

Cabaret, samurai swords, clowning, theatre and more at Ladyfest Leeds!

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- *From:* "ronan.mcnern@xxxxxxxx" <ronan.mcnern@xxxxxxxx>
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Ladyfest Leeds performance line-up – cabaret, samurai swords, clowning, comedy, dance, theatre, spoken word and more

· Over 25 performance events as part of over 100 events taking place across Leeds April 10th –15th

Celebrating women from all walks of life and exciting new creative talent, Ladyfest Leeds (www.ladyfestleeds.co.uk) is the festival which promotes gender equality; featuring over 25 dance, comedy, cabaret, theatre and spoken word performance events from April 10th–15th.

It's the festival that Beth Ditto of The Gossip (voted the coolest person in rock by The NME) approves of, saying, "If you're smart you should go support it, be involved in it, so go, buy a ticket, go to the workshops and learn more."

Performance events take place primarily at The Carriageworks (3 Millennium Square, Leeds LS2 3AD) as well as on various streets and other locations around Leeds. There is just not enough room to mention them all here, so here are some highlights – full details available at <http://www.ladyfestleeds.co.uk/?q=events>. Not only this, but there will be three days of music at Josephs Well and a host of music, art and film events at Holy Trinity Church. The full range of tickets – including festival (£29.50) and day passes (£12.50/15), and individual tickets (£1.50 to £10) – are on sale from the Leeds City Box Office on +44 (0) 113 2243801 and in person at The Carriageworks in Leeds. Enquiries about tickets can be made to boxoffice@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx There are also lots of free events to look out for too.

First up, in The Carriageworks on Tuesday 10th April, is a Cabaret Night, compered by Leeds' lesbian comedian and musician Clitty RubQuick – short for Clytemnestra Aurora RubQuick. Her raucous brand of rude comedy has already earned her plaudits nationwide, performing on the bill of the sell-out show One L of a Night with Rhona Cameron and performing for the cast of 'Emmerdale', 'Heartbeat' and even for Take That star Gary Barlow. Members of the public are invited to join in the cabaret fun!

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On Thursday 12th, top comedienne Isy Suttie, Jo Neary, Lou Conran and Daisy Connolly take to the stage for a night of Stand-Up Comedy, compered by Leeds' Penny Broadhurst. Isy Suttie is one of the most innovative acts to emerge on the comedy circuit in recent times with silly and twisted songs, stand-up and stories that have drawn comparisons with Victoria Wood and Tom Lehrer.

Performances on Friday 13th kick off with a 'Secret' sound art experience in the Yaitrei β Micro Happening, which will include audible cinema, sound art, and strange video works. Audience members are encouraged to bring something that makes a sound they really like! This is followed by choreographer Rachel Dean's dance piece Threadbare, which sees familiar patterns and well-worn rituals start to unravel. Next up is Lorraine Smith with Products of Conception II – a dance and physical theatre piece in which she directs two male dancers investigating the concept of male fertility. Finishing the night off is The Trouble from Bradford's Hi Veld Theatre Company, a heart-warming fusion of clown and physical theatre, which see two women inhabit an underground, dripping world.

Saturday 14th is jam packed with performances, featuring lots of local Leeds talent and artists from further afield. Lancaster's Collette Knowles will be taking to the streets of Leeds with her strolling suitcase bringing Lewis Carroll's The Jabberwocky to life with song and shadows. Back in The Carriageworks, Yorkshire's own poet and singer, Penny Broadhurst, premieres her new show A Little More Sonic Live, which mixes fierce, witty and truthful spoken word with intelligent and catchy proper pop music. Penny has won the hearts of the internet community with her spoken word track LJaded, about the perils of making starts and breaking hearts on the livejournal community: like Kylie Minogue's Absinthe Angel guise in Moulin Rouge if the lads had downed red After Shock instead. Moving away from solo performers, (H)appy Logies (Indes d'Almey and visciousirene), a live art duo from London who mix video, digital art and music into their shows have been confirmed for the festival too. Their performance, Body Signifier, is an investigation into how different paths, traces and marks are created mentally, physically and emotionally during an exchange between two people. Meanwhile, Preston's Certain Curtain Theatre Company will be performing their play Lady in Red, which tells the story of a woman in a red dress who wakes up on Christmas Eve with no idea of who she is, and must piece together the dark and violent elements of her past to unlock the mystery. Shortlisted for an Amnesty International Freedom of Expression Award, this affecting show will be followed by a discussion with the writers and actors for the audience to get involved in. Saturday will finish with a piece called Grass by performance group Leonard, who are making their way to Leeds from Copenhagen in Denmark, where they are currently in residence. They are creating a piece in Leeds itself, inspired by the city and Ladyfest. Other performances on the Saturday include:

- Gemma Bowell of Grasshopper Theatre with her piece Canvas, which

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focuses on one woman's attempt to re-enact time past and questions the extent to which attitudes of desperation, pragmatism and humour can unmake or reaffirm the marks and masks we wear

- Rachel Waters from Bretton Hall with her performance of Cell, a reflection of the physical and psychological brutality one ordinary man allowed himself to carry out in one cell
- Dignity, a performance created by Wakefield's own Ali Bullivent, which features dancers from Bretton Hall with the St Helen's Gospel Singers with a selection of traditional and new songs, music, dance and words to challenge present day slavery, focusing on women's fight for freedom, from the transatlantic slave trade to the present day.

Sunday 15th sees spoken word take to the floor with Gayle Ross popping in from the Beyond the Border North International Storytelling Festival. Gayle has appeared in almost every major storytelling and folk festival in the USA and Canada, and she says she wants to convey the message that people should treat their environment and each other with respect, and many of her stories are intermingled with history about how Native Americans were brutally driven from their land by early settlers. Raconteur Matthew Bellwood (telling cautionary tales for grown-ups, set in his hometown of Leeds) will also be man-aging to perform his show Be Prepared with Bellwood insisting that in part of the show he'll lament his own lack of ovaries. Sunday also sees a distinctly eastern twist to the festival's events with Akemi and Rimika Solloway, a mother and daughter team who make authentic Japanese culture accessible and enjoyable by juxtaposing two important female arts: Akemi will demonstrate the traditional Japanese custom of taking tea and the art of the kimono – from her personal collection of over 100 – while Rimika challenges the traditional male environment of the warrior with her demonstration of kata with her samurai sword: something her samurai ancestors did as the warrior rulers of Japan for over 700 years.

So go on, do what Beth Ditto says – get involved, get a ticket.

More about Ladyfest Leeds

Ladyfest Leeds has a DIY ethos: all the organisers and participants have come together as volunteers to showcase the very best of what Leeds can offer. All proceeds will go to charities which support gender equality. This is the first Ladyfest to be held by people living in Leeds, building on the heritage of over 100 Ladyfests around the world since 2000: non-profit, feminist events organised mainly by women and platforms for the talents of female artists and performers. The events have been focused mainly on encouraging the talent of women and girls, but are open to everyone. Ladyfest Leeds is affiliated with the Celebrate Leeds initiative marking Leeds' 800th year.