

THEATRE (NEW WRITING)

Graeae Theatre Company and Royal Exchange Theatre:

**COSMIC SCALLIES**

**Incisive two-hander on class, friendship and welfare-poverty from the celebrated director/company of 2015 Fringe hit *The Solid Life of Sugar Water***

**Written by Jackie Hagan | Directed by Amit Sharma | Performed by an inclusive cast**

**WORLD PREMIERE**

**Part of Northern Stage at Summerhall // Tech Cube, 5 - 26 August 2017, 18:30 (19:50), 14+, all shows have creative captioning and audio description**

*“Startlingly good”* ★★★★ The Times, on *The Solid Life of Sugar Water* at Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2015 (directed by Amit Sharma)

“*We’re cosmic scallies, we dance on the off-beat, we’re wonky shopping trollies, we’re forgotten and trod on, we’re gravy stained and piss sodden, we’re the breath between coughing fits.”*

**Loosely based on award-winner Jackie Hagan’s experiences** of growing up in the forgotten-town of Skelmersdale, Lancashire, *Cosmic Scallies* is a sharp and funny portrait of friendship, dependency and dancing on the off-beat. Set in ‘Skem’, a working-class north-west town brimming with under investment, this timely and original debut boldly navigates a world where poverty and benefits are commonplace. Informed by Hagan’s first-hand knowledge of life as a disabled person her refreshing and poignant play doesn’t shy away from ‘owt’.

**Shaun and Dent grew up best friends on the same council estate in Skelmersdale.** Dent left and went to university, Shaun stayed loyal to his home town. Now in their 30s, circumstances unexpectedly throw them back together. Dent is back in Skem after the death of her mother and trying, alone, to manage her daily battle with ongoing pain. What can Shaun do to help his old friend, when he is dealing with his own troubles?

***Cosmic Scallies* is Jackie Hagan’s debut play.** A poet, stand-up comedian and a graduate from Graeae’s *Write to Play* programme, she is an award-winning spoken word performer receiving Creative Futures Award for Poetry and Best Spoken Word Show, Saboteur Awards 2015. She explains: “Cosmic Scallies *is a play about the 'undeserving poor' and why we do what we do: oversized tellies, scratch cards, stealing, booze, drugs and flippancy - it’s up to the audience to decide what the reasons really are*.”

Director Amit Sharma has been Associate Director at Graeae since 2011 and is currently at the Royal Exchange Theatre as Associate Artistic Director funded by the Arts Council England’s ChangeMakers programme. Amit’s last production, *The Solid Life of Sugar Water*, received unanimous four and five star reviews and won the Euan’s Guide Most Accessible Show of the Fringe Award in 2015 and transferred to the National Theatre’s Temporary Space in spring 2016. Other directing credits for Graeae include *Prometheus Awakes* and *The Iron Man* (UK Tour). While at Graeae, Amit led the *Write to Play* programme.

Amit said of *Cosmic Scallies*: “*When I read this play for the first time I was hugely excited.* Cosmic Scallies *fluidly makes you laugh out loud and feel huge empathy within a few lines tackling subjects like social class, education, the rhetoric of aspiration and unashamedly highlighting the systematic barriers disabled people face in day to day life. It's a play that needs to be told now and I'm delighted that Jackie, a Write to Play alumni, has the opportunity to write her first play which is a cracker!”*

The role of Shaun will be played by **Reuben Johnson** (*A Streetcar Named Desire*/Royal Exchange, *Loaded*/C4), and Dent will be played by **Rachel Denning** (Doctor Who/BBC, The Government Inspector/Birmingham Rep & Ramps on the Moon and *Dr Frankenstein*/Northern Stage).

www.northernstage.co.uk | @northernstage |@graeae | @rxtheatre | #CosmicScallies

***ENDS***

Notes to editors:

**Jackie Hagan** is from a forgotten new town (Skelmersdale, in which *Cosmic Scallies* is set) that the Guardian called “a waking nightmare”; she loved it. She is a theatre maker, playwright, poet and performer; shedding light on life as a working class woman in a small town. She is also a queer amputee who downs champagne from her glittery false leg and dresses her stump up as celebrities in her cabaret act. Last year she represented the UK in FLUPP international poetry slam in Rio de Janeiro and was the focus of a Channel 4 documentary. The previous year she won the Best Spoken Word Show Saboteur award for her first solo show *Some People Have Too Many Legs*, and a Creative Futures award for literature. For the past 10 years she has run a not for profit organisation providing workshops, support and opportunities for isolated adults.

