

# Beyond Dreams of Aberystwyth

WRITTEN & PERFORMED BY EMMA DECENT



AS FEATURED ON BBC RADIO 4'S MIDWEEK

*A new solo show about a family secret  
and a round-the-world trip.*

*Directed by*  
**DICK BONHAM**

*'Beautifully crafted, thought-provoking, fearless and insightful.'*

- LARGE MAGAZINE -



<http://emmadecent.co.uk/beyond-dreams-of-aberystwyth/>

# About The Show

**'A beautiful story. I can't recommend it highly enough.'**

- CLANCY WALKER, GUEST THEATRE REVIEWER, BBC RADIO LEEDS -

## ~ The Story ~

In 2009 Emma's Dad died. Days later she found out he'd had a child with a woman he abandoned heartbroken and pregnant in the 1950s. The revelation sends her on a round-the-world trip, starting at Aberystwyth, the coastal Welsh town where he'd conducted the relationship and where Emma spent three years as a drama student. In a quest to make peace with her father and her own history, Emma follows in his footsteps, discovering their Jewish heritage in Europe, his film-star dreams in the Far East, and finishing in the place she was born – Toronto.

## ~ The Show ~

***Beyond Dreams of Aberystwyth*** tells the story of a personal quest. Emma takes the audience on a journey of autobiographical myth-making about family secrets, a world trip, failed dreams of youth, and the complexities and disappointments of love for a parent.

Emma enters an empty stage with a suitcase. She unpacks it and brings out treasured souvenirs, tatty mementos and other seemingly random objects, and uses them to mark her travelogue destinations in the space - an arc of the world that the narrative of the show will eventually bring full circle.

The show uses story-telling, objects from Emma's life, slideshows of photographs, music, sound, film and cookery to create a show with dynamic theatrical range. Highlights include Emma cooking latkas (Jewish potato cakes) on stage and a film clip of the Orson Welles movie in which Emma's Dad had a part. Snatches of ***Fiddler on the Roof***, slideshows and the music of ***Sergeant Pepper*** punctuate the show, alongside the running gag of Emma's Dad being on the ***Sergeant Pepper*** album cover. There is colour, humour and poignancy, emotional and theatrical light and shade.

Emma Decent uses her trademark poetic language to tell a multi-layered story about her father and herself, which has resonances for anyone who has ever been part of a family. It is factually inconclusive but emotionally satisfying, with the voice of Jackie - the long-lost daughter/sister - tantalisingly present at the periphery.

Please see link for Show Trailer: <http://emmadecent.co.uk/bdoa/>



# Emma Decent - Writer & Performer

Emma Decent is a theatre and spoken word artist based in the north west of England. As chronicled in the show, Emma got her love for theatre from her father. After attending youth theatre at the amateur dramatics group where her Dad was a member, she did a degree in English and Drama at Aberystwyth.

Most recently Emma is known as a vibrant solo spoken word artist. She has headlined at poetry and other events all over the north west and Yorkshire, most recently supporting Hollie McNish in Hebden Bridge. She had her first slam win at the Uptown Poetry Slam at the Green Mill, Chicago in 2010. She was published in Best of Manchester Poets in 2011 and in 2012 was the popular organiser and host of Todmorden's spoken word night *Magic Words*.

Alongside this she wrote, produced and acted in her short play *Trade* at Europride at the Greenroom, Manchester and at the Hebden Bridge Arts Festival. She co-wrote, performed and produced two queer pantos at the Greenroom, *Snow White & the 7 Dubious Stereotypes* and *Little Red 30-Something and Her Queer Adventures in Wonderland*.

In 2011 Emma developed a 50 minute showcase of her solo spoken word *My Heart is a Place Where Flowers Grow* which she performed at the Not Part Of Festival & Lassfest in Manchester and Ilkley Literature Festival Fringe. This show included a first draft of *Beyond Dreams of Aberystwyth*.

