

Press Release

The House of Bernarda Alba

by Federico Garcia Lorca translated by Jo Clifford. Directed by Jenny Sealey
A Royal Exchange Theatre & Graeae Theatre Company Co-production

- **Kathryn Hunter plays title role in major new production of Lorca's final masterpiece**
- **Graeae and Royal Exchange Theatre co-produce together for the first time**
- **Graeae Artistic Director Jenny Sealey directs first major UK production since *Blood Wedding*¹ by Federico Garcia Lorca in 2015**

In spring 2017, two award-winning companies, Graeae and the Royal Exchange Theatre Manchester, will collaborate on a major new co-production of Lorca's final masterpiece, *The House of Bernarda Alba*, with internationally acclaimed actor Kathryn Hunter leading an all female cast. Performances will run from 2 – 25 February 2017, with a national press night on Tuesday 7 February.

Bernarda's husband is dead. Now she alone rules her household and the lives of her five daughters. A period of eight years mourning will be observed without contact with the outside world and the men who might bring them ruin. That is except for Angustias, whose inheritance has attracted a wealthy local suitor. As the wedding approaches, Bernarda struggles to retain her suffocating grip on her family and on these women whose appetite for defiance is growing.

The House of Bernarda Alba is a bitter and darkly comic tragedy that charts the tyranny, jealousy and desperate struggle for freedom that ultimately tears a mother and her daughters apart.

The Royal Exchange Theatre previously collaborated with Graeae on the second year of the *Write to Play* programme for emerging Deaf and disabled writers, as well as hosting a highly successful week-long run of *The Solid Life of Sugar Water* by Jack Thorne in February 2016, co-produced by Graeae and Theatre Royal Plymouth.

In Graeae's trademark style, all performances will creatively integrate British Sign Language, Audio Description and captioning, while showcasing the incredible talent of Deaf and disabled actors. A relaxed performance will be held on Wednesday 15 February at 2.30pm.

Further casting news to be announced.

[ENDS]

¹ *Blood Wedding* was a Graeae Theatre Company, Dundee Rep and Derby Theatre Co-Production.

Editor's notes

Kathryn Hunter

Bernarda Alba

Kathryn Hunter's many leading and award-winning appearances include title roles in *Richard III*, *King Lear* (subsequently also playing the Fool), *Antony & Cleopatra*, *Celestina*, *Yerma*, *Donna Rosita*, *Spoonface Steinberg*, *The Skriker* (Time Out Best Actress Award), *Mother Courage* and the acclaimed solo performance *Kafka's Monkey*. For *The Visit* (National Theatre/Complicite) she received an Olivier Award for Best Actress. Recent theatre includes: *The Valley of Astonishment*, (Peter Brook), *Cards* (Robert LePage), *Fragments* (Peter Brook), *A Tender Thing* (Helena Kaut-Howson), *The Bee* (Hideki Noda) and Julie Taymor's New York production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (as Puck). Film and television credits include: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (as Puck – Toronto/London Film Festivals), *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, Mike Leigh's *All or Nothing*, *Orlando* (Sally Potter), *The Baby of Macon* (Peter Greenaway), *Rome*, *Silent Witness*, *Grushko*, *Maria's Child* and *The Tale of Tales*. Directing credits include: *My Perfect Mind* (Young Vic/New York/UK Tour), *Othello* (RSC), *The Glory of Living* (Royal Court), *Mr Puntilla And His Man Matti* (Almeida/Duke of Yorks), *The Birds* (RNT), *Comedy of Errors* and *Pericles* (both Shakespeare's Globe).

Jo Clifford

Translator

Jo is a writer, performer, poet and teacher based in Edinburgh. She is the author of about 80 plays, many of which have been translated into various languages and performed all over the world. Her original plays include: *Losing Venice*, *Lucy's Play*, *Playing With Fire*, *Ines de Castro*, *Light In The Village*, *War in America*, *The Tree Of Life*, *The Tree of Knowledge*, *God's New Frock*, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, *Queen of Heaven*, *An Apple a Day*, *Sex, Chips and the Holy Ghost* and *Every One*.

Plays based on other sources include: *Heaven Bent*, *Hell Bound*, *Great Expectations*, *La Vie de Boheme*, *Tchaikovsky* and *The Queen of Spades*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Anna Karenina*, *Don Duardos*, *The Force Of Destiny* and *Faust Parts One and Two*.

Translations include: *The House With Two Doors*, *The Doctor of Honour*, *Schism in England*, *Life Is A Dream*, *Celestina*.

Radio Plays include: *Desert Places*, *Ending Time*, *Writing Home to Mother*, *The Leopard*, *Torquemada*, *Ain't It Grand To Be Bloomin' Well Dead*, *Spam Fritters*, *La Princesse de Cleves*.

Work in 2015 included the opening of a new dramatisation of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Sell A Door theatre Company); revivals of *Great Expectations* (Studio Life, Tokyo, and Dundee Rep); *Anna Karenina* (Manchester Royal Exchange and West Yorkshire Playhouse), *Ines de Castro The Opera* (Scottish Opera), and *The Gospel According To Jesus*, *Queen Of Heaven* (Edinburgh festival fringe at Summerhall).

