

16 April 2021

Short film *Angel of History* explores emotional effect of pandemic on performers

Oldham Coliseum Theatre today releases the first of its Micro Commissions 2021, *Angel of History*, a moving short film by digital artist **Grant Archer**.

In 1940 the philosopher Walter Benjamin described a Paul Klee painting, *Angelus Novus*, as showing an angel of history transfixed by a past he perceives as catastrophe but which is propelling him forward into the future.

Angel of History is a collaboration with ballerina **Nicky Henshall**, actress **Shobna Gulati** and composer **Akshay Gulati**, exploring what it has meant to be a performer during the Covid-19 pandemic, when all regular creative outputs had been restricted.

Filmed on the Coliseum stage, the timely piece reflects not only the struggles of the creative industry, but the impact of the health and wellbeing of society as a whole, and how the events of the past year can be turned into a positive to drive us forward.

Grant said: *"This was a team of creatives I had been looking forward to working with for a long time and this commission gave us the perfect platform to look at the past year and the pressures the pandemic has had on people."*

"The Coliseum have been really supportive and it has been great to experience their shared excitement for bringing a different form of storytelling to the stage, combining dance, film and digital installation."

Angel of History is available to view on the Coliseum's website and YouTube channel.

Grant Archer is a digital artist creating theatrical installation work that explores the relationship between live and recorded media and storytelling. In 2015 he co-founded Take Back Theatre with actor Julie Hesmondhalgh and writer Rebekah Harrison, responding to social and political issues. Grant is also the Coliseum's Digital Associate Artist and is developing further digital installation work. His other recent works have included *Connect* – a series of phone conversations at HOME, Manchester; *Patient* – an audio/visual installation at Oldham Coliseum and Virtual Reality films at The Lowry, the Coliseum and various site-specific locations.

Exploring themes of health and wellbeing, local stories or work for and with young people from Oldham, the Coliseum's Micro Commissions 2021 respond to the world as we live in it today, over a year on from the beginning of the pandemic.

Further commissioned pieces will be released throughout April and May: **Bog Standard Creative's A Brew, A Terrace and the 184** – a filmed play about growing up in a poverty cycle in Oldham; **Joyce Branagh's The Newcomer** – an audio drama telling the true story of a survivor of a WWII Nazi German concentration camp who came to Oldham aged 12; **Dare to Know Theatre's** community verbatim piece **A Broken Family, Together**; **Tori Burgess's** audio drama **A Tale of Two Giants** - based on the Saddleworth folk tale of Alphin and Alder, **Caitlin Gleeson's One Foot In Front of the Other** - exploring

health and wellbeing through the lens of walking; and the online culmination event of **Jade Williams's** creativity and wellbeing project for young people inspired by Black British history, **Pablo Fanque's *Fantastic Fair***.

All Oldham Coliseum Micro Commissions 2021 are free to access, however the theatre asks that audiences consider making a donation to help them support more great artists to create new work.

- Ends -----

Notes to Editor:

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(please note I am currently working from home)

Angel of History

A film by Grant Archer based on the work of Walter Benjamin & Paul Klee

With music by Akshay Gulati

Performance by Shobna Gulati

Dance and Choreography by Nicky Henshall

Lighting by Aaron Barton-Wells

Technical Assistance from Matt Williams, Kevin Leach & Adam Gent

Produced by Rebekah Harrison

Grant Archer's website: www.grantarcher.co.uk/

Oldham Coliseum Theatre

The Coliseum 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, online 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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