

BY
**FRANKIE
MEREDITH**

MAY QUEEN

Mon 27 Jun - Fri 1 July

DIRECTED BY
**BALISHA
KARRA**



Belgrade
Theatre
Coventry



**Paines
Plough**



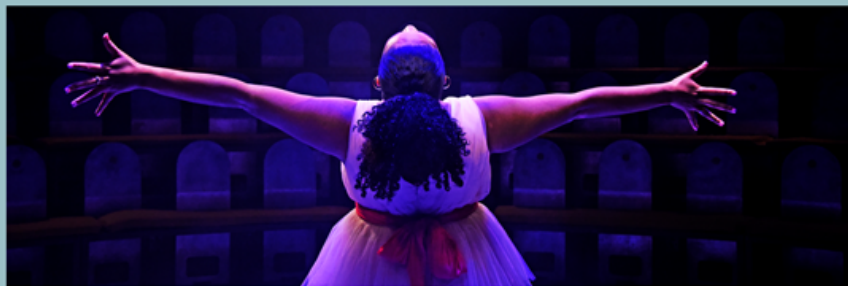
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MAY QUEEN



Welcome to this performance of **May Queen**, the critically-acclaimed play which made its world premiere last summer as part of Paines Plough's Roundabout residency in Wood End, co-produced with the Belgrade for Coventry UK City of Culture 2021.

With a Midlands-based company, **May Queen** is directed by former Belgrade Co-Artistic Director for 2021, **Balisha Karra**, as she returns to direct the Coventry story following last year's success. Written by Coventry-born **Frankie Meredith** and starring Midlands actress **Yasmin Dawes**, **May Queen** is truly a show which platforms local talent and stories.

May Queen puts Coventry as its centre, as we follow sixteen-year-old Leigh, who has just been crowned Coventry's May Queen. During the festivities, our Queen is inevitably toppled. As the year moves on in our City of Peace and Reconciliation, Leigh has to face up to the events of that hot May Day. Can she dig deep within our City's history to ask how she got there, and how she can get out?

Following **May Queen**, and bringing our Spring Season of produced work to a close will be **The Allesley Silas**, which was first staged in Allesley last summer as part of Coventry UK City of Culture's summer programme. The show, which played to sell-out audiences last year, now finds its new home in our B2 auditorium, running from Sat 23 – Sat 30 July.

Adapted from George Eliot's beloved novel *Silas Marner* by Coventry playwright, and Vice Chairman of the Belgrade's Board, **Alan Pollock** (*One Night in November*), **The Allesley Silas** is set in Raveloe, a fictional version of Allesley itself. The tale of hope, redemption and the unshakeable power of the human spirit is told through the story of an outsider, who, as he cares for a child, finds a connection within his community.

From September onwards, we welcome an incredible Autumn Season with highlights like West End hit musicals **SIX**, **Beautiful: The Carole King Musical**, and **The Rocky Horror Show**, classic drama **An Inspector Calls** and **The Mousetrap**, plus the world premiere of the brand new musical **Bombay Superstar**, co-produced by the Belgrade, Phizzical Productions (*Stardust*, *Bring on the Bollywood*) and New Wolsey Theatre.

Our B2 auditorium will play host to a season of talent development opportunities, with a new local artist taking over the space each week to develop a new idea. Here at the Belgrade, our whole team are passionate about trying new ways of working, in partnership with others who bring different expertise and lived experience. We are excited to find even more inclusive ways of working to support the breadth of local talent.

Thank you to our loyal audiences for your continued support of the Belgrade. We look forward to having you back soon.

Laura Elliot (CEO) and Corey Campbell (Creative Director)



Cast & Creatives



Leigh
Yasmin Dawes

Writer
Frankie Meredith

Director
Balisha Karra

Producer
Kim Hackleman

Producer
Hannah Barker

Assistant Director
Sara Myers

Designer
Lydia Denno

Sound Designer
Kieran Lucas

Lighting Designer
Chris McDonnell

Production Dramatherapist
Wabriya King

Movement Director
Kimisha Lewis

Stage Manager
Debbie Harlow



MAY
QUEEN

MAY QUEEN



Yasmin Dawes
Leigh

Yasmin Dawes is a Midlands-born actor and creative. She trained at Rose Bruford College and spent a semester as an acting major at Syracuse University in New York State. After graduating in 2019, she appeared in a Dominoes commercial though her work has been chiefly within the theatre. She has toured with Futures Theatre forum theatre tour **Underwater Love**, and in the North of the UK with Tmesis Theatre in their movement piece **Wicked Women**.

