

Bread & Roses

Female empowerment, unity, strength and socialism

Friday 22 June – Saturday 7 July 2018
An Oldham Coliseum Theatre Production
By Ian Kershaw
Directed by Amanda Huxtable
Designed by Kate Unwin

Press Night: Friday 22 June, 7.30pm

Featuring the songs of **Joe Hill**, **Bread & Roses** is a new play by award-winning writer **Ian Kershaw**, based on the real-life story of the huge mill workers strike - led, and won, by women - in Lawrence, Massachusetts, USA, in 1912.

Bread & Roses is an uplifting new play about hope; it follows the story of Lucy-Rose Atkins as she navigates the strike, facing love, loss, lies and deceit, and using her fierce intelligence to make the journey from unskilled worker to impassioned leader.

On 11 January 1912 the weaving room of the Everett Mill fell silent as mill workers opened their pay envelopes to discover their weekly wages had been cut. A new state law in Massachusetts had reduced the workweek for women and children from 56 hours to 54 hours and the mill owners had reduced their wages. Under the circumstances the workers were faced with, the reduction of two hour's wage was the difference between the ability to feed their families and going hungry. Word of the strike by the women of Everett Mill spread and the walkout cascaded through neighbouring mills and by the end of the next day more than 10,000 workers were out on strike.

The Lawrence strike of 1912 became known known as the Bread & Roses Strike and The Singing Strike. Songs by Joe Hill, published in the Industrial Workers of the World's (IWW) *Little Red Songbook* were sung out across the picket lines. **Joe Hill** was a Swedish immigrant who joined the IWW to protest and change unjust treatment. His songs, including *There is Power in a Union*, *The Preacher and the Slave* and *Everybody's Joining It* inspired the likes of Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen and Billy Bragg.

Director **Amanda Huxtable** makes her Coliseum debut. Amanda is Artistic Associate at Hull Truck Theatre as part of Arts Council England's Change Makers and Co-Artistic director of Hidden Gems Productions. Her previous work includes *Just An Ordinary Lawyer* by Tayo Aluko and *Wondr* by Poppy Burton-Morgan for Metta Theatre. The cast for **Bread & Roses** includes two former *Coronation Street* stars playing real-life historical characters: **Rupert Hill** (Jamie Baldwin) as Joe Ettor, one of the leading public faces of the IWW and **Tupele Dorgu** (Kelly Crabtree) as Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, who was a full time organiser for the IWW and travelled to Lawrence in 1912 for the strike.

Writer **Ian Kershaw** won the Royal Exchange Theatre's Bruntwood Prize for Playwriting with *Candyland* in 2005. His other theatre credits include *The Mist in the Mirror*, *Star-Cross'd* and *Union Street* at the

Coliseum and *Get Ken Barlow* at Watford Palace Theatre. Television credits include *Coronation Street*, *Shameless* and *Holby City*.

The Bread & Roses strike united workers from over 40 different countries and lasted for two months. It was the first large-scale industrial strike in the USA with workers stepping away from their machines and onto the picket lines to fight for their right to earn enough money to live. These issues are still prevalent in modern day Britain; The End of Year Statistics from the Trussell Trust state that in the year 2017-18 over a million three-day emergency food supplies were given to people in crisis, the main reason for referral to the foodbanks was low income.

- Ends -----

Notes to Editor:

Bread & Roses runs from Friday 22 June – Saturday 7 July 2018 at Oldham Coliseum Theatre.

Tickets can be booked on 0161 624 2829 or at www.coliseum.org.uk
Link to production page: <http://www.coliseum.org.uk/plays/bread-roses/>

For further press information, please contact Shelly Ramsdale on 0161 785 7012 or
shellyramsdale@coliseum.org.uk

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.

The Coliseum is actively engaged with Oldham Council and Arts Council England to deliver a new theatre in the town by 2020.

Images:

A high-resolution JPEG of the artwork for **Bread & Roses** is available to download from Dropbox via:
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/urzte76kzd6x0q8/Bread%20%26%20Roses.jpg?dl=0>

Rehearsal photographs will be available from Wednesday 13 June 2018.

Production photographs will be available from Friday 22 June 2018

Cast:



Claire Burns
Anna LoPizzo



Tupele Dorgu
Elizabeth Gurley Flynn



Matthew Ganley
William Dukes



Rupert Hill
Joe Ettor



Sophie Mercell
Abbie Williams



Emma Naomi
Lucy-Rose Atkins



Lauryn Redding
Martha Carter



Oliver Wellington
Cal Jackson

Production Team:

Amanda Huxtable – Director
Kate Unwin – Designer
Howard Gray – Musical Director
Stewart Bartles – Lighting Designer
Lorna Munden – Sound Designer