**'Embryo nights exist solely to aid the development of new, original, exciting and innovative work. Emma has performed twice here and has certainly ticked those boxes.'**

- JOHN MCELHATTON, STUDIO SALFORD -

**'Emma writes and reads with tenderness and grace. As both performer and promoter her strength and clearheadedness are immediately apparent. Whether writing about seismic family events or her love for her dog, her words are full of insight, humour and heart.'**

- JANE STEELE, WRITER & ACTOR -

**'Emma Decent is an outstanding poet and performer, whose work is not only witty and accomplished but also edgy, challenging and unique.'**

- CATHY BRYANT, POET & EDITOR OF BEST OF MANCHESTER POETS -

**'You were the highlight of the evening for lots of people. Stop in again when you're on this side of the pond.'**

- MARC KELLY SMITH, UPTOWN POETRY SLAM, CHICAGO -



# Dick Bonham - Director & Producer

Dick is a Director and Producer based in Leeds. His recent directing work includes Daniel Bye's shows ***The Price of Everything*** (developed at Oval House Theatre and now clocking in at over 100 national and international performances) and ***How to Occupy An Oil Rig*** (co-commissioned by Stockton Arc, Berwick Maltings and Newcastle Theatre Royal); plus ***Where's Your Mama Gone?*** and ***Churchill*** for New End Theatre Beyond. As Co-Artistic Director of PLaY he is currently working on ***We Can Be Heroes*** (The Lowry / Live Theatre, Newcastle and Bradford Theatre in the Mill). He was the dramaturg for Kieran Hurley's ***Hitch***, which was nominated for the Critic's Award for Theatre in Scotland. As a producer he works with Gloria Lindh as part of Little Mighty, organising tours and developing the work of a number of companies and artists, including Move to Stand, Lawrence Speck and LunaBug Theatre. For the past four years, he has taken a lead on Emerge, an artist development project run by a partnership of venues and theatre companies in Leeds, as well as forming part of the programming team at The Carriageworks Theatre.

## Development Of The Show

Emma's work has often been inspired by things close to her. Her father's death and the revelation about her long-lost sister had a major influence on her personally, geographically and creatively. ***Beyond Dreams of Aberystwyth*** began as fragments of journal writing, a couple of poems, and a blog she wrote on her trip.

In 2011 she returned to her roots by writing a short performance piece which blended the spoken word performance work with her first love, theatre.

Emma performed this as part of her spoken word show ***My Heart is a Place Where Flowers Grow*** and at Emerge Festival's Scratch Night in Leeds. Based on positive responses to the piece and the interest and support of venues and professionals, the piece became a full-length theatre show supported by the Arts Council in 2013.

Directed by Dick Bonham it received the active support of a number of venues in March 2013, including Theatre in the Mill, Bradford; The Lowry, Salford Quays; and The Carriageworks, Leeds. It received great reviews and Emma appeared on BBC Radio 4's ***Midweek*** to talk about her work. She also performed the piece at the Greenbelt Festival, Cheltenham, and at Hebden Bridge Little Theatre. She is now looking to tour the show during 2014-15.

Alongside the show Emma has re-written the blog she wrote on her trip and re-published it in 2013 as a book on her website. She is seeking a publisher for the book which will accompany and support future dates of the show.

Please see link to read the book online: <http://emmadecent.co.uk/category/book/>

# Quotes & Reviews

'A lovely production by the talented Emma Decent. I got a huge amount from it because the most powerful stories are personal ones. Emma uses multimedia, lots of photographs and music, and she spreads out the story, creating the world in front of you using lots of props. It's a really beautiful story. I can't recommend it highly enough. 9 out of 10.'

- CLANCY WALKER, GUEST THEATRE REVIEWER, BBC RADIO LEEDS -

'...Beginning with her connection to her university town of Aberystwyth, and then expanding into an introspective history of her relationship with her father, the piece is moving, gentle and more than a little sad. There's plenty happening on stage, and the trinkets and keepsakes add a sweetness which helps to bring us closer to the story. The stage is both cluttered but organised, and the sense of a journey into a personal history is managed wonderfully. Drawing on her immense talent as a performance poet, Decent's delivery is calming and delightful to listen to throughout. We are her friend by the end of the piece, and her father is someone we know. Or, perhaps, someone we thought we might have known, once.'

