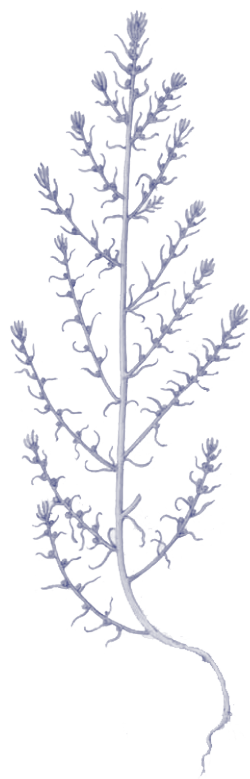


# Salt of The Earth



*A reimagining of the story of Lot's Wife  
and a love letter to the Saltmarshes of the world.*

Oficine 800, Venice  
6th September 2024



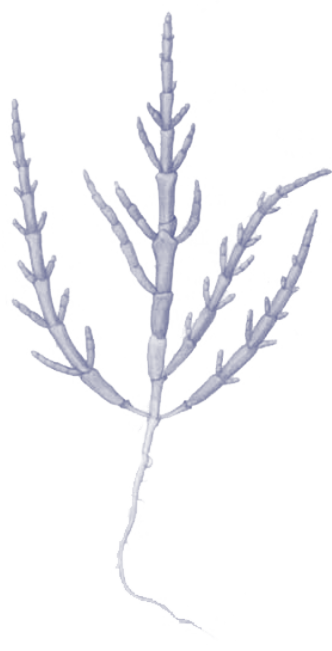


To stand at the edge of the sea, to sense the ebb and flow of the tides, to feel the breath of a mist over a great saltmarsh... is to have knowledge of things as nearly eternal as any earthly life can be.

— Rachel Carson

all of time is a plain filled with salt  
we can enter at any point

— Megan Hunter



Director's Statement by Sophie Hunter

Production Credits

An Introduction to *Salt of the Earth* by Nick Hackworth

Saltmarshes: an Uncanny Landscape by Cal Flynn

Lot's Wife by Lydia Drake

The Salty History of Venice by Gabriele Zatterin

To Take Root in the Tide by Lodovica Guarnieri

Biographies

# Creative Team

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*Created by* **Sophie Hunter**

*Written by* **Megan Hunter**

*Movement by* **Imogen Knight**

*Design by* **Samuel Wyer**

*With Costumes by* **Simone Rocha**

*Video Design & Cinematography by* **Jack Phelan**

*Composed by* **Isobel Waller-Bridge**

*Lighting Design by* **Jack Knowles**

*Sound Design by* **Peter Rice**

*Music Direction by* **Rory Storm**

*Choir Direction by* **Diana D'Alessio**

# Performers

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## *Lead Performer*

Olwen Fouéré

## *Ensemble*

Rakhee Sharma

Chi Kawasaki

Olivia Higginbottom

Rhianna Compton

Vanessa Vince-Pang

## *Singers*

Bellagamba Lorenzo

Boscolo Linda

Camatti Cecilia

Comberlato Fabio

De Gasperi Cecilia

Fanciulli Benedetta

Franco Laura

Ladi Tullia

Lucchesi Aurelia

Minghetti Alvisè

Petrou Kalliopi

Reketyei Alizée

Triccò Francesco

Wyszkowski Marcin

Zambon Giuseppe

Zilio Ada

Zorzi Beatrice

# Production Team

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Clementine Seely — *Producer*

Ellen Pearson — *Director's Assistant*

Jessie Fortune — *Associate Producer*

Matt Watkins — *Company Stage Manager*

Rob Smythson — *Gala Dinner Producer*

Nicola Rosada — *Producer / 360 Degrees*

Marco Zanon — *Production Manager / 360 Degrees*

Alvise Fachinetti — *Assistant Producer / 360 Degrees*

Werner Bacciu — *Technical Director / WonTeD*

Amber Evans — *Patron Liaison*

Lydia Drake — *Programme Editor & Copywriter*

Jason Lynch — *Scientific Researcher*

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Min Kin — *Website & Brand Designer*

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# Scientific Advisors

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Professor Andrea D'Alpaos

Dr Laura Onofri

Angus Garbutt

Jason Lynch

## Venetian Local Partners

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The Tidal Garden

We Are Here Venice

University of Padua

## Advisory Circle

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Jessica Sweidan

Ruth Ganesh

Maxim Parr

Benedict Cumberbatch

Carl Ganter

April Gow

The Liminal Space

## With thanks to

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Film Stills by Jack Phelan

Workshop Imagery by Joseph Lynn

Chêne Bleu Wines

Salcheto Wine







we can see the signs —  
the brow of the world furrowing  
the deeper rushing of the tide

but we look away  
look at other things

— Megan Hunter

# Director's Statement

*by Sophie Hunter*

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Saltmarshes are liminal spaces. Intertidal ecosystems, they disappear twice a day, existing on the edge of the sea and the land. They hold secrets. In Venice, pre-Roman priestesses walked through them; in Essex, Boudicca's troops are said to have haunted them. They are on our doorsteps, in more than 100 countries, and yet how many of us know about them? They are an essential ecosystem, nature's buffer against rising sea levels, they capture a dizzying amount of carbon. Venice has already lost 85% of its saltmarshes. Without action, by 2100 90% of the world's saltmarshes may have completely disappeared. *Salt of The Earth* is for them, a love letter of sorts.

