

A street scene at dusk. On the right is a red brick building with a large black sign that reads "Bush Theatre" in yellow. Below the sign, a woman in a beige coat stands on the sidewalk. To the left, a red double-decker bus is visible, and several people are walking on the sidewalk. The sky is a pale blue.

Bush Theatre

ELEPHANT

**Self-care guide
& content warnings**

What is this document?

This document contains information about ways to look after yourself before you watch, while you're at the theatre or after the play.

It also contains detailed information about the show in order to describe what you should expect when attending. This includes information about the content warnings, the space, lighting and sound, and further access information.

Please note that by discussing the content of the show, the below information will contain key plot points and descriptions of what happens in the performance..

We hope the information and resources in this document will help audiences experiencing the show, and support planning if you are concerned about your visit.

All of the information here was accurate when we put this guide together. As the production is in development, the details may change and we will update as soon as possible.

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What is self-care?

Self-care is a choice to listen to our needs and look after ourselves, so we are able to keep going and live our best lives, despite the difficulties we experience in life and how they make us feel.

Thank you to Clean Break for bringing their care practices, including Self-Care Guides, to the Bush Theatre during our co-production of *Favour* (2022) Clean Break is a theatre company working with women with lived experience of the criminal justice system or at risk of entering it. **cleanbreak.org.uk**

“The concept of self-care comes from the Black Feminist movement. Self-care is important because it’s about recognising that we experience discrimination and oppression because of how others react to who we are, or what we’ve experienced.” - Clean Break

In writing this document, we were inspired by recent approaches taken by several other companies, especially the Nouveau Riche / Royal Court teams.

About the show

The below information contains key plot points.
Skip this section if you want to avoid spoilers.

***Elephant* is a one-person play featuring live music and storytelling. It follows Lylah's relationship with her own race, class, history, through her connection with her piano. The play opens with Lylah explaining the history of the piano. We then cut between moments at three different points in Lylah's life, exploring her experience as a mixed-race woman.**

One strand follows Lylah as a child. We see the daily challenges that come with being the only non-white person in her prestigious French school in London, which she attends on a scholarship. She experiences a great deal of pressure to be 'good', and fears she could lose her place, or stand out further, and is ridiculed for looking different. However, everything changes when she gets a piano - Lylah falls in love with music, and feels truly 'heard' for the first time.

The second strand is her relationship with Leo, the talented drummer she falls in love with. Leo comes from a privileged background of extreme wealth, however, she feels like she really understands music like she does. Over time, Leo becomes more successful, and Lylah becomes increasingly frustrated that he doesn't understand the unique challenges she faces in the industry. Growing tensions come to a head when she goes to meet his family and is surprised by their wealth, and the colonial heirlooms in their home. Lylah points out that their piano keys are ivory, and draws the parallel between the history of that piano and the Elephant slaughtered to make it, her own heritage, and the colonial past they refuse to acknowledge.

The third strand is Lylah as an adult in a series of conversations with music label executives as they pitch ways that she could be more 'marketable'. In these meetings, they suggest she should tone down her middle-class accent, focus on more 'urban' music and working class roots. She is under a great deal of pressure to change her music to fit the image of a Black artist that they want. The play ends with Lylah politely declining their suggestions, with a new sense of confidence to advocate for herself, and not to give in to pressure to change.

Content guidance

This show contains:

- use of strong language
- references to sex
- description of violence against elephants killed for the ivory trade
- intermittent references to and depiction of bullying
- infrequent references to the consumption of drugs, cigarettes and alcohol
- references to and discussion of racism, Empire, slavery and colonialism
- use of the word 'quadroon'
- references to and discussion of classism
- direct audience address where the performer will speak to audience members.

Lighting and Sound

This show will contain:

- bright lights directed towards the audience (especially the front rows)
- lit-up colour-changing paper lanterns hung above the audience seating areas
- lighting directed towards the audience (particularly for seats in the front rows)
- sudden shifts between light and dark lighting
- infrequent moments of darkness
- loud noises including shouting and amplified live music
- sudden loud noises including slamming wood
- moving and flickering projected images
- haze effects throughout.

