

Upstream – good for your mental health

Necessity is the mother of invention, and in this past year theatre companies have had to learn how to stream performances live, rehearse while socially distancing and even perform plays under Covid restrictions.



One Leith-based company, Live Witness Theatre, has embraced

virtual reality and is offering an escape from the confines of home with Upstream, a collection of six VR performances created in collaboration with mental health social enterprise, Speak Mental Health.

The performance which the graduates have devised offers six unique performance experiences created along with mental health experts, each touching on a separate meditative, or mental health practice to offer a sense of calm and reflection.



Audiences will be able to participate in a Tea Ceremony, harmonise with the trancelike movement of drums through the space, and share an intimate moment of eye contact connection with one of our performers – all backdropped by idyllic Scottish landscape. In the times of lockdown and isolation we have been forced into the same daily routines and experiences, 'Upstream' offers the chance to escape into a new setting and take a true moment to yourself in an exciting new theatrical

format – it is an experience not to be missed.

The audience is placed at the heart of the performance and will be truly beneficial and offering respite from anxiety caused by the pandemic. Viewers may take an active role, taking part in meditations and ceremonies or just soak up the scenes.



Keir Aitken, Director, said: “The relationship between the arts and mental health is incredibly important for everyone, I know definitely for me personally. It has been such a pleasure being able to put these unique experiences together and explore a new form that can really benefit our audience’s experiences.”

Max Aspen, Executive Producer, said: “In everything we create, we place the audience at its centre. Partnering with *I Speak Mental Health* to create a production that can be truly beneficial to people’s mental health – especially as we begin to move out of lockdown and the anxieties that may bring to some – has been a wonderful process to be a part of.”

Alejandro Serrano, Director of *I Speak Mental Health*, said: “Exploring mental health theatre in VR is an exciting opportunity to fully immerse an audience in a space that allows them a unique moment to themselves. It has opened so many avenues for us to explore as a charity, experimenting with new ways to aid people’s mental health journey.”

Creative Scotland funded the project.

Tickets are £10 for the performances and £14 for both performances and a headset, all purchased from the Upstream site and available indefinitely at the viewer’s convenience. The headset is one of those cardboard fold outs that you slot your phone into – so you may already have one at home.

[Tickets here.](#)