To quote Mary Oliver, 'attention is the beginning of devotion'. For a long time I have been intrigued by the story of Lot's wife, a woman who refuses to look away, who insists on bearing witness, on paying attention, and is turned into a pillar of salt as punishment. Who was she? How could her act of looking speak to us today?

Alongside this, I was developing a personal, visceral connection to the landscape of the Venetian saltmarshes. This was catalysed by an article in the National Geographic featuring professor Andrea D'Alpaos, an environmental engineer urgently calling for the protection of the marshes in the Venice lagoon that he has dedicated his life to protecting. I reached out to him and before I knew it, we were on a boat, heading out to see the saltmarshes. During the bitter cold of that January morning journey, D'Alpaos shared glimpses of his knowledge of the marshes: their inhabitants, the names of the halophytes, amphorae, limonite, sea purslane, their extraordinary powers of locking in their carbon treasure and their critical vulnerability. By the time we arrived at the marshes, these seemingly unremarkable tufts of vegetation emerging from water, were now the most precious, fragile and sacred entities. **My vision of the marshes – my attention – had been transformed.**

That journey is one that I hold up as seminal to the evolution of *Salt of the Earth*. The vital concept of what it means to truly look, to truly see. I continue to ask the question: how can art and storytelling help the climate emergency resonate both personally and collectively, to foster a sense of shared responsibility?

Nearly a year later, *Salt of the Earth* will open in Venice. Our team has grown from a collective of creatives to encompass our local partners, whose essential knowledge and expertise are integral to the project, and whose work with the lagoon we pay homage to and support. We present this global issue in a very local context, using knowledge and stories that began right here, and which I believe can point the way to a more hopeful future for this landscape and beyond.









# An Introduction to *Salt of The Earth* by Nick Hackworth

## I

*Salt of the Earth* is an extraordinary, immersive art work and performance piece that takes as its immediate subject the declining saltmarshes of the Venetian lagoon. More broadly it is animated by the radical acts of looking at, feeling and being with the natural world and bearing witness to the unfolding ecological and climate emergency. Conceived by Director Sophie Hunter, the multimedia work premieres in Venice in a historic salt warehouse on Giudecca and takes us on a journey in which we experience performance, film and music within a landscape-like installation of salt.

You, the audience, are integral. For the duration of the event you inhabit the same space as the performers and the physical and media elements of the piece. You feel the salt crunching beneath your feet. The singing, speaking and movement of the performers happens alongside you, in amongst you, to you and with you. You are an interactive part of the work and its world.

Allied to the production is an impact programme which engages local communities and aims to materially contribute to the conservation of the saltmarshes. *Salt of the Earth* is a complex, multifaceted project, but also a simple one to understand, because at core it is about our collective connection and responsibility to the natural world that is in crisis.

The taught, lyrical monologue, written by Megan Hunter and performed by Olwen Fouéré, takes, very loosely, the Old Testament story of Lot's Wife as its starting point. There, she is turned into a pillar of salt as punishment for ignoring the angels' injunction not to look back at God's destruction of the sinful city of Sodom. Here, the story of Lot's Wife is reclaimed and reimagined. The protagonist is a woman who lives with her husband and daughters 'at the edge of the world' by the marshes in the lagoon. She loves

In a time of climate change, ecological collapse, and social transformation, art allows us to see hard truths without being destroyed by them.

— Timothy Morton, Philosopher and author of *Being Ecological*

the marsh, which on a good day shines ‘gold in the sun’. She is a part of the marsh and it is part of her, its breath and her breath as one. Like her Biblical counterpart, the act of looking is central to her story. She pays deep attention to the shifting, changing world of the marshes, marvelling at its treasures, its teeming life conducted by the rhythm of its tides, and, despite her devotion, she also notices herself sometimes looking away in denial and despair as the sea levels rise and the marshes shrink. She speaks to us now, in our time, when, prosaically, girls with backpacks head to school and daughters dance in nightclubs to Madonna, life continuing against a backdrop of the enveloping ecological crisis. However, a kind of mythic everywoman, ‘one woman, birthed a hundred times’, she dips in and out of time, invoking the ancient priestesses of the pre-Roman Eneti, who would walk through the saltmarshes wearing conical hats and a dog in each hand to worship their female deities. And she remembers the generations of lives in between, intertwined with the marshland. When she fuses with the salt of the marsh at the end, it is an ultimate act of love.

The film, also beautifully sparse, yet rich in its means of expression, is a portrait of the saltmarshes as a porous, liminal space where sky, sea and land meet in expansive flatness under vast horizons. Female figures, variously in contemporary and more timeless dress – which obliquely recall those ancient memories – move, stand and lie in the marshes. They bury their faces in the marsh grass, lie down on piles of salt, stand in moments of stillness, of being in and with the marshes.

Alongside the monologue and the film, the choir and the movement of the performers bring differing notes of profound grace into the work.

Beauty. Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts.

— Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*

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## II

The acts and states of looking at, feeling and being with the natural world lie at the heart of *Salt of the Earth* and at the core of ecological awareness. Rachel Carson, the American marine biologist and science writer whose work catalysed the modern environmental movement, was entirely driven by these practices. Having written a trilogy of hugely popular and deeply empathic books about the seas and their abundant life, she could not look away from the mounting, but unreported evidence of the catastrophic effects of industrial pesticides and toxic chemicals on animal life, ecosystems and human health. Her 1962 book *Silent Spring* was a devastating exposé. It was written from a place of deep love and understanding of the natural world and horror at the negligent devastation caused by a terrifyingly powerful, but in profound ways, ignorant, industrial culture. As she observed, “...man is a part of nature, and his war against nature is inevitably a war against himself.” The pushback from the chemical industry was vicious, but, astonishingly, she won. Due to her advocacy, groundbreaking environmental laws were passed in the US and the pesticide DDT was banned.

