

COLISEUM SPRING/SUMMER 2019 PROGRAMME ANNOUNCED

Oldham Coliseum Theatre's Spring/Summer programme for 2019 shines a torch on vital issues affecting families and communities across the globe and celebrates Northern stories and voices and through a mix of new plays, musical theatre and contemporary classics.

The season opens on 31 January with a revival of one of the Coliseum's most popular productions, Jimmie Chin's ***A Different Way Home***, which made its world premiere at the theatre in 1998 starring Roy Barraclough. In this deeply moving and astutely observed play, two monologues from a brother and sister living on the outskirts of Manchester tell a powerful story from two wildly different perspectives.

In this first Coliseum restaging of ***A Different Way Home*** director of the original production, Kenneth Alan Taylor, steps into Barraclough's shoes to play the parts of both siblings.

Kenneth Alan Taylor commented: "*This is one of my favourite plays. Jimmie Chinn is on par in this piece with Alan Bennet in Talking Heads. He has an amazing insight into Northern working class people*".

Actor, Director and twice former Artistic Director of the Coliseum, Kenneth won the Manchester Theatre Award for Best Actor for his last performance on the Coliseum stage, in the role of André in 2017's production of *The Father*.

Following the critical success of *The Father*, the Coliseum revisits the vital topic of dementia in a home-grown production of Barney Norris' award-winning ***Visitors***, opening on Thursday 11 April. In a rural farmhouse, a family is falling apart. Stephen can't afford to put his mother Edie into care and her husband Arthur can't afford to stop working. When a young stranger with blue hair moves in to care for Edie as her mind unravels, the entire family are forced to question what the future holds.

Visitors was Barney Norris' first full length work for the stage. It premiered at The Arcola Theatre, London in 2014, winning the Critics Circle Award for Most Promising Playwright and Best New Play at the Off West End Theatre Awards.

Opening on Tuesday 14 May, the Coliseum presents ***Handbagged*** in co-production with Wiltshire Creative and York Theatre Royal.

With great theatricality and satirical humour ***Handbagged*** imagines what may have happened at the Queen's infamous weekly meetings with Margaret Thatcher. The monarch and her most powerful subject collide as they share their opposing views of Britain's role in the world, with a supporting cast of Ronald and Nancy Regan, Geoffrey Howe, Denis Thatcher and others.

Handbagged originated as a one act play in 2010 and was expanded to a full length in 2013. It became a West End hit and was nominated for Best Comedy at the Olivier Awards in 2015.

Dubbed the best British musical in 40 years, ***The Hired Man*** opens in Oldham on Thursday 20 June. Based on the novel by Melvin Bragg, with a superb score of rousing rhythms and soaring choruses by Howard Goodall, this is an epic and heroic tale of love, betrayal and loyalty, set against the backdrop of English country traditions and the gathering storm of war.

Cumbria, 1898. Whippet racing, hiring fairs, hunting and drunken antics collide in the passionate story of John and Emily, a young married couple and their moving struggle to carve a living from the land.

The Hired Man is a Queen's Theatre Hornchurch and Hull Truck Theatre production in association with the Coliseum.

The Coliseum welcomes the return of two exceptional touring theatre companies in April: London Classic Theatre with their production of ***My Mother Said I Never Should*** and Tamasha Theatre Company with Ishy Din's ***Approaching Empty***.

Set in Oldham, Manchester and London, ***My Mother Said I Never Should*** details the lives of four women through the immense social changes of the twentieth century in a bittersweet story of love, jealousy and the price of freedom. Written in 1985 and first staged at Contact Theatre, Manchester, Charlotte Keatley's play is the most commonly performed work by a female playwright worldwide. London Classic Theatre's production comes to the Coliseum from Tuesday 2 April.

Approaching Empty is a razor sharp new drama by award-winning playwright Ishy Din, who started his playwriting career at the Coliseum with ***Snookered***, which won Best New Play at the Manchester Theatre Awards in 2012 as part of the Coliseum's Out & About Season. Set in a minicab office in Northern England during the aftermath of Margaret Thatcher's death, ***Approaching Empty*** lays bare the everyday struggles of a post-industrial generation of British men. It opens at the Coliseum on Thursday 11 April.

The Coliseum's Studio programme across February and March offers audiences the chance to see new work from emerging theatre companies.

On Saturday 23 February Off The Middle Productions presents ***In Other Words***, a moving and humorous love story that explores the effects of Alzheimer's disease and the transformative power of music in our lives.

