

### For immediate release:

## **Graeae is delighted to announce the appointment of five new Patrons to help keep the company's legacy alive.**

Graeae is a force for change in world-class theatre. Since its inception nearly 40 years ago in 1980, Graeae continues to break down barriers, challenging preconceptions and boldly placing D/deaf and disabled artists centre stage.

In recent years Graeae have presented work at the National Theatre (*The Solid Life of Sugar Water* and *Courage Everywhere: And Others*), published their first biographical book (*Reasons to be Graeae*), trained D/deaf and disabled writers and theatre makers with its professional development programmes, and reached over 100,000 people across the UK and internationally. Recent productions have included the revival of critically acclaimed *Reasons to be Cheerful*, a co-production with the Royal Exchange Theatre of *The House of Bernarda Alba* with Kathryn Hunter in the title role, and the 14-18 NOW/Blesma co-commission *This Is Not For You*.

### **Graeae's new Patrons are:**

**Jack Thorne:** BAFTA and Olivier award winning theatre, film, television and radio writer, and writer of *The Solid Life of Sugar Water* for Graeae

"I'm thrilled to become a patron of Graeae... it is without doubt one of the greatest theatrical companies to work with."

**Jemima Dury:** Writer, performer and daughter of founding Graeae Patron, Ian Dury, and ambassador for Graeae's *Reasons to be Cheerful*

"Since I was a teenager I've watched Graeae redefine what's possible in theatre by making disabled-led, accessible, and thought-provoking work that is truly inspiring."

**Hilary Carty:** Specialist in leadership development and organisational change; Facilitator, mentor, coach. Director, Clore Leadership Programme.

"Putting inclusivity at the heart of creative practice, Graeae sets the standard high and inspires us all to achieve our very best."

**Ola Animashawun:** Creative Director at Euphoric Ink playwriting consultancy, Connections Dramaturg at the National Theatre and mentor/tutor on Graeae's Write to Play programme

"I share fundamental core values with this vitally important company, at a time when it's never been so important for everyone to be reminded of those values."

**Ruth Gould MBE DL:** Artistic Director of DaDaFest, a disability and D/deaf arts organisation based in Liverpool.

"Graeae continues to lead the way internationally for theatre created by the lived experience of disability. I am delighted and honoured to become a patron."

They join Graeae's existing patrons: Sir Peter Blake, Dame Harriet Walter, Jenny Agutter OBE, Richard Wilson OBE, Sadie Frost, Mat Fraser and Nabil Shaban

Graeae's patrons are an integral part of keeping Graeae's legacy thriving. We value their support, encouragement and enthusiasm, for both the company and for the social and artistic ethos Graeae promotes. What unites our five new patrons is their passionate belief that it is possible to provide a platform for D/deaf and disabled artists – equal to that of non-disabled artists - through championing accessibility and inclusivity.

Graeae's Artistic Director Jenny Sealey MBE says...

"I'm thrilled, excited and honoured to be able to welcome our five new patrons into the Graeae family. They have all been long-term advocates, supporters and collaborators of Graeae and I can't wait to continue working with them all as patrons on the next chapter of Graeae's journey."

Graeae prides itself on being a company that gives artists opportunities to grow, gain new experiences and develop professionally. Graeae leads the way in pioneering, trail-blazing theatre. Graeae also run an extensive programme of creative learning opportunities throughout the year, training and developing the next generation of D/deaf and disabled artists. These programmes include *Write to Play* and *Ensemble*.

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.

For interview and photo requests, please contact:

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[Click here to download Graeae's media language guide.](#)

## Full Quotes

"I'm thrilled, excited and honoured to be able to welcome our five new patrons into the Graeae family. Jack Thorne, Jemima Dury, Hilary Carty, Ola Animashawun and Ruth Gould MBE have all been long-term advocates, supporters and collaborators of Graeae's, and I can't wait to continue working with them all as patrons on the next chapter of Graeae's journey."

**Jenny Sealey MBE**

“I’m thrilled to become a patron of Graeae, Britain’s leading disabled theatre company. I have had the honour to actually write for Graeae on several occasions now it is without doubt one of the greatest theatrical companies to work with. A constant source of seemingly unending talent it is a company that constantly provokes and pokes at the world and makes outstanding theatre as it does.” **Jack Thorne**

“Since I was a teenager I’ve watched Graeae redefine what’s possible in theatre by making disabled-led, accessible, and thought-provoking work that is truly inspiring. The energy, vision and impact of a Graeae production will stay with you forever.”  
**Jemima Dury**

“Graeae’s work is a beacon of artistic and creative leadership in the arts and cultural sector. Putting inclusivity at the heart of creative practice, Graeae sets the standard high and inspires us all to achieve our very best.”  
**Hilary Carty**

“It is an honour to be a patron of Graeae. Trail-blazing, pioneering, enlightening, challenging pre-conceptions, exploding myths, realising potential, expanding minds and opportunities and confounding expectations. I share fundamental core values with this vitally important company, at a time when it’s never been so important for everyone to be reminded of those values. I pledge to shout that message as loudly and clearly and as frequently as I can.”  
**Ola Animashawun**

“Where would we be without Graeae? Since it’s founding in 1980, it has produced revolutionary theatre, launched the careers of countless actors, writers and technicians, and continues to lead the way internationally for theatre created by the lived experience of disability. As a company, their work has quite literally changed the theatre world. I am delighted and honoured to become a patron.”  
**Ruth Gould MBE DL**

## Editor’s notes

**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 also run an extensive programme of creative learning opportunities throughout the year, training and developing the next generation of D/deaf and disabled artists. These programmes include *Write to Play* and *Ensemble*.

