



PRESS RELEASE

16.08.17

IMAGES FROM PREVIOUS PRODUCTION CAN BE DOWNLOAD [HERE](#).

Twitter: [@R2BCheerful](#) [@graeae](#) #Reasons17

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Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/217014732>

Graeae Theatre Company presents...

Reasons to be Cheerful

A raucous musical featuring the hits of Ian Dury and the Blockheads, in a new production for 2017 directed by Jenny Sealey.

- **‘If It Can’t Be Right Then It Must Be Wrong’**, a new song written exclusively for ***Reasons to be Cheerful*** by members of Ian Dury’s band The Blockheads and Graeae performer John Kelly
- Exclusively available for FREE download to all ***Reasons to be Cheerful*** ticket holders from Graeae’s website
- Live performance of the song at every show of ***Reasons to be Cheerful***, seven venue UK tour, starting on 8th September 2017
- ***Reasons to be Cheerful*** is leading a new protest song movement with anthems being written across UK as part of Graeae’s Community Engagement programme
- Award-winning artist **Tony Heaton OBE** has been commissioned to create artwork for the new song **‘If It Can’t Be Right Then It Must Be Wrong’**

Pioneering disabled-led theatre company Graeae has been proud standard-bearers for protest and disability rights for many years. In conjunction with the final tour of their smash hit musical ***Reasons to be Cheerful***, set in 1979 Thatcher’s Britain, Blockheads **Chaz Jankel**, **Derek Hussey** and cast member **John Kelly** have written a protest song for 2017, **‘If It Can’t Be Right Then It Must Be Wrong’**.

From Kate Tempest’s incendiary government-bashing performance at Glastonbury through to the #Grime4Corbyn movement and the re-energising of the anti-Maybot politicised protest at the Cambridge Folk Festival, the summer of 2017 has seen music reclaim its status as a vehicle for protest and advocacy once again.

The song is a rallying cry against the current government cuts; specifically the austerity and cuts directed at the d/Deaf and disabled community in the UK and the systematic disintegration of the NHS and the Welfare State. The lyrics of **‘If It Can’t Be Right Then It Must Be Wrong’** reflect back to the era ***Reasons to be Cheerful*** is set, when Ian Dury and The Blockheads were dominating the charts. Full lyrics can be seen [here](#).

Chaz Jankel said: *“This is one of the most timely and relevant songs I’ve ever been involved in. The funding cuts are atrocious. The lyrics Derek Hussey has written-with additional input from John Kelly frame the current crisis perfectly. It goes beyond being a pleasure to be part of this project, it’s VITAL!”*

Derek Hussey said: *“These issues should be at the top of the agenda in any fair minded democratic society. Allowing individuals to achieve and maintain independence, an element of self-esteem and dignity without suffering the ignominy of having to resort to a humiliating begging bowl mentality. ‘If It Can’t Be Right Then It Must Be Wrong’ highlights some of those points and, I hope, reminds us all that with the right kind of assistance anything is possible.”*

Graeae’s **John Kelly** said: *“‘If It Can’t Be Right Then It Must Be Wrong’ is the fight back towards a society that respects equality, difference, human rights and that celebrates that we actually want to support each other through life. I hope that people come along to the show and join in the fun, anarchy and energy of it all, so we can have a right old sing-along every night during the tour.”*

‘If It Can’t Be Right Then It Must Be Wrong’ will be available as a free download to everyone who buys a ticket for the ***Reasons to be Cheerful*** tour and will be performed exclusively at each show on the tour by the cast and band.

It has also been announced today that **Tony Heaton OBE** has been commissioned to create artwork for the new song **‘If It Can’t Be Right Then It Must Be Wrong’**. A long-term Ian Dury and the Blockhead’s fan and close friend of Graeae, Tony will take inspiration from his landmark sculpture ‘Great Britain from a Wheelchair’. Working in his much-celebrated signature style he will work to reflect the song’s defiant protest message.

