

SIX NORTH WEST ARTISTS LINK WITH OLDHAM COLISEUM FOR 2020

Oldham Coliseum Theatre is welcoming three new Associate Artists: **Grant Archer**, **Hafsah Aneela Bashir** and **RedBobble Arts**, and three Supported Artists: **Caitlin Gleeson**, **Nana-Kofi Kufuor** and **Sorcha McCaffrey** to the team for the year 2020.

Associates are practitioners with whom the Coliseum will create work in collaboration with, whilst Supported Artists are individual theatre makers and writers that the Coliseum will support to bring their own work to fruition. Starting in January 2020, all Associate and Supported Artists will have access to individually tailored experiences to support their development and strengthen their networks.

Chris Lawson, Acting Artistic Director of the Coliseum, said: “*The Coliseum is proud to open its doors to a wide range of artists at different levels of their careers from across the region. We look forward to supporting them in making work and to them contributing to the life of the Coliseum and the town of Oldham to ensure high quality relevant work is available to all.*”

The Coliseum is committed to developing artists and companies from across the North West and all of the artists will be supported to try new forms and produce new work across the building and site specific locations, mentored by Acting Artistic Director Chris Lawson, continuing Associate Company **Fine Comb Theatre** and staff relevant to their areas of interest. Fine Comb's first year as Associates saw them host scratch nights and workshops throughout the year, successfully apply for Arts Council England funding and debut their new show, *Not Yours, Mine*, which explored parental rights and responsibilities within the British judicial system, in the Coliseum's Studio.

Grant Archer is a digital and visual artist and co-founder of Take Back Theatre with actor Julie Hesmondhalgh and writer Rebekah Harrison. His recent work includes books on Iceland and Gibraltar, published by Out of Place Books, a series of short films with Take Back Theatre, *Connect* – a series of phone conversations at HOME, Manchester, *Patient* – an audio/visual installation at the Coliseum and Virtual Reality experiences at the Coliseum's Cultivate Festival and The Lowry's Open Day.

Grant commented: “*I'm excited to work with the Coliseum in the development and creation of further digital installation work. The Coliseum works with an exciting range of artists for potential collaborations and is constantly expanding its community links. It is highly motivating to know that they believe in experimentation and the exploration of new forms of telling stories.*”

Hafsah Aneela Bashir is a Manchester based poet and playwright and co-director of the arts collective Outside The Frame Arts. She works with marginalized and underrepresented communities delivering creative writing workshops centred around identity and empowerment. Her work has featured in anthologies

published by Crocus Books and her debut poetry collection, *The Celox And The Clot* by Burning Eye Books, launched last year with Manchester Literature Festival. Her recent work includes a monologue for *Memories of Partition* with Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester, and a commission for PUSH Festival at HOME, Manchester this year with her play *Cuts Of The Cloth*.

Hafsah commented: *"I'm excited to explore and develop new ideas around British Muslim stories and to really push the potentials of the work I am making in terms of innovation and originality. This opportunity will give me valuable time, space and resources to contribute to my professional development as an artist and I am particularly looking forward to connecting with the networks and communities that the Coliseum engages with. Having access to the Coliseum team and its practitioners is exactly what I need at this stage of my career and I plan to share my learning with other artists at a similar stage in their practice as much as possible."*

RedBobble Arts – aka Louisa May Parker and Kelly Munro-Fawcett - are a female led company based in Manchester and Leeds. Formerly RedBobble Theatre, they specialise in making live performance as well as creating community engagement and education projects.

Louisa and Kelly said: *"We are so excited to be working more closely with Oldham Coliseum in 2020. This opportunity couldn't have come at a better time for us; a new name, some new team members, a new outlook! We're looking forward to some much needed mentorship that will hopefully help us build our profile and support us to explore new ways of storytelling, both in the theatre and out in the community."*

Caitlin Gleeson is a theatre maker, facilitator and writer whose work includes solo performance, interactive theatre and community arts, and often explores autobiography, gender and place. She is currently touring *Pour and Serve*, a site-specific solo performance on the language of sexual harassment, and is in development with *Vera* - a collaboration with Ross McCaffrey which uses the story of a pioneering astrophysicist to ask why we believe some people more than others; and *Dungarees*, a show that uses humour, autobiography and a host of unhappy lesbian TV characters to explore how coming out can be dangerous, exhausting and radical.