Performances of *Elephant* last approximately 75 minutes with no interval.

Helplines & Support

Mind

Provides advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem.

mind.org.uk or 0300 123 3393

BLACK MINDS MATTER

Provides free, 1:1, culturally relevant therapy for Black people in the UK. blackmindsmatteruk.com

BAATN

Support services for people who identify as Black, African, South Asian & Caribbean. baatn.org.uk

Hub of Hope

UK-wide mental health service database. Lets you search for local, national, peer, community, charity, private and NHS mental health support. You can filter results to find specific kinds of support.

hubofhope.co.uk

Samaritans

Provides 24/7 emotional support to anyone in emotional distress, struggling to cope, or at risk of suicide.

samaritans.org or 116 123

Self-care suggestions

Watch with someone

Bring a friend or someone you trust to watch the play with you.

Talk to someone

If you find the content distressing try talking to someone you trust, or try one of the organisations suggested above.

Breathe

Breathing is a great way to help you feel calm. Try breathing in for four seconds, holding your breath for four seconds, exhaling for four seconds and holding again. Repeat this for as long as you need.

Find some nature

Look out of the window or go for a walk if you can; experiencing nature can help us feel grounded.

Shepherd's Bush Green is only a minute's walk away, and the Bush has a terrace with outdoor seating.

Know if you need to step away

There is nothing wrong with deciding this isn't for you or it's too much.

Leave the auditorium, walk away, take a break. Do what feels right for you.

Self-care suggestions

Try a grounding exercise

Grounding exercises are things you can do to bring yourself into contact with the present moment.

There are many ways you can do this. Here are some ideas:

1. Notice five things you can see, four things you can feel, three things you can hear, two things you can smell and one thing you can taste.
2. Sit with your feet on the floor and back against your chair and either gently tap each leg or cross your arms and tap your shoulders.
3. Wash your hands or drink some water.



The performance space

This show will take place in the Holloway Theatre, which is the larger of our two performance spaces. For this performance, the space will be in an 'in-the-round' arrangement, meaning the seats are arranged on all four sides of a central stage area. If you are seated in Blocks C and D, you may have to cross the stage to leave during the performance.

The maximum capacity is 227. Access to the Holloway Theatre is on the ground floor and the floor is level.



There is step free access to row A in Block A. For this show, there is a circular area in the middle of the stage that is sunk down by around 30cm. The stage area has a wooden flooring, with a small 1cm lip around it.

A wheelchair space is available to book for every show.

Please note that due to the intimate nature of the performance space latecomers may not be admitted, and we cannot guarantee readmission once the performance has begun.



Access information

The Bush Theatre building has two theatre spaces – the Holloway Theatre and the Studio – as well as our Library Bar. There are two entrances to the building:

The first entrance is via the Bush terrace to the right hand side of the building, accessible via a ramp suitable for wheelchair users and buggies or via three steps. There is a red automatic double glass door.

From here the Box Office is to the left and the Library Bar and Gianni and Michael Alen-Buckley Script Library are beyond the Box Office around the corner. The Holloway Theatre entrance is just beyond the bar and to the right of the Script Library.

Access information

If you enter through **the front entrance** on Uxbridge Road through the porch up some steps, the theatre's Library Bar is straight ahead on the right, the Script Library is to the left, and the Box Office to the right. The entrance to the Holloway Theatre is straight ahead on the left.

The toilets are situated on the first floor and are accessible via stairs or the lift. There is also an **accessible toilet** on the ground floor beneath the stairs which access patrons have priority to use.

The Bush Theatre aims to be as accessible as possible in everything we do. The whole building is accessible for wheelchair users, a hearing loop is available, and Assistance Dogs are welcome at every performance.

Discounted tickets for disabled bookers and free tickets for essential companions are available.



**If you have any
questions or
would like more
information, don't
hesistate to get
in touch with our
team:**

**email:
boxoffice@bushtheatre.co.uk**

**phone:
020 8743 5050**