Nearly 40 years on The Blockheads’ chart dominating era in the late 1970’s, the UK is again undergoing massive change with shifts in global power and a new generation rising up, musicis once again becoming a way of channelling emotion, maintaining solidarity and demanding change.

As part of Graeae’s ***Reasons to be Cheerful*** extensive community engagement programme, protest songs are now being written across the country. Graeae is inviting all members of the community (regardless of their previous song writing experience) to create original songs with an accompanying video in any format accessible to them. These are available to view and listen to at www.graeae.org/protest-song-hub. To assist members of the public with their song writing, an exclusive guide has been written by lead vocalist and songwriter **John Kelly** which can be [downloaded here](#). A selection of the songs will be given their first airings to the public at each of the venues on the ***Reasons to be Cheerful*** tour.

-ENDS-

For further information please contact Philippa Redfern
philippa@thecornershoppr.com // 020 7831 7657

Chaz Jankel, Derek Hussey and John Kelly are available for interviews.

The lyrics for **‘If It Can’t Be Right Then It Must Be Wrong’** can be viewed [here](#)

For further information on the Protest Song community engagement programme, please email jodi@graeae.org or visit <http://graeae.org/protest-song/>

This tour is supported by Arts Council England through their Strategic Touring Fund.

Graeae's media language guide can be viewed [here](#)

If you would like this information in a different format please contact helen@graeae.org

BIOGRAPHIES

John Kelly (Lead Vocals) has completed five UK tours as well as many international performances. John is Artistic Director of DaisyFest, National Associate Artist for Drake Music, musician with circus company ExtraOrdinary Bodies and Policy & Strategy manager at Merton Centre For Independent Living. John sang *Spasticus Autisticus*, live at the opening ceremony of the Paralympic Games in London, and has also guested with The Blockheads.

Chaz Jankel and Derek Hussey are members of the iconic band The Blockheads. For more information, [click here](#).

Tony Heaton OBE is a sculptor and performance artist, who worked in the field of disability, diversity and social justice throughout his career. He has worked as a Field Officer for RADAR (now Disability Rights UK), Development Officer for NACAB Citizens Advice, Director of Holton Lee and most recently as Chief Executive of Shape Arts, a disability-led arts organisation working with major cultural institutions and disabled people as artists and audiences. In 2012, he was commissioned by the London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games to create sculptural lecterns for Lord Sebastian Coe and Sir Philip Craven, inspired by his landmark work 'Great Britain from a Wheelchair', which is now displayed year-round at Graeae's offices. www.tonyheaton.co.uk

LISTINGS

Reasons to be Cheerful

Writer Paul Sirett

Director Jenny Sealey

Designer Liz Ascroft

Associate Director Daryl Beeton

Lighting Ian Scott

Sound Lewis Gibson

Choreography Mark Smith

Musical Director Joey Hickman

Musical Supervision & Arrangements Robert Hyman

Casting Sarah Hughes CDG

Friday 8 & Saturday 9 September

Belgrade Theatre Coventry

<http://www.belgrade.co.uk>

024 7655 3055

Tuesday 12 – Saturday 16 September

Derby Theatre

<https://www.derbytheatre.co.uk>

01332 59 39 39

Press night: 13 September

Tuesday 26 – Saturday 30 September

Nuffield Southampton Theatres

<https://www.nstheatres.co.uk>

023 8067 1771

Tuesday 3 – Saturday 7 October

New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich

<https://www.wolseytheatre.co.uk>

01473 295 900

Tuesday 10 – Saturday 14 October

West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds

<https://www.wyp.org.uk>

0113 213 7700

Tuesday 17 – Saturday 21 October

Liverpool Everyman

<https://www.everymanplayhouse.com>

0151 709 4776

Tuesday 24 October – Saturday 4 November

Theatre Royal Stratford East

<http://www.stratfordeast.com>

020 8534 0310

Press night: 24 October

Age recommendation 14+

All performances include creative British Sign Language, captioning and audio description.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

Reasons to be Cheerful

This joyful and defiant production will visit seven regions around the country, kicking off at the **Belgrade Theatre**, Coventry, who are also associate producers, on **Friday 8 September** before touring to **Derby, Southampton, Ipswich, Leeds, Liverpool** and ending with a two-week run at **Theatre Royal Stratford East** in London from 24 October – 4 November. Press night is 13 September at Derby Theatre.