In a similar spirit, contemporary philosopher Timothy Morton defines ecological awareness as realising the interconnectedness of all forms of life in a vast, entangled mesh and thinking and acting ethically and politically in ways that take responsibility for our interconnections. He contrasts this with technocratic environmentalism which aims to keep our current global system going by trying to mitigate its most damaging effects as inexpensively as possible – the strategic equivalent of searching for a giant band aid for a self-inflicted wound whilst simultaneously creating ten more.

Art and culture are, of course, part of the entanglement of all things. They can also, in a myriad of ways and forms, help us see and feel that entanglement and act and think with it. Here, in Venice, *Salt of the Earth* invites us to do just that with the world of the saltmarshes in all its complexity, connecting us to its tidal rhythms, to all the beings that are a part of it, to the generation of people who lived by it and those who still do. If we are to learn how to truly co-exist with the rest of the world, it will be through such beauty, empathy and understanding.

**Nick is a writer and curator. He is also a Director of AmazoniAlerta, a Brazilian NGO.**





# Salt Marshes: an Uncanny Landscape

by *Cal Flyn*

Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet.

— Gerard Manley Hopkins, 'Inversnaid', 1881

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Down on the saltmarsh the sea mist is swirling. I can hear waves, though I cannot see them. Like breathing: in, and out.

This is a threshold place, neither here nor there. There is a smell of muck, organic matter, brackish water. Burnished silver pools give off a matte gleam, tangled here and there with clumps of cloud-like algae. The vegetation low, close-cropped, salt-frosted.

A strange landscape. Quite unlike the peatlands above — where moss rises like dough, soft and diffuse, sucking and swallowing. In the saltmarsh, boundaries between land and sea are tightly spaced but clearly drawn. Here: a firm plate of soil, densely tufted with vegetation. There: a channel of brine, tunnelling its way inland.

From above, the saltmarsh appears a tightly packed archipelago, the smallest of sea cliffs separated by the narrowest of straits and sounds. To traverse it, one must leap from plateau to plateau, always careful not to overshoot and topple into standing water.

That there is vegetation here at all seems an unlikely achievement; for a plant to thrive amid saltwater is a feat akin to us learning to drink petrol. These are special, specialist plants. Halophytes, we call them: salt-lovers. Where I live, our salt-loving familiars are the sea aster and the pompom-headed thrift, succulent glasswort and sea purslane — all plants who scrape by in these marginal places — neither land nor sea, but a hybrid of both.

Historically, such marshes have been considered wastelands: haunted, hopeless places where outlaws and outcasts slip out of sight. In Dickens, this was the unlovely wilderness from which the convict Magwitch stumbles, covered in mud: a “dark” and “dismal” place, that nevertheless obsessed the author; he wrote his masterpiece from a window overlooking the vast, flat labyrinth of the marshes of Kent.

In America, the early colonists scratched out their living, grazing their skinny cattle and cutting hay in the “salt meadows” of New England before striking inland. “The low green prairies of the sea,” one poet called them. Like the silt, human history gradually accretes, building up in layers.

(Saltmarshes are hiding places in nature too. They serve as nurseries to defenceless young fish and soft-bodied sea creatures. They are places to lurk, to lie low, until your shell hardens or your limbs regrow.)

Despite this status as safe haven for the vulnerable (or, more likely, because of it) saltmarshes have been under pressure for centuries. Dammed or drained, smothered with landfill, sprayed with insecticides, polluted with chemicals — there is very little harm we haven't wreaked upon them. This is a process still ongoing; overall, between a quarter and half of global saltmarshes are thought to have been lost to agriculture, urban development, and waste disposal.<sup>1</sup>

Though these are places of constant change — where salinity dials up and down twice a day, where migratory species sweep through by the season — they remain sensitive to changes of a different kind. Rising sea levels due to manmade climate change represent an existential threat: the gradual inundation of low-lying lands outpaces saltmarsh's capacity to climb to higher elevation. Hurricanes and coastal erosion, intensifying with the warming climate, inflict massive damage in shockingly brief timeframes.

The statistics are sobering. Assuming even the IPCC's most optimistic estimates, 60% of the world's saltmarshes are expected to be drowned by the rising tide by 2100. Without major reductions in emissions, the true losses will be far greater—with 90% or more lost to the sea.<sup>2</sup>

This is particularly dangerous, as saltmarshes themselves are major carbon sinks. One hectare of saltmarsh might capture two tons of carbon from the atmosphere a year, and lock it safely away for millennia. Disturb them and risk releasing it all back into the atmosphere at once — 16.3 million tons of carbon are released this way every year<sup>3</sup>— compounding the spiralling climate crisis.

A frightening prospect. One I contemplate from the marshes as the sun is going down. I wander down onto the mudflats in the lowering light, picking my way between the husks of razor clams and the skull-like shells of the sea potatoes still shedding their needles like fur. A stream cuts its winding path through the flats, the rain running down off the hills to meet the incoming tide. They swirl together, the syrupy saltwater spinning up and commingling with the sweet, peat-filtered freshwater, setting the shallows a shimmer.

This is land art in its most primitive sense, a symbol of an ecosystem that works in mysterious ways: an uncanny landscape that seems to exist in parallel with our own. One which might be visited, but which we return from changed.