In the summer of 2021, she debuted in her first one-woman show with **May Queen** by Frankie Meredith. She was touring with Paines Plough's Roundabout season. She then went on to undertake the experimental solo show **Education, Education, Karaoke** by Thomas Ryall.

She is fresh from touring as Patricia in the critically acclaimed **Patricia Gets Ready (For a date with the man who used to hit her)** by Martha Watson Allpress.

Yasmin feels blessed to reprise the role of Leigh in **May Queen**, a year since first performing it in Coventry. She is proud to stay true to using theatre as a tool for social and political change.





Balisha Karra
Director

Balisha is excited and honoured to be returning to the Belgrade Theatre with **May Queen** this summer. She loves Coventry and the energy it brings and has always admired that it is a city of peace and reconciliation. Balisha believes both those sentiments speak loudly to the joys and challenges presented in the show.

Balisha originally directed **May Queen** as part of her time at the Belgrade Theatre as Co-Artistic Director for Coventry's City of Culture year. The show made up part of Paines Plough's Roundabout season.

Prior to this, she spent time co-directing Frankie Meredith's show **17** as part of the Vault's Festival during her time with Old Vic Theatre (recipient of the Florence Kleiner Award).

Balisha's assisting credits include: **Freeman** (Strictly Arts); **Present Laughter** (Chichester Theatre); **Sticks and Stones**, **How to spot an Alien** and **Island Town** (Paines Plough) and **Wise Children** (Old Vic/Wise Children company).



Frankie Meredith
Writer

Frankie is a Midlands-based playwright and theatre-maker. Having gained a place on the Lyric Hammersmith Young Writers Programme she started writing short plays which were performed at theatres around London.

She wrote her first full length play, **Turkey**, while on the Soho Writers Lab (The Hope Theatre, Off West End nominated). **Finding Peter** a play for young audiences was taken up to Edinburgh and had two subsequent runs in London. Her play **17** was produced at Vaults Festival (Wildcard Theatre). Last year, Frankie wrote and directed a folk-musical about women from her area, **Petticoat Council** (Warwick Arts Centre).

Her film **Clementines** recently won 'Best Short' at the British International Film Festival and she has recently written and directed her own web-series **Becoming Danish**.

Frankie was Paines Plough's Playwright Fellow during which time she had some of her work translated into Catalan and performed in Barcelona. She is currently developing a new short film and work for television



Kim Hackleman
Producer

Kim Hackleman is a freelance producer, actor, director and writer. While working at the Belgrade Theatre she produced two festivals: **All Our Tomorrows: A Festival of Young Companies** and the **Belgrade Theatre's Partner Theatre Festival for National Theatre Connections 500**.

Kim was Community Embedded Producer for the Belgrade Theatre's programme for Coventry UK City of Culture 2021. While in this role, she co-produced with Ayesha Jones and co-created with the community, a programme of events which ran in repertory with **May Queen** and 3 other plays at Roundabout in Wood End in 2021.



Hannah Barker
Producer

Hannah Barker is a Creative Producer at the Belgrade Theatre, with particular focus on Participation and Talent Development. Prior to joining the Belgrade, she was a freelancer for 15 years, co-founding Analogue Theatre Company which went on to win multiple awards, including two Fringe Firsts, tour nationally and internationally, and co-produce work across Europe, developing shows as a National Theatre Studio Associate Company and publishing three plays with Oberon.

She is a recipient of a British Council Artists International Development Fund, and an Arts Connect Cultural Leader and is a fully trained journalist. With dual UK/USA nationality, she has travelled and worked in the US, Africa, Asia, Australasia and Europe and produced for Festivals including the Australia and New Zealand Festival in London. She has recently joined the Board of Phizzical, a theatre company commissioning and producing unique South Asian arts and cultural experiences.