From 1 – 2 March ***Drip*** is a one-man musical comedy by award-winning duo Tom Wells (***The Kitchen Sink***, ***Jumpers For Goalposts***) and Matthew Robins. Liam is 15 and he's just signed up for a synchronised swimming team to help his best mate Caz. The problem is, Liam can't swim.

From 26 - 27 June Freedom Studios present ***Black Teeth and a Brilliant Smile***, which follows Andrea Dunbar, acclaimed writer of ***Rita***, ***Sue and Bob Too***, as she struggles with her latest work.

Last but certainly not least, the Coliseum welcomes an array of one night events throughout the season including: a special Christmas concert from **The Oldham Band Lees** (11 December); the chance to sing along with iconic films in ***Sing-a-long-a The Greatest Showman*** (13 February) and ***Sing-a-long-a Grease*** (7 June), treats for young people and their families with ***The Tiger Who Came To Tea*** (11 - 12 May) and Northern Ballet's short ballet for small children, ***Puss In Boots*** (10 May); and tributes to musical greats: **Cher** (24 January), **ABBA** (23 March), **The Beatles** (8 May), **Neil Diamond** (4 June) and **Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons** (6 June).

The Coliseum's Spring/Summer 2019 Season Ticket Offer includes: **Visitors**, **Handbagged** and **The Hired Man**, plus a choice of either **A Different Way Home**, **My Mother Said I Never Should** or **Approaching Empty**. Audiences also have the option of booking all six shows in the season at a reduced price with the Six Show Season Ticket.

The final productions of the Coliseum's Autumn/Winter season are **A Skull in Connemara** and **The Verdict**.

The Coliseum opens its home-grown production of Martin McDonagh's **A Skull in Connemara** on Friday 22 February. **Martin McDonagh** is best known for feature films: *In Bruges*, *Seven Psychopaths* and *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri* (winner of three BAFTA Awards and two Golden Globe Awards). **A Skull in Connemara** is the second of his Leenane Trilogy of plays, premiered in 1997 at Town Hall Theatre, Galway. Mick is a gravedigger whose wife died under mysterious circumstances some seven years ago. Rumour has it, it was murder. When the time comes to exhume bodies from the Connemara graveyard he finds her bones are missing.

Opening on Tuesday 12 March, **Middle Ground Theatre Company** present **Barry Reed's** best-selling courtroom thriller **The Verdict**, which was made famous by the Oscar nominated film with Paul Newman and James Mason. Washed up veteran lawyer, Frank, is given an open-and-shut medical malpractice case that no one thinks he can win. Smelling a cover-up, he instead takes the case and the entire legal system to court.

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Notes to Editor:

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Images for Coliseum Spring/Summer 2019 Season Ticket productions are available via: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/i4jgqri837nhst3/AACXwMSKlKwMx7_1iyNS34U2a?dl=0

Oldham Coliseum Theatre is a cultural and educational charity that works with over 150,000 individuals per year.

The Coliseum has a rich history in Greater Manchester dating back to 1885. It provides a wide variety of distinctive theatre performances and participatory activities for people from all communities in Oldham, Greater Manchester and beyond. It creates eight original productions each year, of which up to half are newly-commissioned work, which are presented at the Coliseum and on tour. Intrinsic to the town's ongoing regeneration, the theatre works with its local communities and young people to develop creative programmes to facilitate learning, engagement and community cohesion.

Performance runs:

<i>A Different Way Home</i> An Oldham Coliseum Theatre production	Tuesday 31 January – Saturday 9 February 2019
<i>A Skull in Connemara</i> An Oldham Coliseum Theatre production <i>Part of the Autumn/Winter 2018-19 Season</i>	Friday 22 February – Saturday 9 March 2019
<i>The Verdict</i> Presented by Middleground Theatre Company <i>Part of the Autumn/Winter 2018-19 Season</i>	Tuesday 12 – Saturday 16 March 2019
<i>My Mother Said I Never Should</i> Presented by London Classic Theatre	Tuesday 2 – Saturday 6 April 2019
<i>Approaching Empty</i> Presented by Tamasha, Kiln Theatre and Live Theatre	Thursday 11 – Saturday 13 April 2019
<i>Visitors</i> An Oldham Coliseum Theatre production	Thursday 18 April – Saturday 4 May 2019
<i>Handbagged</i> An Oldham Coliseum Theatre, Wiltshire Creative and York Theatre Royal production	Tuesday 14 May – Saturday 1 June 2019
<i>The Hired Man</i> A Queen's Theatre Hornchurch and Hull Truck Theatre production in association with Oldham Coliseum Theatre	Thursday 20 June – Saturday 6 July 2019