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to be seen is  
to be loved  
to be loved  
is to be seen

— Megan Hunter



# Lot's Wife

## *by Lydia Drake*

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The story of Lot's Wife is present in the Old and New Testaments as well as the Qur'ān. In both biblical and quranic stories Lot's wife is nameless, known only as an appenditure to her husband, but in Jewish literature she is known by many names: Ado, Edith, Irit or Erith. In all these stories, she is a woman who rebels and is punished for her disobedience to god.

Versions in the holy books differ, but the central details remain the same: Lot, his wife and children are saved by two angels, who allow them to escape from the city of Sodom, which God is burning to the ground for its sins. But there is one condition: they must not turn their heads and look back at the destruction of their city. Lot and his family flee, heading for the safety of the hills. But at the last moment, Lot's wife cannot resist glancing back at her home, consumed by sulphur and fire behind them. And for this act of disobedience, she is turned into a pillar of salt.

The 'looking taboo' is a recurring theme in ancient mythology and folklore. In one Greek myth, Medusa is so hideous that anyone who looks at her turns to stone. In another, Orpheus travels to the underworld to save his love Eurydice, but breaks his promise to Hades by looking at her before their escape is complete. And in both the Japanese myths of Toyotama-hime and Izanami-no-Mikoto, a female deity is banished from the world because a male deity looked at her at an improper moment.

In all these stories, women are either dangerous magnets for the male gaze, or are themselves condemned for their sinful acts of seeing. However, in *Salt of The Earth's* re-imagining of the story of Lot's wife, Erith's defiant refusal to look away from the destruction of her world is re-conceptualised as a radical act of bearing witness. In Christian teachings, Lot's wife is criticised for being 'married to the world rather than to God, her maker,' but in our production, we take inspiration from Erith's devotion to the forgotten marshland she calls home.







# The Salty History of Venice

*by Gabriele Zatterin*

Historically referred to as ‘white gold’, the production and trade of salt was responsible for transforming the city of Venice into a formidable maritime republic and one of Europe’s leading economic powers.

Venice’s relationship with salt is as ancient as its origins; there is evidence that inhabitants of the region were extracting salt from the lagoon from as early as the 1st century AD. This was around the time that Roman soldiers’ pay, the *salarium*, became closely associated with salt for its purchasing power. Situated in a lagoon with unique environmental conditions, Venice was naturally endowed with the ideal resources for salt production. The interplay of seawater and freshwater in the lagoon created the perfect medium salinity levels, making it possible for early Venetians to produce salt efficiently and in significant quantities.

One of the reasons salt became such a valuable commodity during the Middle Ages, is because of the role it played in food preservation. Specifically, Venetian households relied on salt not only to cure meats and fish but also for the production of cheese and other preserved foods that were vital for survival during winters and for long voyages at sea. Salt was also a crucial ingredient for industries such as tanning, dyeing, and glassmaking, further embedding it into the fabric of Venetian life.

Venice’s lawmakers closely regulated salt production and trade, recognizing its critical importance to the city’s economy. They imposed taxes on salt and established strict monopolies to ensure that the profits from this precious resource remained in Venetian

## The salt sea was our beginning.

— *Salt and the Alchemical Soul* by Jobes, Jung and Hillman

hands. The wealth generated from the salt trade was instrumental in allowing the Venetian Republic to build a powerful navy, which protected its commercial interests and extended its influence across the Mediterranean.

Salt also had a profound impact on the city's architecture. During the Middle Ages, salt warehouses occupied half of the lagoon's infrastructure. Many are still visible today, such as the warehouses home to the Fondazione Vedova or indeed the Oficine 800 on Giudecca in which our production takes place. Salt money also financed the construction of Venice's most iconic landmarks, including St. Mark's Basilica and the Doge's Palace. These grand structures, adorned with art and gold, were a testament to the city's prosperity, much of which was underpinned by the lucrative salt trade.

The connection between Venice and salt is clearly more than just a story of economic prosperity; but a narrative that weaves together the city's complex history and culture. Salt was the lifeblood of Venice, a resource that enabled it to flourish and become one of the most powerful cities in the medieval world. But eventually, with the emergence of American gold and silver in the 16th century, the salt trade stopped being the most prized commercial activity. Venice's own role in the world began to diminish and the saltmarshes that surround the city, which had once been treasured resources, became the abandoned and overlooked spaces which they are today.

Still, it is strange to consider that we owe so much of the beauty of this city to the soft, white, flavoursome mineral of salt – and to the abandoned saltmarshes which produced it.







Matter is not a thing-in-itself beyond experience, but a placeholder for the not-yet-experienced.

— McKenzie Wark, *Molecular Red*

# To Take Root in the Tide

*by Lodovica Guarnieri*

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It was there, under the leaf of a cauliflower that struggled to grow in the warm soil of the greenhouse: a tiny shoot of samphire. It had grown on its own, the farmer told us, its seed probably brought in on her shoes. The salt in the soil had created space for something that was not meant to be there. And yet, there it was. Once we started paying attention, we found others. That was when the farmer agreed to try cultivating those plants. Weeds. They looked so out of place and, precisely for that reason, threatening. Saltmarsh plants that could be eaten. Alien and intimate, the samphire and the soil around us were speaking the language of another world, of a not-yet that was waiting to take root in the one we inhabited. They spoke the tide. We paused, aware that we would need to learn to speak it too.