**Graeae Theatre Company** 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, engaging 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 Graeae productions/co-productions include: Lorca’s *The House of Bernarda Alba*, *The Solid Life of Sugar Water* by Jack Thorne, Lorca’s *Blood Wedding*, *The Threepenny Opera, Reasons to be Cheerful, Blasted and Bent*. Graeae is part of the Ramps on the Moon consortium of theatres.

**Graeae’s cult hit musical *Reasons to be Cheerful*** will also return for a UK tour this autumn. Celebrating the music, politics and audaciousness of Ian Dury and the Blockheads, the production will be directed by Jenny Sealey and opens in Coventry on 9th September 2017 before touring nationally.

***Write to Play* is Graeae’s flagship writer development programme**, championing d/Deaf and disabled playwrights nationwide in partnership with leading new writing theatres across the UK. Each year, 5 writers, through a series of workshops and placements, work towards their first full-length play, which is performed in a public sharing at the end of the year. Jackie Hagan was part of the second year cohort (2015-16), of which The Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester were partners, and is the first *Write to Play* graduate to have a play developed through the programme professionally produced.

**Royal Exchange Theatre** transforms the way people see theatre, each other and the world around them. The historic building, once the world’s biggest cotton exchange, was taken over by artists in 1976. Today it is an award-winning cultural charity that produces new theatre in-the-round, in communities, on the road and online. Exchange remains at the heart of everything the company makes and does. Now its currency is brand new drama and reinvigorated classics, the boldest artists and a company of highly skilled makers - all brought together in a shared imaginative endeavour to trade ideas and experiences with the people of Greater Manchester (and beyond).

**In 2016 the Royal Exchange won The Stage’s award for Regional Theatre of the year.** Recent work includes *Hamlet* with Maxine Peake (for stage and film), *The Skriker* (with the Manchester International Festival), *King Lear* (co-produced with Talawa Theatre Company, filmed for BBC iPlayer and BBC Four), *Little Sister* (by Mark Storor & developed with communities across Greater Manchester), and *The House of Bernarda Alba* (a co-production with Graeae Theatre Company). Spring/Summer 2017 productions include *How My Light is Spent*, *Persuasion* and *Fatherland.*

**Northern Stage** in Newcastle has a reputation for breathing new life into classic texts, curating ambitious and sometimes daring contemporary theatre and working with thousands of people every year in a strong participation programme. This is the 6th year that Northern Stage has hosted a programme at the Edinburgh Fringe, presenting some of the most interesting theatre from across the north of England and beyond.

**Further reviews for The Solid Life of Sugar Water (2015)**

*“Intense…rewarding”* ★★★★ The Guardian, on *The Solid Life of Sugar Water* at Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2015

**Cast**

Shaun - Reuben Johnson
Dent -Rachel Denning

**Creative Team**

Director Amit Sharma
Writer Jackie Hagan
Artistic Director (Graeae) Jenny Sealey
Designer Bethany Wells
Lighting and captioning Designer Joshua Pharo
Sound Designer and composer Lewis Gibson

*Graeae Theatre Company and Royal Exchange Theatre are supported by Arts Council England*

***ENDS***

Listings information:

**Graeae Theatre Company and Royal Exchange Theatre: Cosmic Scallies**

Part of Northern Stage at Summerhall

Summerhall Place, Edinburgh EH9 1PL

Sat 5 – Sat 26 August 2017 (except Wednesdays) | 18:30 (19:50)

£12 (£10)

Tickets: 0131 560 1581| [www.summerhall.co.uk](http://www.summerhall.co.uk)