Jenny Sealey has been Graeae's Artistic Director since 1997. In 2009, she was awarded an MBE in the Queen's Honours and became an Artistic Advisor for Unlimited 2012 Festival. UK theatre credits for Graeae include: *Blood Wedding* (co-production with Dundee Rep and Derby Theatre), *The Threepenny Opera* (co-production with West Yorkshire Playhouse, New Wolsey Theatre Ipswich, Nottingham Playhouse Company and Birmingham Rep Theatre), *Belonging* (co-production with Circo Crescere Viver), *Reasons To Be Cheerful* (2010 co-production with The New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich and Theatre Royal Stratford East, 2012 national tour co-produced with the New Wolsey Theatre and 2012 performance at Southbank Centre), *Signs of a Star Shaped Diva* and *Blasted*. Other theatre and outdoor credits include: *Romeo and Juliet* (National Theatre Dhaka for A Different Shakespeare British Council programme 2016), *Blood Wedding* (Setagaya Public Theatre, Tokyo), *Against the Tide* (GDIF, Milton Keynes International Festival and The National Theatre's Watch This Space); *The Iron Man* (Norfolk & Norwich Festival, Brighton Festival, Bristol Do Festival, GDIF and SIRF); and *The Garden* (National Theatre GDIF and Southbank Centre). In 2012 Jenny co-directed the London 2012 Paralympic Opening Ceremony alongside Bradley Hemmings (GDIF). She also won the Liberty *Human Rights Arts Award* and was named on the Time Out London and Hospital Club *h.Club100* list of the most influential and creative people in the creative industries.

About Graeae

Graeae is a force for change in world-class theatre - breaking down barriers, challenging preconceptions and boldly placing Deaf and disabled artists centre stage. Artistically led by Jenny Sealey, Graeae's signature characteristic is the compelling creative integration of sign language, captioning and audio description, which engages brilliantly with both disabled and non-disabled audiences. Championing accessibility and providing a platform for new generations of artists, Graeae leads the way in pioneering, trail-blazing theatre. Recent productions include: *The Solid Life of Sugar Water* (co-production with Theatre Royal Plymouth), *Blood Wedding* (co-production with Dundee Rep Ensemble and Derby Theatre), *The Threepenny Opera* (co-production with West Yorkshire Playhouse, New Wolsey Theatre Ipswich, Nottingham Playhouse Company and Birmingham Rep Theatre), *Belonging* (co-production with Circo Crescere Viver), *Reasons to be Cheerful* and *Blasted*. Spectacular outdoor productions include *The Limbless Knight* (with Strange Fruit/commissioned by GDIF), *Prometheus Awakes* (with La Fura dels Baus/co-commissioned by GDIF and SIRF) and *The Iron Man*. Graeae won the Promotion of Diversity Award at the TMA Theatre Awards UK 2012. www.graeae.org

About Royal Exchange Manchester

Situated in the heart of Manchester, the Royal Exchange Theatre is one of the UK's leading producing theatres and is currently Regional Theatre of the Year 2016. Its ambitious programme is inspired by the world's greatest stories: stories that have the power to change the way we see the world. That means taking artistic risks, working as part of exciting partnerships, championing new talent and seeking out bold collaborations. A record number of people experienced their work in the last year, and they continue to broaden their output on and offstage, to speak to the most diverse audiences in Manchester and beyond. This September marks the Royal Exchange's 40th Year as a Company, and they will be celebrating with audiences and communities across the city all year. As well as collaborating with Graeae Theatre Company, the

40th Anniversary Season also includes *Birth* – a global festival of theatre and Debate, which is a creative partnership between The Oglesby Charitable Trust and The Royal Exchange Theatre, as well as a second co-production with the Royal Court Theatre for the Bruntwood prize-winning play *Wish List*. The season also includes the return of Maxine Peake, in Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Breaking the Code* by Hugh Whitmore and *Sweet Charity* at Christmas.

Quotes

Jenny Sealey said:

'I have wanted to direct this play for many years, and am thrilled to finally be doing so with this full-blooded translation by the wonderful Jo Clifford. Alongside this heated tale of competitiveness, danger and fragility, we'll be weaving Graeae's famous 'aesthetics of access' into the fabric of the production, ensuring it truly is a landmark event, while showcasing the extraordinary talent of our Deaf and disabled actors.'

Access information

All performances include British Sign Language, audio description and captioning. All venues are fully accessible.

Please contact Richard Matthews on richard@graeae.org or call 020 7613 6906 if you would like this press release in alternative forms.

Dates

Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester

Thu 2 – Sat 25 February 2017

Evenings 7.30pm. Thu and Sat matinees 2.30pm (except Thu 2 & Thu 9 Feb).

Wed matinee 15 Feb 2.30pm (relaxed performance).

Press night Tue 7 February 7.30pm

To book press night tickets, email paula.rabbitt@royalexchange.co.uk

Box office: 0161 833 9833

www.royalexchange.co.uk

St Ann's Square, Manchester, M2 7DH

Priority booking for Members from 24 May

Priority booking for Season Ticket Holders from 6 June

Public booking opens 21 June

All performances will creatively integrate British Sign Language, audio description and captioning.