## Submergence

From the Greek *hals*, “salt” and *phyton*, “plant,” halophytes are native to saltmarshes and salty swamps. Part of an environment considered other than emerged land, wild, edible halophytes such as *Salicornia*, *Obione*, and *Inula* are gradually taking the place of freshwater crops in the agricultural fields in and around the Venice Lagoon, their physiology allowing them to tolerate the excess of salt in the soil. Through subterranean phenomena, imperceptible and latent tides expand the sea and the Lagoon. The water carried on these movements relocates croplands into a ubiquitous salinity, a new terrain for thinking about how we can feed on already submerged environments.

Rising humidity and marine aerosols are tidal forms through which the Lagoon seeps and transpires, expanding and contracting her surrounding inhabitants. Salinised soil and the edible halophytes that grow on it, form basins of a brackish body of water, found everywhere in varying degrees of wetness. They index a geography that constantly swings between seabed and islands, aquatic and terrestrial, emerged and submerged. Neither wetlands nor drylands, these croplands offer the possibility to defy conventional spatial categorisations that have governed modern Western paradigms of habitation. Where freshwater crops are unviable, salt-water crop cultivation becomes possible, drawing amphibious agricultural zones that are more akin to intertidal environments.

## Desert

As counter-intuitive as it might sound, salinity opens a new understanding of abundance that can counter the structural dispossessions of the Lagoon's amphibious life-worlds that have been legitimised by the myth of unproductivity. Framed as a form of desertification and soil contamination, cropland salinisation resonates with the legacies of colonial climate epistemologies, wherein ecologies unsuited to freshwater agriculture have been categorised as lifeless, infertile, and uninhabitable wastelands. The desert, as both construct and fantasy, serves to legitimise the spatial expansion of extractive capitalism. This "regime of emptiness" (Henni) reshapes specific socio-ecological landscapes, transforming them into vacant sites primed for dispossession and erasure.

Over the past 180 years, the Venice Lagoon, as an ecological, cultural, and labour habitat, has been rendered expendable in favour of the increasingly industrial exploitation of its ecologies. This process has been instrumental in shaping the Italian nation-state as a modern capitalist entity. By identifying brackish wetlands as infertile, non-modern, and unhealthy wastelands, the establishment of infrastructural and industrial projects in the Lagoon and its surrounding region has relied on the cultural and ecological erasure of amphibious life-worlds. Policies, classifications, maps, and physical interventions have led to the disruption of the relations through which salinised ecologies reproduce, leading to their slow disappearance.

By portraying salinised croplands as deserts, the extractive spatial rationale behind past expulsions continues to shape contemporary perceptions and responses to soil salinisation in and around the Lagoon. As their fields are deemed infertile, farmers risk losing their land, and communities risk losing their food security and their capacity for future reproduction at the advantage of escalating property speculation. While cropland salinisation today is exacerbated by anthropogenic climate change, the classification of this process as 'desertification' remains integral to the same socio-economic and environmental regimes that have driven these extreme changes. 'Desertification' operates as a form of colonialism because it targets brackish water as a distributed being in order to perpetuate the life-denying conditions of extractive capitalism in the future.



## Domestication

Against this backdrop, practices of habitation require us to radically reimagine individual and communal modes of existing in attendance to the pervasive salinity that entangles the Lagoon's human and non-human communities. As the life-negating conditions of extractive capitalism are imposed through an ongoing suppression of brackishness, any collective imagination of adaptation might begin with acknowledging, defending, and repairing the amphibiousness of all Lagoon inhabitants and ecologies. Humans and halophytes, saltmarshes and fish, croplands and birds are all bound by water. We are bound up in each other's possibilities, flourishing, and destruction.

Food habits and the policies that regulate them, play a pivotal role in processes of imagination and socio-ecological repair. They are the means through which specific life-worlds are redistributed into the future — or, conversely, are prohibited from reproducing. By cultivating edible plants typical of saltmarshes on emerged salinised soil, communities redefine food politics in attendance to salinity and establish a nourishing infrastructure centred around salinised croplands. They interrupt the governance of desertification and infertility to redefine food systems as a decolonial and healing project for future and past saline worlds.

Cultivating, cooking, and digesting halophytes are actions through which we make meaning. Within the amphibious conditions of land – neither fully saltmarsh nor cropland, emerged nor submerged, dry nor wet – the mutual process of domestication involving halophytes, farmers, chefs, and local communities embeds within the language and practices of this time, the possibility of another time. In this other narrative, wild halophytes transform into crops, saltmarshes turn into fields, submergence becomes a possibility, salinity is reimagined as fertility, and enzymes reshape geographies. Cultivating salinised croplands re-enchants the world, bringing to the surface of a history that is ending, a multitude of stories that might still be possible. In the words of McKenzie Wark, through a “working knowledge of the ways labour and nature confront and confuse each other”, we can craft our present and our future from the web of relations that make the world. And through this, we can learn to speak the tide.

**Lodovica Guarnieri is an independent researcher and designer and co-founder of The Tidal Garden.**





# Biographies

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## CREATIVE TEAM

### Director | Sophie Hunter

Sophie Hunter is an award-winning British artist whose work spans performance, theatre, opera, film and installation. Recent projects include the short film *Ylur* for Sigur Rós' album *Átta*, and a double bill of Kurt Weill's *Seven Deadly Sins* and Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle* for Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires. Other directing credits include: Benjamin Britten's *Phaedra* (Happy Days Festival Enniskillen), *The Turn of the Screw* (Aldeburgh), *69 Degrees South* (Brooklyn Academy of Music), *The Terrific Electric* (Barbican), *Lucretia* (Location One Gallery, Soho) and *Ghosts*, (Access theatre, New York). Hunter was also Associate Director on award-winning production *Enron* (Royal Court, West End, Broadway). Awards and Residencies include: The Oxford Samuel Beckett Award, Location One British Artist in residence and Rauschenberg Residency With Phantom Limb.