Recent productions and co-productions for the stage include: *This Is Not For You*, *Reasons to be Cheerful*, *Cosmic Scallies*, *The House Of Bernarda Alba*, *The Solid Life Of Sugar Water*, *Blood Wedding*, *The Threepenny Opera*, *Belonging*, *Blasted and Bent*. Spectacular outdoor productions include *The Limbless Knight*, *Prometheus Awakes* and *The Iron Man*. With Naked Productions Ltd, co-productions for radio include *The Midwich Cuckoos* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*.

Graeae are a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) of Arts Council England.

### **Jack Thorne**

Jack Thorne writes for theatre, film, television and radio. His theatre credits include *A Christmas Carol* (Old Vic), *Woyzeck* (Old Vic), *Junkyard* (a Headlong, Rose Theatre Kingston, Bristol Old Vic and Theatre Clwyd co-production), *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* (SFP Productions / Harry Potter West End Theatrical), *The Solid Life Of Sugar Water* (Graeae Theatre Company, Edinburgh Festival & UK Tour), *Hope* (Royal Court Theatre), *Let The Right One In* (Dundee Rep / Royal Court Theatre, NTS / Marla Rubin Productions Ltd), *The Borough* (Punchdrunk / Aldeburgh Festival), *Stuart: A Life Backwards* (adapt. Hightide / Sheffield Theatre - Edinburgh Festival & UK tour), *Mydidae* (Drywrite - Soho Theatre / Trafalgar Studios), *The Physicists* (adapt. Donmar Warehouse), *Bunny* (Nabokov - UK tour / NYC), *Red Car Blue Car*, *Two Cigarettes*, *When You Cure Me* (Bush Theatre), *Greenland* (National Theatre), *2nd May 1997* (Bush / Nabokov), *Burying Your Brother in the Pavement* (NT Connections), *Stacy* (Tron / Arcola / Trafalgar Studios) and *Fanny and Faggot* (Pleasance Edinburgh / Finborough / Trafalgar Studios). On film his credits include *Wonder*, *War Book*, *A Long Way Down* and *The Scouting Book for Boys*. For television his credits include *Kiri*, *National Treasure*, *The Last Panthers*, *Don't Take My Baby*, *This Is England*, *The Fades*, *Glue* and *Cast-Offs*. In 2017 he won a BAFTA and an RTS Television award for Best Mini-Series (*National Treasure*). He won 2016 BAFTAs for Best Mini-Series (*This Is England '90*) and Best Single Drama (*Don't Take My Baby*), and in 2012 won Best Series (*The Fades*) and Best Serial (*This Is England '88*).

### **Jemima Dury**

Jemima Dury is an English writer with a history in performance, having studied dance at the Arts Educational Schools, in Tring and London, and drama at the University of Kent. She has performed in theatres all over Europe with Belgian theatre maker Jan Fabre and was an active member of the Royal Court Young People's Theatre in the 1980s and 90s. Jemima currently writes fiction and works as a manuscript archivist and art curator. She has been an Ambassador for Graeae's *Reasons to Be Cheerful* production since its premier in 2010 and is the daughter of founding Graeae Patron, Ian Dury.

### **Hilary Carty**

Hilary S. Carty MBA CCMI is a specialist in leadership development and organisational change, having worked as a consultant, facilitator, mentor and coach. Rooted within the arts and cultural industries, Hilary's career demonstrates a successful record of senior level leadership, policy development and management including Director, London (Arts) at Arts Council England; and Director, Culture and Education at London 2012, the organisation that successful bid to bring the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games to London.

### **Ola Animashawun**

Currently Creative Director at Euphoric Ink playwriting consultancy; Connections Dramaturg at the National Theatre; Associate Dramaturg at Eclipse Theatre; and Artistic Associate at the Shop Front Theatre with Theatre Absolute. From 2008 until 2018, Ola was Artistic Associate at the Royal Court Theatre and prior to that from 1998 until 2008 he was Founder and former Head of the Royal Court Young Writers programme.

## **Ruth Gould MBE DL**

Ruth Gould MBE, DL, FRSA is Artistic Director of DaDaFest, a disability and D/deaf arts organisation based in Liverpool. DaDaFest is internationally renowned for delivering high quality and accessible events, creative programmes for young people and arts projects, including its award-winning biennial festival DaDaFest International. Ruth is a leader and pioneer in creating opportunities to empower disabled and D/deaf artists, using the arts to change social attitudes to reposition disabled/D/deaf people in society.

Ruth is also a Patron for Life Now; a board member for USA based DisArt: Chair of Unlimited's Main Commissions Panel since 2014 and an advisory member for the Granada Foundation and Liverpool City Council Tourism and Culture Select Committee. She became a Winston Churchill Travel Fellow researching disability arts in India, Malawi and South Africa. Ruth is also an Honorary Fellow of Liverpool John Moore's University. This year, the Women's Organisation included Ruth in their publication 'Twenty One', celebrating the lives of 21 influential women who have helped shape the Liverpool city region, and beyond.