

Text-focused scholarship is not the dominant one in relation to epic traditions beyond the western canon, such as *Gilgamesh*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayan* and the Sundiata epics, where performance has always remained the primary source of transmission. This all-night epic event draws from multiple epic performance traditions to explore durational performance in practice.

The rise in popularity of durational performance in recent years in western contexts has meant that audience members are now often seen as both co-creators of a performance as well as participants in the temporary communities that are created during these lengthy performances. This project brings research into durational performance together with recent explorations of epic poetry and performance that recognize, as with jazz performance, that composition in performance involves, and is determined by, the audience.

**Fiona Macintosh**

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I am deeply grateful to Fiona Macintosh for working so hard to make this event happen; and to Marina Warner, Susan Jones, Justine M<sup>c</sup>Connell, Estel Baudou, Margaret Kean, Georgina Paul, and CK.

I'd like to thank the staff and students of St. Hilda's College for hosting us; especially James Adcock, Franco Lopez and Jamie Morris who have overseen lighting and sound in the theatre; night porters who will let the audience in; and kitchen staff who are providing breakfast.

The following bodies have contributed funding: St. Hilda's College Research Fund; DANSOX; APGRD; and King's College London.

We have been working from Sophus Helle's beautiful translation; and we are also lucky to have been allowed to use a new dramatised version by Marina Carr.

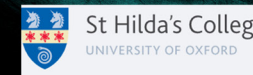
Thank you to Joe Oswald, who is photographing the event.

**Alice Oswald**

Jacqueline du Pré Music Building  
St Hilda's College, Oxford

8pm to 6am  
30 April through to 1 May

# all-night epic



# GILGAMESH

Enkidu built him a house for the Dream God  
With a windbreak against the storm.  
He had Gilgamesh lie in a circle of sacred flour,  
While Enkidu slept like a snare in the doorway  
(Tablet 4, translated by Sophus Helle)

Welcome to the Dream House, where for ten hours you will be drawn through the ancient epic of *Gilgamesh*, while the brand new month of May moves into position in front of us.

Gilgamesh was the abusive, two-thirds divine King of Uruk. His people prayed for a challenger and in response the gods made Enkidu, the wild man. When Enkidu died, Gilgamesh set out to find eternal life and what he brought back was the story you are about to witness.

More than fifty performers have gathered tonight to piece together twelve tablets separately rehearsed. This is a carnival and you are part of it. If you need to look at your phone, please do so outside, for the sake of the performers, the dreamers, the listeners and the poem itself which (if you lend your close attention) will now enter.

**Alice Oswald, 30 April 2023**

# LIST OF ARTISTS / PERFORMERS

**Tablet 1: The Coming of Enkidu:** Badia Obaid and Wafa' Tarnowska.

**Tablet 2: The Taming of Enkidu:** Ammar Haj Ahmad, Archana Ramaswamy, Frances Reynolds, Saju Hari, and Xanthe Gresham; directed by Tim Supple; music by Barry Ganberg.

**Tablet 3: Preparation for the Expedition to the Cedar Forest:** Will Keen.

**Tablet 4: The Journey to the Cedar Forest:** Thembe Mvula.

**Tablet 5: The Combat with Humbaba:** Anna Mullett, Cara Garrow, Cordelia Scotter Mainprize, Delilah Purchess, Dora Grandy, Giulia Murphy, Hafsah Ahmed, Joseph Noble, Julianna Strickland, Leo Noble, and Ruth Conmy (students from Spires Academy); directed by Will Ogden with help from Jaqueline Watts.

**Tablet 6: Ishatar and the Bull of Heaven:** Alice Oswald and Peter Oswald, with Lily Penrose, Marcus Bell, and Saju Hari.

**Tablet 7: Death of Enkidu:** Annina Lehman with Saju Hari.

**Tablet 8: The Funeral of Enkidu:** Daniel Eikeboom, Ella Paul, Ellie Robins, Isabella Jones, Jessica May, Romain Roch, Ruby McGowan, and Timo Marchant (students from Dartington School of Arts); with Amelia Wyckoff, Dowon Jung, Faith Wong, Finlay Miles, Flynn Hallman, Io Oswald, Leo Dakin, Lily Penrose, Olivia Boyle, Shaw Worth, Sylvie Leggatt, and Wang Sum Luk (from the University of Oxford).

**Tablet 9: The Wanderings of Gilgamesh:** Jennifer Wong.

**Tablet 10: At the Edge of the World:** Stephe Harrop.

**Tablet 11: Immortality denied:** Alva Orr, Amelia Wyckoff, Claire Barnes, Marcus Bell, and Zoë Jennings; directed by Estel Baudou.

**Tablet 12: Underworld Riddles:** Alex Silverman and Helen Eastman.

The dancer **Saju Hari** and musicians **Sam Brown** and **Tarik Beshir** will perform throughout the night.