### Writer | Megan Hunter

Megan Hunter is a prizewinning novelist, poet and screenwriter. Her first novel, *The End We Start From* was published by Picador (UK) and Grove Atlantic (US) in 2017, and was widely translated. It was adapted for feature film by Alice Birch, starring Jodie Comer and directed by Mahalia Belo. Her second novel, *The Harpy* (2020), was Indie Book of the Month; she is currently adapting it for television with Red Planet Pictures. In addition to novels and screenplays Megan also writes poetry and essays; her writing has appeared in the *White Review*, the *TLS*, *Literary Hub*, *Vogue*, *Elle*, *BOMB*, and elsewhere. Her third novel, *Days of Light*, will be published in 2025.

## **Movement Director | Imogen Knight**

Imogen Knight is an artist who works with the body. She creates original, bold and provocative work that generates from the body and its impulses. She applies her practise in theatre, film, music, television, performance art and opera all over the world. Imogen is a Somatic Experiencing therapist and is currently studying NeuroAffective Touch with Dr. Aline Le Pierre.

## **Designer | Samuel Wyer**

Samuel Wyer works in opera, ballet and theatre, exploring bold, textural forms in set and costume, often blurring the boundaries between performer and environment; or sculpting larger than life characters that seem carved out of mythology. Recent work includes Seven Deadly Sins/Bluebeards Castle (Teatro Colon, Buenos Aires), Wolf, Witch, Giant, Fairy (Royal Opera House, Olivier Award winner, Best Family Show) and Lazuli Sky (Birmingham Royal Ballet at Sadlers Wells, nominated for the Sky Arts Dance Award). This year he will be returning to the National Theatre in London with Director Katy Rudd, for the first major staging of the novel Ballet Shoes.

## **Costume | Simone Rocha**

Award-winning fashion designer Simone Rocha was born and raised in Dublin, Ireland before going on to graduate from the acclaimed Fashion MA at Central Saint Martins College, London. Debuting during London Fashion Week in September 2010, the collections explore the continued themes of Ireland, Hong Kong, art and family. Signature fabrications are balanced with silhouette and hand-embellishment to create a modern form of femininity. Alongside receiving critical acclaim and working with the most prestigious stockists in the world, Simone continues to develop immersive retail environments within her stand-alone stores.

## **Composer | Isobel Waller Bridge**

Isobel Waller-Bridge is an award-winning composer at the forefront of a new wave of emerging artists in film, television and theatre. Her new work includes a new ballet for the American Ballet Theatre (ABT, premiering at the Lincoln Centre 2024), a new piece Rothko No.9 for Manchester Collective (Southbank Centre 2024), an acapella choral piece "I Let Go" (Barbican, 2024), and a new work Isobel is performing at ICA in London 2024. In 2022 Isobel was nominated for Discovery of the Year by the World Soundtrack Awards.

## **Video Designer and Cinematographer | Jack Phelan**

Jack is a video artist and filmmaker producing moving images for stage, screen and everything in between. His happy place is collaborating on artistically and technically challenging large-scale projects. Recent work includes, Vanya (Wessex Grove, West End), To Be A Machine (Dead Centre) and Enda Walsh and Donnacha Dennehy's operas The First Child and The Second Violinist, for which Jack won the 2019 Knight of Illumination award for projection design.

## **Lighting Designer | Jack Knowles**

Jack Knowles is a lighting designer for theatre and opera. He won the 2024 Olivier Award for Best Lighting Design for Sunset Boulevard at the Savoy Theatre. His selected credits include: Patriots and Caroline, or Change on Broadway; Two Strangers (Carry a Cake Across New York), Long Day's Journey Into Night and Best of Enemies in the West End; London Tide, Barber Shop Chronicles and Cleansed at the National Theatre and Venice Preserved at the Royal Shakespeare Company. Opera credits include: The Seven Deadly Sins and Bluebeard's Castle at Teatro Colón and La bohème at Gothenburg Opera.

## **Sound Designer | Peter Rice**

Peter Rice is a freelance Sound Designer for Theatre & Short Film. He is Course Leader for Sound Design & Production at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, London; Chair of the Association for Sound Design and Production; Sound Associate for NYX Electronic Drone Choir; one half of the electronic music duo Skeleton Woman; and makes work as thesoundcollective. Peter has worked as Head of Sound at the Young Vic Theatre; Senior Sound Technician at the National Theatre and Deputy Head of Sound at the Royal Exchange Theatre. Peter is the producer of 'Conversations with Sound Designers' podcast.

## **Musical Director | Rory Storm**

Rory Storm is a conductor unrestricted by genre, format or repertoire. He has led projects with a number of the UK's foremost orchestras, while his collaborators include Grammy-winning jazzers and an array of the most accomplished classical artists working today. Having given many premiere performances across concert, opera, multi-disciplinary and experimental forms, he maintains an active focus on expanding the scope of contemporary music. Most recently, he led the first ever recording of author Paul Bowles' only opera, unheard since its composition in 1955. As a prolific orchestrator and arranger, Rory is regularly commissioned by major ensembles & artists.

## **Producer | Clementine Seely**

Clementine Seely is a creative producer known for her work in large-scale complex projects in film, theatre, public art installations, museum shows, and immersive opera. Finding exceptional stories and storytellers has been a driving force behind the projects she chooses. Clementine's work has begun to focus on projects that directly support communities in need, she is the Executive Director of The Heliotrope Foundation, a non profit founded by the artist Swoon, to use art as a tool for healing after natural, social or economic disasters and is currently studying an MA in Human Rights, Culture and Social Justice at Goldsmiths University, London.