This coming of age tale rejoices in the infectious and enduring music of Ian Dury and the Blockheads. Featuring stone-cold classic songs including **Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick; Plaistow Patricia; Sex and Drugs and Rock and Roll; Sweet Gene Vincent; What A Waste** and the titular **Reasons to be Cheerful Part 3**, this show is loud, bold and jubilant.

Reprising their roles from the hugely successful 2010 and 2012 tours, **Stephen Lloyd** will play Vinnie alongside **Stephen Collins** as Colin, **Karen Spicer** as Pat, **Wayne ‘Pickles’ Norman** as Pickles and **Jude Mahon** in the role of Debbie. With **John Kelly** on lead vocals, the on-stage band is

completed by **Paul Sirett** (Guitar, also writer), **Nixon Rosembert** (Bass) and **Paula Stanbridge-Faircloth** (Drums). **Beth Hinton-Lever** will play Janine in her Graeae debut, while **Gerard McDermott** (Blood Wedding and Blasted for Graeae), **Joey Hickman** (The Threepenny Opera for Graeae) and **Max Runham** (Captain Walker in Tommy for Ramps on the Moon) will also join the company. The band will be completed with Graeae newcomer **Louis Schultz-Wiremu** on saxophone, making his stage debut.

Using Graeae's signature theatrical language, all performances of **Reasons to be Cheerful** seamlessly include British Sign Language, audio description and creative captioning.

About Graeae

Graeae is a force for change in world-class theatre - breaking down barriers, challenging preconceptions and boldly placing d/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. Graeae won the Promotion of Diversity Award at the TMA Theatre Awards UK 2012. Recent productions include: *Cosmic Scallies* at the 2017 Edinburgh Festival Fringe (co-production with Royal Exchange Theatre) *The House Of Bernarda Alba* (co-production with Royal Exchange Theatre), *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 Crescer e Viver), *Reasons To Be Cheerful* (originally co-production with New Wolsey Theatre Ipswich and Theatre Royal Stratford East), *Blasted* and *Bent*. 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*.

www.graeae.org

<https://twitter.com/graeae>

Jenny Sealey MBE

Director / Artistic Director of Graeae Jenny Sealey co-directed the London 2012 Paralympics Opening Ceremony alongside Bradley Hemmings (GDIF). She has been Artistic Director and CEO of Graeae since 1997 and has pioneered a new theatrical language, coining the term 'aesthetics of access'. Credits for Graeae include *The House Of Bernarda Alba*, *Blood Wedding*, *Blasted*, *The Threepenny Opera*, *The Limbless Knight*, *Belonging* and *Reasons To Be Cheerful*. International work includes *Romeo and Juliet* in Bangladesh, *Blood Wedding* in Tokyo and *Belonging* in Brazil. Jenny was awarded her MBE in 2009 and The Human Rights Awards for the Arts in 2012.

<https://twitter.com/GraeaeJennyS>

Paul Sirett

Paul is a playwright, dramaturg and musician. He is currently working as the dramaturg on the new Ramps on the Moon production of *The Who's* rock opera *Tommy* – a job that includes integrating two new songs from Pete Townshend and revising the script to make the production fully accessible. Most recently, Paul wrote Stratford East's biggest ever selling pantomime, *Simbad The Sailor*, and worked as the dramaturg on a re-working of the John Mellencamp and Stephen King musical, *Ghost Brothers*

Of Darkland County in New York. Previously, Paul was nominated for an Olivier for his musical *The Big Life* and he wrote *Come Dancing* with Ray Davies. Upcoming productions include a new Punk Rock musical, *Oxy and the Morons*, at the New Wolsey in Ipswich, and a new Graeae tour of Paul's Ian Dury and the Blockheads musical *Reasons to be Cheerful*.