

5 December 2018

Chris Lawson steps up to Acting Artistic Director at Oldham Coliseum

Oldham Coliseum Theatre's Associate Director, Chris Lawson, has stepped up to Acting Artistic Director at the theatre following the departure announced last month of former Chief Executive & Artistic Director, Kevin Shaw.

Chris joined the Coliseum as Associate Director in October 2015 from the Almeida Theatre, London. As a theatre director he has worked across the country, most recently opening *Robin Hood and the Babes in the Wood* at Cast, Doncaster on Friday 30 November 2018.

Chris commented: *"I was pleased to have been asked and proud to accept the opportunity to lead the artistic vision of the Coliseum in the interim period. Our theatre is in the midst of some very exciting developments and I'm looking forward to working with the rest of the team here to continue and build upon our excellent work on stage and in both the Oldham community and the Greater Manchester theatre and arts community. Our recently announced Spring-Summer season for 2019 is a dynamic programme of new plays, musicals and contemporary classics that celebrate Northern stories and shine a torch on vital issues affecting communities across the globe."*

Chris directorial credits at the Coliseum to date include: Tom Wells' *The Kitchen Sink* and *Jumpers For Goalposts*, John Godber's *Up 'N' Under* and Stephen Jeffreys' adaptation of *Hard Times* (nominated for Best Actor and Best Supporting Actor at the Manchester Theatre Awards). He also assisted on the Coliseum's productions of *Pygmalion*, directed by Chris Honer, and *The Pitmen Painters*, directed by Kevin Shaw.

In the New Year Chris will be directing the Coliseum's forthcoming productions of Martin McDonagh's black comedy *A Skull in Connemara* (22 February – 9 March 2019) and Barney Norris' multi-award winning *Visitors* (18 April – 4 May 2019).

Chris has launched a number of initiatives and opportunities for theatre makers at the Coliseum, including programming the Studio with a focus on new writing and emerging artists; *Cultivate* festival of workshops, opportunities and industry insight; *Scribbles* writing group; *Scripts* play reading group; artist development workshops and the Regional Theatre Young Directors Scheme (RTYDS). He has also developed a number of partnerships with Universities and Drama Schools including Academy of Live and Recorded Arts (ALRA) North and local theatre companies, most recently naming Fine Comb Theatre and Rogues Bones Theatre Company as the Coliseum's Associate Companies.

The Coliseum's Executive Director, Jenny Langlands, has taken on the role of Interim Chief Executive.

Jenny commented: *"I'm very excited to be working with Chris and the team, ensuring we continue and develop the great work of the Coliseum. We remain committed to producing and presenting a vibrant programme of high quality theatre and have ambitious plans to grow our artist development programmes. Equally, our commitment to supporting community cohesion and social regeneration*

remains unfailing, and we will continue to deliver a range of trailblazing participatory opportunities across the borough to facilitate community engagement and grow participation.”

Gail Richards, Chair of the Coliseum’s Board of Trustees, commented: *“We’re delighted to welcome both Chris and Jenny into these key roles - working closely with rest of the team at the Coliseum they will enable us to build on our strong foundation and move forward with our audiences and our many other supporters.”*

- Ends -----

Notes to Editor:

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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 original productions, of which up to half are newly-commissioned work, which are presented at the Coliseum and on tour. Intrinsic to the town’s on-going regeneration, the theatre works with its local communities and young people to develop creative programmes to facilitate learning, engagement and community cohesion.