- ADAM ZED, LEEDS LIST -

'Emma unpacks a suitcase full of memories, turning the stage into a microscopic world, as if unfolding an origami bird to reveal a treasure map. Her use of the space is incredibly clever, and leads the audience to make a very tangible connection with the journey she embarked upon. The objects and the space would, of course, be nothing without Emma's honest and vivid stories. It's not often that you'll be captivated like that. A show which will sneak into your heart and paint intricate pictures in your mind.'

- GENEVIEVE WALSH, WRITER & BROADCASTER -

'Emma Decent is a writer and performer with the rare quality of captivating her audience and never letting them go, her work haunting the emotions and the imagination long after the performance has finished. ***Beyond Dreams of Aberystwyth*** is deeply evocative, weaving poetic responses to her journey in search of her father through the audience which continued to reverberate through the soul for a long time afterwards. Subtle, powerful, literary magic.

- J. A. BRUNNING, LANCASHIRE WRITING HUB -

'***Beyond Dreams of Aberystwyth*** is an intensely personal piece to Emma, but also to its audience. It's very rare to see a story that resonates on so many levels, so deeply, told with precision and unbridled passion. As far as journeys played out go, this piece is up there with the best of them.'

- DERMOT DALY, ACTOR & DIRECTOR -

Please see link for more feedback and reviews: <http://emmadecent.co.uk/aber-show-feedback/>



# Who Is It For? and Marketing

The story of a family secret revealed is always of interest both to those within and beyond current arts audiences. This has proven a great initial 'hook' for audiences and marketing. Other specific target audiences are as follows:

- Regular attendees - mature, thoughtful people interested in ideas, themes and emotional journeys. Those of an age to be affected by loss and bereavement of parents, and by concepts of 'failure' and success at midlife. Those reached by BBC Radio 4 and broadsheet arts. The show has already featured on Radio 4's **Midweek** and has had the interest of **The Guardian**. Please see link for **Midweek**: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0214314>
- Seekers of new theatrical experience – contemporary theatre attendees interested in autobiographical work. This can be reached through established marketing routes including venue mailing lists and exit flyering.
- Non-regular attendees such as Jewish audiences and others from immigrant backgrounds recent or historic; those drawn by the theme of family history, emigration and its long-term legacy. These can be reached through specific Jewish and other cultural centres, arts centres and press. Please see link for interview in JLife magazine, March 2013: <http://www.jlifemagazine.co.uk/latest-news/interviews/march/april-2013/in-his-footsteps.html>
- Non-regular attendees such as queer audiences, through Emma's identification and current queer following. These can be reached by facebook, twittering and lesbian and gay press. Please see link for feature in Shout Magazine, March 2013: [http://gayers.co.uk/?page\\_id=1835](http://gayers.co.uk/?page_id=1835)
- New writing and literary audiences – **Beyond Dreams of Aberystwyth** has literary roots as well as an accompanying book. These audiences may be reached through specific mailing lists and groups, but also literary festivals, writers groups and bookshops. Emma can support with book readings if opportunities are available.
- Spoken word and poetry audiences – Emma has a background and audience in performance poetry. The show is a theatrical experience but captures the intimacy and direct address of story-telling. Audiences can be found through local nights, specialist venues, and spoken word organisations. Emma is able to support the show with appearances at local spoken word and poetry events if opportunities are available.
- Young people - The show has no adult content or strong language and is suitable and relevant for anyone over 12. It can show young audiences how the past shapes the present, creating the parents they have, and explores the struggle of every generation to fulfill their dreams.

Emma has press releases to support the show and is available for interview.