**Associate Producer | Jessie Fortune Ryan**

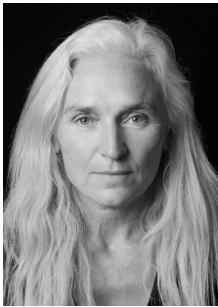
Jessie Fortune Ryan is a producer, interior designer and art advisor. She is a passionate advocate for outstanding art and culture. Jessie studied at the University of Florence, and at La Sapienza. She lives and works in Paris and London.

**Stage Manager | Matt Watkins**

Matt is a London based stage manager and show caller for international theatre and events. Theatre work includes shows for: Cirque du Soleil, National Theatre, Royal Shakespeare Company, Royal Opera, Royal Ballet, Disney Theatrical, Chichester Festival Theatre, New Adventures, and multiple West End musicals. Event work includes: the opening and closing ceremonies of the London 2012 Olympic & Paralympic games, the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympic games, and the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth games.



## PERFORMERS



### **Olwen Fouéré**

Olwen Fouéré is a performer, writer, director and creative artist working internationally in English and in French. Her extensive practice navigates theatre, film, the visual arts and music. Recent theatre performances include: *iGirl* by Marina Carr (Abbey Theatre, Dublin) and *The President* by Thomas Bernhard (co-produced by the Gate Theatre Dublin, and Sydney Theatre Co, Australia). Recent film includes *The Watchers* by Ishana Night Shyamalan. Visual art collaborations include: *Tremble Tremble* by Jesse Jones, representing Ireland at the Venice Biennale 2017.



### **Rakhee Sharma**

Rakhee Sharma is a multidisciplinary artist whose neuro-diverse perspective has led her to develop a unique creative language. Trained at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, where she received the Laurence Olivier Award, she has appeared in *Macbeth* (National Theatre), *Wuthering Heights* (Royal Exchange, Manchester), *The Third Day* (PunchDrunk / HBO), *Dope Girls* (BBC), *The Power* (Amazon) and *The Bay* (ITV). Her performance style blends somatic dance, Indian philosophy, and physical theatre, which was shaped by her early career in the Bollywood film Industry.



### **Chihiro Kawasaki**

Chihiro Kawasaki is a Japanese dancer, performing artist and movement director based in London. She moved from Kyoto to the UK at 14 to study at The Arts Educational School (Tring Park) and London Contemporary Dance School. Her credits include: *Punchdrunk* (TBC, TDM), *Simon McBurney* (Theatre Complicite dir. opera), *Florence and the Machine* (Autumn De Wilde, Ryan Heffington), *The Chemical Brothers*, *Gecko Theatre* (Time of your life), *Matilda* (Matthew Warchus, Ellen Kane), *Bebe Rexha* (I'm Drama), *Barcardi x Camilla Cabello* (LaHorde), *Zena Holloway* (underwater photography) and *Jack Davison* etc. She also teaches pilates, aikido, dance, embodiment.



### **Olivia Higginbottom**

Olivia is an actor, dancer and creative (choreographer and director) working across theatre, film, opera, dance, circus and physical theatre. Her breadth of work spans the profane to the sublime and she has worked internationally with film and theatre directors from Mike Newell to Simon McBurney and Mariame Clement. This is her first project with Sophie Hunter.



### **Rhianna Compton**

Rhianna Compton is an actor, singer and creator. Her practice focuses on extended vocal technique, Polyphonic music and embodied movement. She has performed internationally, singing in over ten languages with Song of the Goat, Animikii Theatre and Warsaw Stage Society. Most recently she recorded NYX's upcoming album and filmed A Bear Remembers (Academy Films).



### **Vanessa Vince-Pang**

Vanessa Vince-Pang is a performer and mentor who specialises in movement. Her extensive background in dance and acrobatic-practices features across theatre, film, television and music. Following a 16 country tour, performing Akram Khan's Jungle Book Reimagined, Vanessa's upcoming releases include Dope Girls (BBC), Sandman S2 (Netflix), Too Much (Netflix) and Director Jon M. Chu's feature film Wicked.

## THE CHOIR

### **Choir Cantori Veneziani and Piccoli Cantori Veneziani**

The choir was founded in 1974 with the intention of bringing young people closer to music. The existence of different ensembles within this choir has made it possible to broaden interests and possibilities, from pedagogical fields to the most important musical institutions in Venice (Biennale Danza, Biennale Arte, Teatro La Fenice, Teatro Goldoni, Teatro Toniolo, Fondazione Cini, and TV RAI). From its establishment, the Piccoli Cantori Veneziani children choir collaborates regularly with the Theatre La Fenice for all the symphonic and opera productions. The Cantori Veneziani choir on the other hand is mostly dedicated to studying and performing music from contemporary and twentieth-century choral repertoires, both profane and religious, taking an interest in unpublished or rarely performed musical material and in the performance of pieces commissioned from young composers.

### **Diana D'Alessio**

After graduating in piano, Diana D'Alessio then devoted herself to the study of choral conducting, attending advanced courses and obtaining a Diploma in Choral Music and Choral Conducting. At the same time, she studied music pedagogy at the Zoltán Kodály Institute in Kecskemét, Hungary and Foreign Languages and Literatures at University of Padua. Since 1998 she has collaborated with the prestigious Teatro La Fenice in Venice. In 2008 she became the Principal Conductor and Artistic Director of the Associazione Cantori Veneziani. Involved in teaching activities in various fields, focusing mostly on children's choirs, she is now teaching Choral Conducting and Choral Composition at the Conservatory of Bologna.

