

\*Music intro and Female voices saying 'Things I Am Not' and in different languages\*

Lara: Hello and welcome to Things I Am Not. My name is Lara Parmiani and I'm Artistic Director of Legal Aliens Theatre, the producers of this series. Em- I am Emmanuela Lia and I created the concept for Things I Am Not.

Becka: I'm Becka McFadden I am the Associate Artistic Director of Legal Aliens and I'm directing Things I Am Not. We're here to talk about our new podcast Things I Am Not, is that right though? Is it a podcast?

Lara: I don't know we normally don't do podcasts. We are a theatre company and actually, a theatre company with a very visual approach to theatre. We like to play with physical theatre, multimedia, so we are quite new to this idea of being just voices in the ether.

Becka: So what are we doing in this audio format?

Lara: It's an experiment so let's see how it goes. So let's start from the beginning, Emmanuela this was all your idea so, do you want to tell us how it came about?

Emmanuela: I got very tired of people assuming what I am and what I can do from the way I look or sound or my mannerisms. They were creating this person that was, say, 20% of what I actually am; and during the first lockdown, I realized that there have been more times, than I care to admit, where I defined myself through people's assumptions and the things I was told I wasn't. So I came up with this monologue, where people have no visual reference and they just listen to the story of a woman and who she is.

Lara: And do you think that those assumptions that you talk about, are particularly evident because we are women? Do you think that people treat us differently because of that? Like.. our experience as migrants is different from a man's experience?

Emmanuela: They certainly have more expectations; and they come from those assumptions I was talking about, on accent, country of origin, education. It's the reason I chose my monologue to not be autobiographical but have things in it that we all share, as women, as migrants or both; and I knew this was a matter close to your heart and your work so, that's why I brought it to you.

Becka: following on from that, Lara, can you speak a bit about why Things I Am Not is such a good fit for Legal Aliens?

Lara: Well of course! Legal Aliens has been going on for 10 years. And one of our missions has always been to platform migrant voices, international theatre and really open up spaces and platforms to voices that are not normally heard. So when Emmanuela came to us with this idea, it felt like an immediate fit because all our work has always been about trying to fill a gap, especially in British theatre, a gap in narrative and in representation. We live in such a multicultural society. You go to the supermarket, you go to the hospital, you go to school and you meet people from all over the world. You meet people with accents, you meet migrants and you go to the theatre and suddenly (clicks fingers) it's like the guy from the Marvel movie who, you know, clicks his fingers and half of the world disappears. There are no foreigners in British theatre! Even when you go and see a contemporary play everyone is British! And there's so much to be said about this experience of otherness; and especially when you marry this experience with being a woman and the patriarchy on top of it; and how colonialism is articulated when it also comes to a certain kind of misogyny and how people feel like, exoticized and objectified. There's so much to explore. And let's make it very clear, we are not saying for a second, that the experience of somebody who's run away from the war in Lebanon, is the same as somebody who has arrived here from Italy or Greece 'cause that would be stupid, that would be implying that, you know, we live on cuckooland. But what we are trying to say is that, when we come together as women, as migrant women in the space, there's always a moment where we click and a moment where we really find common ground. Where we say 'yes I

know what you're talking about. I felt that too'.

Becka: Something I've been thinking about, that seems to me quite interesting in the context of women and migration, is this notion of the intersection of gender; and you know one's status as, not being from here. I'm increasingly unsure and it kind of gets.. I get less sure the older I get, if what I'm experiencing is down to being read as foreign, read as female or read as belonging to a particular age group. So yeah, I think it's really.. Particularly when one's lived, one's pretty much entire adult life, outside of their home culture. And I live between two cultures neither of which I was born into. It can get (laughs) hard to figure out what exactly is the... what exactly is determining one's perceptions or the way one is perceived in one's experiences. So I really.. I look forward to seeing if I get any clearer about that if I can untangle that knot at all, over the course of this project.

Lara: That's a good point and it's gonna be a process of self-discovery for many of us perhaps.

Emmanuela: so Becka, what can the listeners expect from Things I Am Not?

Becka: so even though podcasting is a new medium for us with this project, we're really trying to find continuity, between our approach to theatre-making and the way that we're approaching the production of these stories. One of the things that's important to us, as a company that focuses on translation and English language premiers of plays written in other languages, is finding ways to make that original language present in the production in English. Sometimes that means that the English that's used in the play, is influenced in a particular way by the original language and sometimes it means, that you hear bits of it, maybe even experience for a few moments what it's like to not understand what can be a really important experience to have. You can expect to hear our writers employing similar techniques in their work. Even though of course they're not translations, they're still texts written in English by people with access to multiple languages. So you can expect to be aware of that as you listen. And we think that's something really wonderful that we're able to work within this project. Another thing that's really important to us as a company is the visual dimension of our work and we're very pleased, that we've been able to bring collaboration with Laura Rouzet, who's the artist that we worked with, on the design of our last stage production before Covid, with us into this project to create original, digital art for each of the podcasts. So that's something that you can look forward to encountering, as they roll out on a weekly basis. We also have other members of our theatre-making team, who've been involved with us in the past, past productions, as performers and devisers, curating our web and online experience. So really, however you engage with this project, you're really in the hands of theatre makers and we hope that, that is able to bring a sense of liveness and immediacy to this audio work.

Lara: and actually Becka, talking about social media and the visual side of it, it's worth remembering that, this project, also, wants to be interactive and to resume a conversation with our audiences, that we feel has been interrupted since we have been in lockdown. So, every week, we are going to encourage people, to submit their own responses to the monologues. They can do that through our website or on social media. If they choose to do that through the website, they can send us their own monologue if they want, a video, a poem, a text, a photo, anything that is a creative reaction to what they hear. They don't need to be artists, they don't need to be actors, designers, They, even, don't need to be women or migrant. We are quite inclusive in our company! So, anyone, please let us know what you think because I think that's very, very important. Because I am sure that, our audiences are going to be quite surprised. and they might start listening with some expectations, the media have forced on us this narrative of migrants, as individuals that kind of live on the edge of society. First of all, these are stories that are written and performed by migrant women, who are professional artists in this country. And I think it's important to say because the fact that they are artists doesn't invalidate their experience. People don't tend to associate 'migrant' and 'artist' in the same sentence. it's almost like, if you're a migrant you are passing by, you are not part

of the society, of the cultural discourse but we are, we're here.

Emmanuela: and I think it's important to say here that, that's why we chose to do monologues instead of a documentary, for example, as you said, nobody thinks 'artist' and 'migrant' can be the same person. But it can. And we're here.

\*music\*

Becka: Things I Am Not will launch in March so, hit that subscribe button to make sure that you catch all of those episodes. In the meantime, you can find us on Twitter and Facebook at Legal Aliens ITC and on Instagram at Legal Aliens Theatre. You can also visit our website at [www.thingsiamnot.com](http://www.thingsiamnot.com) where you can join the conversation around identity, migration and all the things we're not. \*music fades out\*