Caitlin said: *"I'm really excited to be a supported artist at the Coliseum and am looking forward to further developing new performance projects with a theatre I know and love. I want to make work for audiences in Oldham and create new opportunities for people to engage with the Coliseum and its work. I can't wait to get started and develop my practice with the support of all the brilliant staff".*

Nana-Kofi Kufuor is a writer from Stockport who writes to expose and humanize the people that mainstream media currently and historically has taken delight in mocking or ostracising. He wants to take theatre to places it doesn't ordinarily go and create stories that are rarely seen on stage. Nana-Kofi is currently under commission from Box of Tricks as part of the PlayBox writers' scheme. He was also shortlisted for the Theatre Uncut Political Playwriting Award earlier this year.

Nana-Kofi commented: *"I'm so excited to become a Supported Artist at this famous and historic theatre. This opportunity will open doors for me to go to places I struggled to get into before and ultimately enables me to create more work about a wider variety of people, which has always been my goal."*

Sorcha McCaffrey is a Yorkshire actor, writer and theatre-maker based in Manchester. Her first play *Ladybones* ran at VAULT Festival and Edinburgh Fringe Festival 2019 and has been recorded as an audio drama for Audible.

Sorcha said: *“It’s so heartening for a theatre to support you and invite you to become part of the building and the community. I’m proper excited to be supported by Oldham Coliseum and have the chance to develop as an artist and make work that is bold, playful and collaborative.”*

All of the artists will be embedded in the Coliseum company, giving them access to valuable development opportunities including administrative and technical support, one to ones with staff, office and development space, performance and networking opportunities. Associate and Supported Artists and Companies work closely with the Coliseum to develop new audiences and provide critical feedback for other Coliseum productions. They are a part of a peer-to-peer support network and act as mentors for aspiring creatives working with the theatre.

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Notes to Editor:

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

Oldham Coliseum Theatre

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 each year 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.

Oldham Coliseum Theatre is supported by Arts Council England, Oldham Council and Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA).

Oldham Coliseum Theatre is a Registered Charity, no 508829.
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Biographies:

Grant Archer – Associate Artist

Grant initially studied Fine Art Photography in Manchester and London, working on projects with The Theatres Trust and National Piers Society. Recent projects include books on Iceland and Gibraltar, published by Out Of Place Books.

In 2015 Grant co-founded Take Back Theatre with actor Julie Hesmondhalgh and writer Rebekah Harrison, responding to social and political issues. Starting with script in hand rapid response theatre Take Back has expanded into immersive and full length pieces as well as audio recordings and most recently a series of short films.

Awarded a Developing Your Creative Practice fund from the Arts Council in 2019 Grant has been creating theatrical installation work that explores the relationship between live and recorded media and storytelling. Recent works have included Connect - a series of phone conversations at Home, Patient - and audio/visual installation at Oldham Coliseum and Virtual Reality films at the Lowry, the Coliseum and various site specific locations.

Hafsah Aneela Bashir – Associate Artist

Hafsah Aneela Bashir is a Manchester based poet and playwright with an MA in Postcolonial Literary and Culture from the University of Leeds.

She is founder and co-director of the arts collective, Outside The Frame Arts, passionate about platforming voices outside the mainstream. She works with marginalized and underrepresented communities delivering creative writing workshops centred around identity and empowerment.

