

A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a bright red jacket and dark pants, is kneeling on a bed of crumpled white paper. She is holding a small, folded paper airplane in her right hand, extending it towards the snout of a large, realistic-looking polar bear puppet. The bear's head is positioned above its front paws, which are also resting on the crumpled paper. The background is a dark, deep blue, suggesting a night sky or a stage backdrop. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the woman's face and the bear's features.

MIKA AND THE POLAR BEAR

COALESCE DANCE THEATRE IN ASSOCIATION WITH THEATRE PORTO



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

DIRECTORS NOTES

Mika and the Polar Bear is an original production by Coalesce Dance Theatre, created in association with Theatre Porto.

This work brings together contemporary dance and visual storytelling, integrating puppetry, original music, and digital projection to tell a climate-focused story centred on a fantastical friendship between a young girl, Mika, and a polar bear.

Inspired by many different types of children's books, and the use of simple words and vivid imagery, one of the questions that has guided our creation process has been how we tell a child-centered story that reveals both the wonder and the fragility of our natural world, while celebrating the resilience that children naturally embody through qualities like curiosity and playfulness.

While the production includes one or two 'perilous' moments which focuses our attention on the wellbeing of the planet we share, we hope that audiences of all ages come away with a heartfelt appreciation of our interconnectedness and that they find joy and inspiration within this story of empathy, courage, and care.

DIRECTORS



FERN WAREHAM

Fern Wareham is the Co-Director of Coalesce Dance Theatre. She has established herself as a leading creative voice in the North West's independent dance sector. Under her direction, she has led Coalesce through extensive UK touring. As a passionate advocate for gender equity and representation in the arts, Fern's practice centres underrepresented female voices and strives to create structures that empower women in leadership and creative roles. Fern continues to champion dance as a force for social connection, wellbeing, and empowerment, shaping a body of work that is both artistically ambitious and deeply human.



RACHEL MAFFEI

Rachel Maffei is the Co-Director of Coalesce Dance Theatre. She has built a dynamic career as a performer, facilitator, and director. As Co-Founder of Coalesce, she has been pivotal in shaping the company's artistic vision and participatory ethos. Rachel has been instrumental in the company's extensive community engagement and education programmes. Her commitment to nurturing the next generation of artists is reflected through Coalesce's youth and professional initiatives. Under her direction, Coalesce has toured widely throughout the UK, presenting many acclaimed works.



NINA HAJIYIANNI

Nina Hajiyanani is artistic director and CEO of Theatre Porto in Ellesmere Port, she is an experienced theatre maker and director of work for children and families. She is an honorary member of ASSITEG international, a global network of theatre for young audiences. Nina is also currently a trustee for LAC Scotland. She is well known for creating bold, original work that speaks to children, families and communities with heart and purpose.

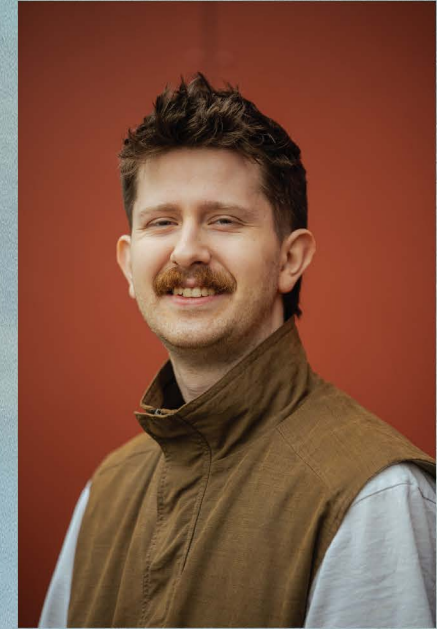


THE CAST



MIKA - JANICE HO

Janice is a freelance dance artist originally from Singapore, now based in the UK. She trained at London Contemporary Dance School, and later joined Emergence Postgraduate Dance Company. Janice's performance career highlights include international and national tours of contemporary dance shows, for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Pageant, and in shows for young people. Alongside performing, Janice teaches and devises work in collaboration with companies across the UK. She values the variety within her practice and the opportunity to connect with people from diverse backgrounds and all walks of life.



