
Oldham Coliseum's Mini-Podcast Series

Oldham Coliseum Theatre's popular Mini-Podcast Series shares original works by people of all ages and backgrounds from the communities the theatre serves. For each episode the Coliseum has invited writers to respond to a theme within a specified length, with pieces ranging from 100 words to a 20-minute short audio-play.

Launched on World Theatre Day 2020 (27 March), the theatre has already recorded and aired new works by well-known names, professional playwrights, emerging writers and young people from the local area for the series. All pieces in the Coliseum's Mini-Podcast series are recorded remotely by professional actors, with an introduction from the theatre's Artistic Director **Chris Lawson** and edited by the theatre's Digital Associate **Grant Archer**.

Episode 1: 100 Word Plays (about Oldham) features 17 plays of no more than 100 words based on the theme of Oldham. The plays were written by well-known writers including **Julie Hesmondhalgh**, writers of previous Coliseum hits: **Ian Kershaw** (*Bread & Roses*, *The Mist in the Mirror* and *Star-Cross'd*) and **Lindsey Williams** (*Meat Pie*, *Sausage Roll* and *Dreamers*) and local emerging writers.

The 100 Word Plays submissions responded to a 2019 call-out for which the plays were displayed across the theatre in crafty and creative places. Within two weeks of the theatre's closure to help slow the spread of COVID-19, the theatre had employed a cast of nine Greater Manchester actors to record 17 of the 100 Word Plays for the inaugural episode of the series. The cast includes: **John Askew** (Netflix's *The English Game*), **Natalie Gavin** (also Netflix's *The English Game*, plus Alma Capstick in ITV's *Jericho*), star of last year's pantomime *Jack and the Beanstalk* **Sam Glen** (also the Coliseum's productions of *The Kitchen Sink* and *Star-Cross'd* and BBC's *Let it Shine* with Gary Barlow), **Darren Jeffries**, **Jack Radcliffe** and Coliseum Associate and Supported Artists: **Hafsah Aneela Bashir**, RedBobble Arts (**Kelly Munro-Fawcett**, **Louisa May Parker** and **Martha Simon**), Fine Comb Theatre (**Rachel McMurray** and **Catherine Morefield**) and **Sorcha McCaffrey**.

Episode 2: 'Off Out' Monologues features three monologues written by young people and inspired by the UK lockdown. The Coliseum's Learning and Engagement Team invited people aged 21 and under to submit monologues about a character's once-daily trip out of the house, offering insight into their reactions around the unprecedented situation. The three monologues in the episode: *Like Dad, Like Duck* by **Joe Walsh**, *A 60 Minute Adventure* by **Adele Barnes** and *A Birthday in Quarantine* by **Freya Williams** were recorded by actors: **Jake Talbot** (Rob Johnstons's *Riot Act*), **Natasha Davidson** (The Coliseum's 2015 production of *Hindle Wakes*) and **Sonya Nisa** (*This is Oldham* by Lindsey Williams at The Grange).

Episode 3: Pop and Crisps is a new 20-minute audio play by **Sorcha McCaffrey** commissioned by the Coliseum for the series. Sorcha is an actor, writer and theatre maker and a Supported Artist of the Coliseum.

Saf hasn't seen her dad for 20 years. All she remembers about him is his love of 80s music and Doritos. Her aunt said he went to Scotland. Linda over the road said he went to the North Pole. Her mum didn't say anything. On the brink of making a life-changing decision, Saf arranges to meet him again.

Pop and Crisps was recorded by **Cora Kirk** (*A Monster Calls* Old Vic UK Tour, *Peter Pan* at The National and *Not Such Quiet Girls* at Leeds Playhouse) and **William Travis** (the Coliseum's productions of *The Kitchen Sink* and *Hard Times* and most recently *Wonderland* at Nottingham Playhouse and Northern Stage) and directed by the theatre's Artistic Director **Chris Lawson**.

Episode 4 of the Mini-Podcast Series sees the Coliseum collaborate with **DANC** (Disabled Artist Networking Community) and **TripleC** to invite writers who are part of **DANC** to write short plays no more than five minutes in length responding to the theme of Distance. Submissions for the episode are open until Friday 5 June.

TripleC is a disabled led arts organisation that creates projects to break down the barriers for people with disabilities accessing the arts. **DANC** is the professional strand of **TripleC** that champions solution focussed events, workshops and conversations between disabled artists and key industry decision makers to increase representation, inclusivity and employment of disabled artists in the arts and media sector.

Oldham Coliseum Theatre's building on Fairbottom Street in Oldham town centre is temporarily closed to help slow the spread of Coronavirus. The theatre closed to the public with immediate effect on Monday 16 March, following UK Government advice that people should avoid public buildings including theatres. The Coliseum's teams are working remotely to create art and opportunities which can be shared online so that audiences and participants can access them from home. Coliseum staff are also making regular phone calls with the theatre's most vulnerable older participants in place of the theatre's regular social activities and distributing art and craft packs from a safe distance to young people in the local communities so that they can participate in creative activities at home.

The theatre's team is also working to reschedule events which have unavoidably been cancelled due to the Coronavirus crisis. The Coliseum thanks audiences for their patience as its small but dedicated team is working as quickly as possible.

Oldham Coliseum Theatre has only closed once before in its 135-year history. If you are able and would like to support the Coliseum at this difficult time the theatre asks that audiences consider donating all or part of their ticket costs for cancelled events, or donating online at coliseum.org.uk/your-coliseum-needs-you . Oldham Coliseum Theatre is a Registered Charity (no. 508829)

The Coliseum's Mini-Podcast Series is free to access. It is available online at: coliseum.org.uk/mini-podcast-series/ or on Soundcloud at soundcloud.com/oldhamcoliseum/sets/oldham-coliseum-mini-podcast

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Notes to Editor:

For further press information, please contact Shelly Ramsdale via email at shellyramsdale@coliseum.org.uk (please note I am currently working from home)

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.

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