Her work has been published by Crocus Books in various anthologies. Her debut poetry collection, *The Celox And The Clot* published by Burning Eye Books, launched last year with Manchester Literature Festival, where she is currently writer-in-residence. Her recent works include a monologue for *Memories Of Partition* with Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester, and a PUSH Festival commission this year with her play *Cuts Of The Cloth*, exploring Muslim women's experiences of the war on terror. Current work is the development of a SICK! Festival catalyst commission exploring mental health in the South Asian community.

Previously an Open Exchange Supported Artist with Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester and a 'Leader of Tomorrow' with the Artistic Director's Leadership Programme, she has recently been awarded the prestigious Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellowship 2019-20.

She blogs at <http://hafsahaneelabashir.wordpress.com/> and tweets at @Hafsah_A_Bashir & @artsOTF

RedBobble Arts – Associate Company

RedBobble Arts are a female led company, based in Manchester and Leeds. They specialise in making live performance as well as creating community engagement and education projects.

Kelly Munro-Fawcett is both an actor and Co-Creative Producer at RedBobble Arts and is based in Leeds with her young son Hadley. See her Spotlight page here: <https://www.spotlight.com/interactive/cv/1/F124024.html>

Kelly is a passionate advocate for parents in the arts and lives with the reality of maintaining a career whilst managing the needs of a little one. It can be challenging but she wouldn't have it any other way!

Kelly is very passionate about arts for all and is an experienced community development worker and workshop specialist, with a particular focus on working in areas of low arts engagement. She's also a freelance Producer.

Louisa May Parker was born and raised in Wythenshawe, Manchester and remains very proud of her working class roots. She trained as an actor at The Arden Manchester and more recently completed her MA at Drama Centre London. She was also lucky enough to spend two months training at The Boris Shchukin Theatre Institute, Moscow.

Louisa wrote RedBobble's debut show 'The Box' and as an actor has worked in theatre, film and TV. See her Spotlight page here: <https://www.spotlight.com/0457-9082-0394>

She is an experienced workshop leader having worked with companies such as Collingwood Learning and Eyewitness Theatre and has led and developed workshops for communities and schools.

Caitlin Gleeson – Supported Artist

Caitlin Gleeson is a theatre maker, facilitator and writer whose work includes solo performance, interactive theatre and community arts, and often explores autobiography, gender and place. She is experienced in delivering arts projects with communities and currently works with the Octagon Theatre, Royal Exchange, and Contact. She is currently touring *Pour and Serve*, a site-specific solo performance on the language of sexual harassment. In development is *Vera*, a collaboration with Ross McCaffrey which uses the story of a pioneering astrophysicist to ask why we believe some people more than others; and *Dungarees*, a show that uses humour, autobiography and a host of unhappy lesbian TV characters to explore how coming out can be dangerous, exhausting and radical.

Nana-Kofi Kufuor – Supported Artist

Nana-Kofi Kufuor is a 28-year-old writer hailing from Stockport. His influences range from film to TV and theatre to radio. Nana-Kofi received a BA Hons in Film and Television production from the University of Cumbria in 2014 and achieved his Master's Degree in 2018 in Screenwriting for Film, Television and Radio from the University of Salford.

Nana-Kofi's style of writing comes from his own experiences; he has worked in provisions in education for years and has seen young people from all financial backgrounds and the vast inequalities in modern day society. He writes to expose and humanise the people that mainstream media currently and historically has taken delight in mocking or ostracizing. He started playwriting in late 2017 and wants to take theatre to places it doesn't ordinarily go and create stories that are rarely seen on stage. Nana-Kofi is currently under commission from Box of Tricks as part of the PlayBox writers' scheme. He was also shortlisted for the Theatre Uncut Political Playwriting Award earlier this year.

Sorcha McCaffrey – Supported Artist

Sorcha is a Yorkshire actor, writer and theatre-maker based in Manchester. She trained at ALRA North and has taken part in the Royal Court writers group. She has performed with the John Godber Company, Contact Theatre and Co:LAB Festival at Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester. Her first play *Ladybones* ran at VAULT Festival and the Edinburgh Fringe 2019, and has been recorded as an audio drama for Audible.