

27 April 2021

Oldham Coliseum and Toronto's impel theatre present cross-Atlantic live theatre over Zoom

Mina Anwar, **Darren Jeffries** and Canadian actors **Blythe Haynes** and **Ryan G Hinds** star in a cross-Atlantic collaboration of **Caridad Svich's** *An Acorn* presented by Oldham Coliseum Theatre and Toronto's impel Theatre. The performance takes place live on Zoom on Thursday 6 May, followed by a recorded run from 7 – 17 May.

An Acorn is a poetic play about facing despair, healing and moving forward. Originally commissioned in 2017 by American Blues Theatre, the play opens the morning after an unspecified disaster and resonates with the struggles of people in living lockdown during the pandemic.

"It seemed as if a certain part of the world changed forever..."

Directed by **Kendra Jones**, **Mina Anwar** (*The Thin Blue Line*, *Everybody's Talking About Jamie*) and **Darren Jeffries** (*Hollyoaks*) will receive the script and some specific instructions just an hour before the performance, whilst Canadian actors **Blythe Haynes** (*An Atlas, A Necktie & Other Concerns*) and **Ryan G Hinds** (*#KanderAndEbb*, *We Will Rock You*) will be rehearsed. The two groups of actors have never met before, adding to the sense of chaos and spontaneity.

Over one year on from the beginning of the first lockdown we continue to be isolated and, while vaccine rollouts mean that some semblance of 'normal' life will return, the experience of isolation, fear and upheaval will linger with us.

We have learned in this time about our fellow humans, and while there have been moments of hope, the divide between factions feels to have grown into a chasm. Will we ever reconnect? Or has the awareness of these differences changed us forever?

An Acorn is a live digital performance with an interactive twist, taking place both over Zoom and on Social Media. Upon booking audiences will receive a link to download the show's accompanying soundscape and instructions on how to curate their space and interact with the piece with pandemic portraits on Instagram at [@forest_acorn](https://www.instagram.com/forest_acorn).

Writer **Caridad Svich** is a playwright, screenwriter, translator, editor, lyricist, essayist, educator and freelance arts journalist. Her works in English and Spanish have been produced internationally. Her first independent feature film (as co-screenwriter) *Fugitive Dreams*, based on her play, premiered at the 2020 Fantasia Film Festival, 2020 Austin Film Festival and the 2020 Tallinn Black Nights Festival, and 2021 Manchester Film Festival (UK). Three of her new plays were on the 2020 Kilroys List. She has received the 2012 OBIE for Lifetime Achievement, the 2011 American Theatre Critics Association Primus Prize for *The House of the Spirits*, based on Isabel Allende's novel, and NNPN rolling world premieres for *RED BIKE* and

Guapa. She was awarded the 2018 Ellen Stewart Award for Career Achievement in Professional Theatre from the Association for Theatre in Higher Education.

Director & Co-Producer **Kendra Jones** trained at RADA, London, and The University of Winnipeg, Canada. Her directing credits include: Simon Stephens' *Sea Wall*, Sarah Kane's *4.48 Psychosis* (Theatre By the River), a site-specific interpretation of Tim Crouch's *I, Malvolio* (impel theatre), *Watching Glory Die* (Love2 Theatre), and *Drunk Enough To Say I Love You, Seagulls* (selardi theatre). Kendra is also a creator of original work, including: *Dear Mama*, *Tonight at Eight*, *Autel*, and her adaptation of Marlowe's *Edward II*. She writes about contemporary performance from an academic perspective on her blog and has been published by CBC Manitoba, Common Ground Publishing, Brunel University, and the Humanities Education Research Association.

Mina Anwar has had a varied career as a professional actor in theatre, television, film and radio. Best known for *The Thin Blue Line* (BBC) and *Everybody's Talking About Jamie* (West End), she recently appeared in the Lawrence Batley Theatre's filmed performance of *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Her other credits include *The Worst Witch*, *Dr Who*, *The A Word*, *Happy Valley*, *Shameless*, BBC's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Understudy* (West End) and the Sheffield Crucible and West End production of *Life of Pi*. Mina is also a regular lead vocalist with The Suburban Swing Orchestra in Greater Manchester.

Ryan G. Hinds is a critically-acclaimed theatre artist who has appeared across Canada and the US in shows including: *#KanderAndEbb*, Theatre New Brunswick's *It's a Wonderful Life*, Magnus Theatre's *We Will Rock You*, *Hedwig & the Angry Inch* at the Capitol Theatre; and *Lilies; Or, The Revival of a Romantic Drama* for lemonTree Creations, Why Not Theatre, and Buddies in Bad Times. Ryan is an Associate Artist at lemonTree Creations, was an artist-in-residence at Buddies in Bad Times, 2014-2016 and has performed alongside artists such as Liza Minnelli, Todrick Hall and Debbie Reynolds.

Blythe Haynes is an actor, award-winning voice artist and producer. She is a co-founder and co-artistic director of Gangway! Theatre Co., a Toronto-based collective focused on exploring feminism, Canadian history, and mental health through an intersectional lens. Blythe regularly lends her voice to podcasts, including the award winning *Six Stories, Told At Night* and Campfire Radio Theatre's *Woods Ferry*, and has received two PARSEC awards for her voice work. Her acting credits include: *An Atlas, A Necktie & Other Concerns* (Period. Productions/Toronto Fringe, Winner of Best of Fringe Theatre Orangeville), *Six Stories, Told At Night* (Gangway!/Toronto Fringe), *A Canticle of Light* (Missed Metaphor Productions), *In His Name* (The Canadian History Project) and *Mary's Wedding* (Brantbury Fair/Toronto Fringe).

Darren Jeffries is a stage/television actor originally from Warrington. His theatre credits include: *Dear Nomad* (Octagon Theatre, Bolton); *Where We Are* (HOME, Manchester) and Andrea Dunbar's final play *Shirley* (Square Chapel Arts Centre) and for television: Channel 4's *Hollyoaks* and BBC's *Doctors*. He is a self-confessed film fanatic, music lover, and an ardent supporter of all things art and culture.

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Notes to Editor:

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(please note I am currently working from home)

An Acorn

Presented by Oldham Coliseum Theatre and impel Theatre

by Caridad Svich

Directed by Kendra Jones

Produced by Kendra Jones and Blythe Haynes

Performed by Mina Anwar, Blythe Haynes, Ryan G Hinds and Darren Jeffries.

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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