## OUR PARTNERS

### **Andrea D'Alpaos, Environmental Engineer & Professor at The University of Padova**

Andrea D'Alpaos is a full professor of Hydrology at the Department of Geosciences, University of Padova. His research focuses on the interplay between physical and biological processes in coastal landscapes. He has authored over 100 papers in leading peer-reviewed international journals and was recently ranked among the top 2% of the world's most influential scientists, according to a Stanford global peer-reviewed study that assessed more than 9 million researchers.

### **Laura Onofri PHD – Environmental Economist & Professor**

Professional environmental economist and econometrician (MS Catholic University of Leuven, Ph.D. University of Maastricht), whose research/teaching/consultancy activities are carried out both in an academic context (University of Bologna, University of Padova, University of Athens) and in international organisations (The World Bank Group, Conservation International, FAO, UNEP, WTO, Prince Albert II Foundation, Inter-American Development Bank, FEEM, to mention a few). Mathematical and statistical modeller of the economic link between growth/development and sustainability/conservation, with an application to selected issues, including the economic valuation of natural capital and ecosystem services/biodiversity in the lagoon of Venice.

## The Tidal Garden

The Tidal Garden is a Venice-based research agency that explores the edible potential of halophytes – salt-tolerant plants – as a tool for cultural adaptation to climate change. Led by Filippo Grassi (environmental scientist), Lodovica Guarnieri (designer/researcher) and Lorenzo Barbasetti di Prun (chef/artist), in collaboration with a network of farmers and gastronomic professionals, the project focuses on establishing the cultivation of new crops and developing novel culinary habits from salinised agricultural fields.

Since 2021, The Tidal Garden has been consulting with the Municipality of Cavallino-Treporti on strategies to adapt to the expanding soil salinisation in the area. They have successfully developed a series of products in collaboration with local producers, which are now commercialised in Venice.

They are international research fellows of The Fish Knows Everything (Hamburg), part of the European Union's Bauhaus of the Seas Sails programme. As EU Ocean Ambassadors, they contribute to a knowledge exchange programme (2024-25) coordinated by Malmö University, aiming to develop situated, regenerative practices in response to challenges related to water bodies across Europe.

In 2023, The Tidal Garden curated "Sapid Soil," a public programme of culinary events, workshops and performances commissioned by TBA21 and hosted by Ocean Space, Venice. They have developed and curated culinary performances for the 'Non-Extractive Architecture(s) Summit' organised by Space Caviar and re:arc institute (2023), 'Italy, A New Collective Landscape' at ADI Design Museum (2023), and 'Otherworldly Stories' at V-A-C Foundation (2022), among others. Their work has been featured in MOLD Magazine, Gambero Rosso, L'Integrale and Looms, and they have contributed to The Preserve Journal and Sali e Tabacchi Journal. In 2023, they received the bronze award in the MITdesignX Venice programme.

## **We Are Here Venice**

We Are Here Venice is a nationally and internationally recognised Third Sector Organisation (TSO) working to ensure that Venice remains a living city. Founded in 2015, it is developing and implementing innovative approaches to research questions together with practical solutions for restoring saltmarshes, reinforcing connections between the best available sources of information, institutional stakeholders and the local community.

Venice, with its specificity, its history and its cultural intricacies, represents a unique context for exploring and acting on innovative policies of resilience. Initiatives range from specific projects, such as nature restoration in the central lagoon, to education programmes and broad awareness-raising campaigns. We Are Here Venice's compact team exponentially broadens its impact via collaboration with universities, businesses, cultural institutions, residents and public authorities to create projects and propositions which are based on rigorous research and bring concrete economic, physical and ecological change, measurable by social indicators.

## WITH THANKS TO

### **About Chêne Bleu Wines**

Chêne Bleu is pleased to provide its Chêne Bleu Le Rosé 2022 and its red Chêne Bleu Astralabe 2019. Chêne Bleu is a sustainable, multi-award-winning winery located in a UNESCO protected biosphere in the upper Rhone Valley in the shadow of Mont Ventoux in Provence. The domaine's single-estate "couture" wines have garnered top accolades and awards around the world and are referred to as "Super Rhônes".

Businessman and conservationist, Xavier Rolet KBE, discovered an abandoned medieval priory, La Verrière, and its historic vineyard. With the help of his wife Nicole Rolet and family, they have restored both the vineyard and priory and pioneered regenerative organic practices to create wines of exception and distinction in full respect of Nature. By supporting biodiversity and relying only on natural methods, they have achieved stronger soils and superior wines. Their dedication to protecting the well-being of consumers and the planet is rooted in 1100 years of local history.

### **About Salcheto Wines**

Salcheto is pleased to provide its Obvius Bianco made with 75% Trebbiano and 25% Vermentino grapes. Since 1984, the estate has produced the finest quality wines using organic and biodynamic practices. Salcheto is located in Montepulciano, in Tuscany's Vino Nobile area, and has brought a new outlook to this region due to its wine style and commitment to sustainability. Salcheto is a profitable business with a social vision. Winemaker Michele Manelli joined in 1997 as President and CEO and encouraged a holistic approach to sustainability including an energy-independent cellar and the world's first winery to index its wine carbon footprint in 2010. Through innovation, Salcheto has undertaken to redefine what it means to be a sustainable winery.





