Please see link for previous press coverage - <http://emmadecent.co.uk/aber-media/>

# Audience Comments



*Pure gold. A scintillating show.*

*Inspiring, moving and funny.*

*A very impactful show, loved it.*

*Amazing.*

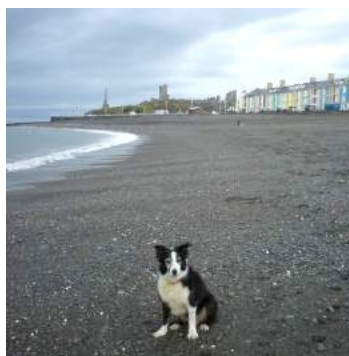
*A remarkable work.*

*Brilliant.*

*It conveyed very well the 'what is known' and 'what is not known' about the people we love.*


*Definitely something to be savoured and remembered.*

*Yay, yay, yay! It was fabulous!*



# Sample Poster & Leaflet

**Beyond Dreams of Aberystwyth**  
BY EMMA DECENT



*'Beautifully crafted, thought-provoking, fearless and insightful.'*  
- LARGE MAGAZINE -

Directed by  
**DICK BONHAM**

<i>Theatre in the Mill</i> <b>1-2 MARCH 2013</b> WORK IN PROGRESS SHOWING BOOKINGS: 01274 233200	<i>The Lowry</i> <b>21 MARCH 2013</b> BOOKINGS: 0843 2086010 GROUPS: 0843 2086003 lowry.com 7, Pier 8, Quays M50	<i>The Carriageworks</i> <b>22-23 MARCH 2013</b> BOOKINGS: 0113 224 3801 www.carriageworkstheatre.org.uk
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**Beyond Dreams of Aberystwyth**  
BY EMMA DECENT



*Theatre in the Mill, Bradford*  
**1-2 MARCH 2013**

*The Lowry, Salford Quays*  
**21 MARCH 2013**

*The Carriageworks, Leeds*  
**22-23 MARCH 2013**

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LOTTERY FUNDED

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In 2009 Emma's Dad died. Days later she found out he'd had a child with a woman he abandoned heartbroken and pregnant in the 1950s.

The revelation sends her on a round-the-world trip, starting at Aberystwyth, the coastal Welsh town where he'd conducted the relationship and where Emma spent three years as a drama student.

In a quest to make peace with her father and her own history Emma follows in his footsteps, discovering their Jewish heritage in Europe, his film-star dreams in the Far East, and finishing in the place she was born - Toronto.

Part travelogue, part autobiographical myth-making, Emma uses her trademark poetic writing and multi-media to express an impossible search for truth.

Emma Decent is an emerging theatre artist based in the north west, known for provocative spoken word, performance poetry, subversive panto and theatre.

[www.emmadecent.co.uk/beyond-dreams-of-aberystwyth](http://www.emmadecent.co.uk/beyond-dreams-of-aberystwyth)

*'Emma Decent is a writer and performer with the rare quality of captivating her audience and never letting them go. 'Aberystwyth' is subtle, powerful, literary magic.'*  
- J. A. BRUNNING, LANCASHIRE WRITING HUB -

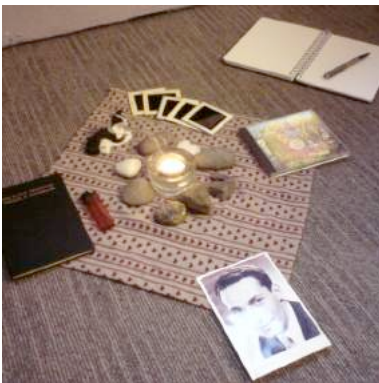
<i>Theatre in the Mill</i> <b>1-2 MARCH 7:30PM   £5</b> (WORK IN PROGRESS)	BOOKINGS: 01274 233200 WEBSITE: <a href="http://www.bradford.ac.uk/theatre">www.bradford.ac.uk/theatre</a> University of Bradford, Off Shearbridge Road, Bradford BD7 1NX
<i>The Lowry</i> <b>21 MARCH 8PM   £10/£8</b>	BOOKINGS: 0843 2086010 GROUPS: 0843 2086003 WEBSITE: <a href="http://www.thelowry.com/drama">www.thelowry.com/drama</a> The Lowry, Pier 8, Salford Quays M50 3AZ
<i>The Carriageworks</i> <b>22-23 MARCH 7:45pm   £9/£7</b>	BOOKINGS: 0113 224 3801 WEBSITE: <a href="http://www.carriageworkstheatre.org.uk">www.carriageworkstheatre.org.uk</a> The Electric Press, 3 Millennium Square, Leeds LS2 3AD

THE LOWRY ART & ENTERTAINMENT

Safespaces

THEATRE IN THE MILL





**The Online Book**

The online identity of all who visited Toronto I hoped to make a journey. The light of the page, the cover, the words she was a mischievous dream subject in the 1970s and 1980s, chosen to be her first and last work in the world to be published in the early 1990s. Discovering the book requires a journey around the world with a few stops.