BEAR - LUKE SPEDDINGS

Luke is a dance / dance theatre practitioner based in Leeds and the North of England. He completed both his BA in Contemporary Dance and his MA in Contemporary Dance Performance at the Northern School of Contemporary Dance. Luke has worked on placement with the dance theatre company Luca Silvestrini's Protein with which he toured the country with their production of The Little Prince. He has also worked with choreographers such as Phil Sanger, Akeim Toussaint Buck and has been seen dancing on screen for the "Waterloo: an ABBA Tribute Band". Luke is passionate about making art accessible to everyone, regardless of who they are or where they come from.

THE CREATIVE TEAM

ORIGINAL CONCEPT	COALESCE DANCE THEATRE
CO-DIRECTION AND CHOREOGRAPHY	COALESCE DANCE THEATRE
CO-DIRECTION AND DRAMATURGY	NINA HAJIYIANNI
DANCE ARTISTS AND COLLABORATORS	JANICE HO, LUKE SPEDDINGS & BEN YORKE-GRIFFITHS
MUSIC COMPOSITION	PATCH MIDDLETON & RICHARD SMITHSON
SOUND DESIGN	PATCH MIDDLETON
LIGHTING DESIGN	BARNABY BOOTH
PUPPET AND SET DESIGN	BEK PALMER
SET BUILD	JOHN HORNSBY
COSTUME DESIGN	COALESCE DANCE THEATRE
TECHNICAL MANAGER	CATH CULLINANE
TECHNICAL ASSISTANT	MATT BENNETT
PRODUCTION AND PROJECT MANAGER	COALESCE DANCE THEATRE
ORIGINAL BEAR ARTWORK	LAUREL PETTITT
GRAPHIC DESIGN	FERN WAREHAM
MARKETING	COALESCE DANCE THEATRE
MARKETING ASSISTANT	LUCY WHITE
PR	ROBERT JAMES
PRODUCER	ROSIE WATT
ASSISTANT PRODUCER	CHRIS ELWELL



ABOUT COALESCE DANCE THEATRE

Coalesce Dance Theatre is an all-female identifying, LGBTQIA+, and disability-led contemporary dance company based in Manchester. They are dedicated to telling thought provoking, physically powerful, and socially relevant stories through striking dance theatre performances.

The company focuses their work on the physical, creative and emotional development of children and young people across the North West of England. Coalesce Dance Theatre envisions a bold future where dance empowers young people to shape a more just, joyful, and sustainable world. Rooted in the North of England, Coalesce are a leading contemporary dance company dedicated exclusively to children and young people.

Since it's inception in 2018, the company has toured multiple shows to venues throughout the UK to great acclaim, receiving regular support from Arts Council England. Coalesce is inspired to continue reaching new audiences with *Mika* and *the Polar Bear*.

ABOUT THEATRE PORTO

Theatre Porto is an award-winning theatre company for children, young people and families, the only one of its kind in Cheshire and on Merseyside, and one of a small number of specialist venues across the UK.

The company creates new work for, by and with children and young people, merging the 'playful with the political' and providing spaces for inspiring shared experiences for young people, children and adults.

As a cultural hub, Theatre Porto nurtures community, artistic enquiry and learning. It recently became the first children's theatre in the UK to join the Sanctuary Arts Network and be awarded Theatre of Sanctuary status. The company is part of Arts Council England's National Portfolio.

BEAR TRAIL

Have you found all of the bears hidden around the theatre? Before you leave today, make sure you've found them all. You're looking for 6 bears that look like this.



Once you've found them all, head to the box office to claim a small prize!