be honest.

With me and Mum moving around so much, I'd never quite settled into anywhere for long enough to make proper friends.

What's da point in making friends when in six months time you'll be on da other side of borough?

But I talk to Carol, my teacher.

She is proper sick.

Even if she is well posh and has a funny voice.

Carol is one of dem posh people who calls other posh people posh.

Carol is one of dem posh people dat dresses like a tramp but you know everyfink is proper expensive.

Carol has worked for big floristry companies dat have done fashion week and stuff like dat.

And guess what yeh, she going to let me help her with da flowers for some girl who marrying some guy and dey were both in Love Island.

Mainly just assisting with da decoration of da church, and also da bouquet.

Da wedding is gonna be featured in OK,

Which is a trashy mag but it's coverage still, so it's kinda cool.

Da bouquet is pale pink Hydrangea and white peonies.

I add some Baby's breath,

To fill it out.

I give da bride her bouquet while she's getting her make up done, she's wearing a satin dressing gown in Rose Gold, in italics it says "Bride".

And her bridesmaids have matching ones dat say "Brides Tribe".

And der all slim, tanned, white with filled lips.

Perfectly polished nails with a French tip

And suddenly I feel like...I dunno.

Cos, I know dis will never be me.

Dis world of beauty and glamour

Of being a princess for da day will never be mine.

Carol was like.

CAROL It's so vulgar darling and these flower walls make me feel positively sick... White roses are such a cliché. And as for the mother of the bride...Mutton dressed up as lamb. Wait til you start doing fashion week, that's where it's at!

ANGELIQUE I nodded my head like Yeah.

But really, I thought da church looked beautiful so did da bride.

Carol is obviously over it.

She's been married like three times.

Which is kinda a good fing cos dat means three guys wanted to marry her.

I don't reckon I'd be able to convince da one.

Well not da one I've got anyways.

Since Mum went inside again and I've been living with Sam, he don't check for me.

I see him in college, but he claims he's a "private person" don't want everyone in our business.

Which I get, yet I still feel a way.

Cos even doe it's been half a year, half our year don't know.

What we've got is real,

Not some fake instagram ting.

So even doe in public he's not like all over me,

I know he's got my back.

I reckon I probably love him dat's why I put up with his shit.

Cos he's ain't a hit with Mum.

MUM You can do better darling. Get a boy with some prospects.

ANGELIQUE Which I fink is a bit unfair.

Yeh, he might not have done good at school.

But he makes funny jokes, and he's good at art.

He's going to start a YouTube channel soon, and people who do dat make bare money.

Especially if der as piff as him.

Da fing is he rolls with a bad crowd.

It's fine when I'm around.

But lately he's been rolling with dem deep.

See Mickey – dat's my boyfriend – owes Rampage a favour.

Rampage is boss man and sells drugs to all of da ravers.

White kids who keep moving into da luxury flats, kids from places like Berkshire with names

like

Tarquin,

Fluffy,

Aurora

And Rupert.

Kids who like to do da dab.

And also like a dab of coke, or smoke a bit of weed or take some E's.

See, Rampage is bad news.

Mickey's kinda shook, as he's only a younger in da crew.

Rampage is like God to him, but he's done some fucked up tings.

Like ders dis one yout called Misty-obvs dats not his real name but everyone calls him dat cos one time he smashed up da Year Five classroom and when dey asked him why he did it, he said "a red mist" came over him.

Anyways Misty used to be part of Rampage and Mickey's gang.

Until one day, he mentioned to another guy dat he thought Rampage was cutting him short of his takings.

It got back to Rampage and he didn't like dat.

Misty got a scar from his eye to lips

Rampage did to him as a sign,

"To see no evil, speak no evil"

Rampage is not to be messed with.

So what it is,

Rampage told Mickey dat he's been taking liberties,

And dat Mickey owes him bare peas

Cos Mickey was meant to take a couple of keys down country but he never.

See Mickey can't leave his Nan for too long.

Cos she's not all der and she's also a bit racist.

But she ain't completely racist cos she lets Mickey stay with her, and if you're like a proper racist den you wouldn't let

someone half black live in your house, she'd have him put in care.

Like me.

Anyways, dis is where it gets proper mad.

Rampage liked my pics on instagram.

Underneath one of dem he wrote some comment saying he would bang.

And I was like nahhhhh. Dead dat still.

One, I've got a man and two, Rampage is proper old.

Like at least twenty-four.

Mickey was like.

MICKEY Babes, you can help me clear a couple debts.

I mean I probably wouldn't have to do like full...

Just let Rampage feel me up a bit.

ANGELIQUE At first I was like.

What kinda Fuckery?

Are you mad in your head?

Do I look any yat?

I've got dreams and ambitions and dat.

I'm gonna be like a businesswoman one day.

See me with Richard Branson, Karen Brady, Patricia Bright and probably whoever is Prime Minister at da time.

Don't try and mug me off you prick.

MICKEY If you don't den I understand, but Angelique you'll be making my funeral flowers.

ANGELIQUE Men are a fucking joke.

I mean look at dis madness Mickey has got me into.

I don't really know what to do.

And I don't really have no one cos Mum's away

Mickey ain't perfect but at least he's stays.

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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