The book is based on a travel blog made by Emma Wilson for her journey in 2000. (Continued in a chapter of the book published in January 2015)

 <b>Chapter 20: Aberystwyth - The End</b> Signed copies of Aberystwyth: The Book Online (31 June 2006) a first-class travel guide to the city.	 <b>Chapter 19: Toronto</b> Signed copies of Aberystwyth: The Book Online (31 June 2006) a first-class travel guide to the city.	 <b>Chapter 1: The Beginning</b> Signed copies of Aberystwyth: The Book Online (31 June 2006) a first-class travel guide to the city.
 <b>Chapter 16:</b> Signed copies of Aberystwyth: The Book Online (31 June 2006) a first-class travel guide to the city.	 <b>Chapter 18: Niagara Falls</b> Signed copies of Aberystwyth: The Book Online (31 June 2006) a first-class travel guide to the city.	 <b>Chapter 17: Ohio</b> Signed copies of Aberystwyth: The Book Online (31 June 2006) a first-class travel guide to the city.



# Technical Info

## ~ Company ~

1 performer with 1 touring technician

## ~ Minimum Space Requirements ~

6m x 5m

## ~ Running Time ~

75 mins with no interval

## ~ Set ~

- One chair to be provided by venue
- Hand props in suitcase
- A small electric ring cooker is used to cook some food during the show. It is switched off after use and has been PAT tested.
- During the show the performer lights a single tealight style candle. This is in a secure fireproof holder and is never left unattended.
- A full risk assessment of all technical aspects can be provided.

## ~ Technical Requirements ~

- **Get-in:** 5 hours
- **Lighting:** A lighting plan can be provided. The company technician will assist with rig and focus during get-in. If the venue can pre-rig a basic wash and the back and side lighting it would be most appreciated.
- **Sound:** 2 x SM28 microphones and 1 stand, CD player, Minijack for laptop sound
- **Audiovisual:** Projector to be provided by venue to run slideshow and film from company laptop. White backdrop or screen to be projected onto to be provided by venue.
- **Operating:** One venue technician to assist with set-up, rigging & plotting of LX. Company technician will operate all aspects of show itself.

***A full technical spec can be provided.***

## ~ Flexibility ~

The show can also be performed in a much simpler non-theatre venue, such as a function room, with minimal technical requirements. Minimum technical requirements would be a 3m x 3m space, a CD player & amp, minijack for laptop sound, projector & white back-drop or wall provided by venue.

# Performance Info

~ Dates Available ~

From Autumn 2014

~ Contact ~

Dick Bonham | Director/Producer, LittleMighty  
[dick@littlemighty.co.uk](mailto:dick@littlemighty.co.uk) 07956 573679

Emma Decent | Writer/Performer  
[emmadecent@talk21.com](mailto:emmadecent@talk21.com) 07742 350739

~ Credits ~

**Written & Performed** by Emma Decent

**Direction & Dramaturgy** by Dick Bonham

**Additional Script Material** by Jackie M

**Produced** by LittleMighty

**Technical Design** by Alyson Howe

**Photography** by Matthew Tullet & Clare Pearl

**Film** by Clare Pearl

~ Thanks to ~

All the above

Arts Council of England

Theatre in the Mill

The Lowry

The Carriageworks

Emerge





*'So me and Jackie had another couple of glasses of wine and with the help of Photoshop we decided to make our own Sergeant Pepper album cover... And in the end we relented, and we put my Dad back on where he always said he was, behind Paul McCartney's head. And we both felt a lot better for that.'*