Sara Myers
Assistant Director

Sara is a writer and director from Birmingham. Her original stage play, **Marcus**, ran at the Birmingham Hippodrome during Black History month in 2021.

Sara assisted directing on **Fighting Irish** alongside Corey Campbell as her student placement and is currently studying Applied Theatre at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire.



Lydia Denno
Designer

Lydia is a visual artist. She studied Theatre Design at Nottingham Trent University. She began her career as Assistant Designer on the award-winning **Railway Children** (National Railway Museum and King's Cross Theatre), and has gone on to develop an interdisciplinary practice which encompasses theatre, installation, illustration and even walking.

She has worked for theatres such as York Theatre Royal, Nottingham Playhouse, The Lowry, Soho Theatre and Wembley Arena, as well as heritage sites around the UK and galleries internationally.

Lydia's design work has been awarded an Eastern Eye Award and recently 'gained laurels', having been selected for the Tribeca Film Festival.



Kieran Lucas
Sound Designer

Kieran is a sound designer and theatre-maker. Selected sound and composition credits include: **First Touch** (Nottingham Playhouse); **SHTF** (Schauspielhaus Vienna); **The Winston Machine** (New Diorama); **Black Love, Hungry, May Queen, Really Big & Really Loud** (all Paines Plough Roundabout, co-produced with the Belgrade Theatre); **Deciphering** (co-design with Peter Malkin, New Diorama) Off West-End Award Nomination for Best Sound Design, **The Future Project** (Streatham Space Project); **Me For The World** (Young Vic); **The Rage of Narcissus** (Pleasance Islington); **Antigone** (New Diorama); **GASTRONOMIC** (Shoreditch Town Hall/Norwich Theatre Royal); **Found Sound** (Coventry Cathedral); **Companion: Moon, How We Save The World** (both Natural History Museum); **TBCTV** (Somerset House); **Square Go** (Paines Plough Roundabout/59E59); **The Drill** (Battersea Arts Centre); **A Girl In School Uniform [Walks Into A Bar]** (New Diorama); Off West-End Award Nomination for Best Sound Design, **My Name Is Rachel Corrie** (Young Vic); **The Shadow of The Future** (Imperial War Museum); **Big Guns** (The Yard) and **Under The Skin** (St. Paul's Cathedral).

As Associate Sound: **Persuasion** (Rose Theatre, Alexandra Palace, Oxford Playhouse). Kieran is a founding member of Barrel Organ, an associate artist at Coney and a founding member of Streatham Space Project.



Chris McDonnell
Lighting Designer

Chris was nominated for an Off West End Award for Best Lighting Design for **Thrill Me: The Leopold & Loeb Story** (Jermyn Street Theatre) and for **The Lesson** (Hope Theatre).

Other Recent Theatre include: **Til Death Do Us Part** (Theatre 503); **Pinocchio** (Orange Tree Theatre); **Skin Tight** (Hope Theatre); **The Winter's Tale** (Minack Theatre); **Comedy of Errors**, **Peter Pan** (Roman Theatre of Verulamium); **P.S. I'm a Terrible Person** (Cockpit Theatre); **The Mikvah Project** (Orange Tree Theatre); **Tryst** (Chiswick Playhouse - Outstanding Theatricality Award Winner - London Pub Theatres); **Can't Wait for Christmas** (Orange Tree Theatre and Lighthouse, Poole); **Target Man** (Kings' Head); **Die Meistersinger** (Fulham Opera); **Directors Festival 2019** (Orange Tree Theatre); **Ricky Riddlegang and the Riddle Gang** (New Wimbledon Theatre); **Uncle Vanya**, **Little Echoes**, **Ruffian on the Stair** (The Hope Theatre); **Kika's Birthday** (Little Angel Theatre) and **Eros, Mouldy Grapes** (White Bear Theatre).



Wabriya King

Production Dramatherapist

Wabriya graduated as an actress from The Oxford School of Drama in 2012 and qualified with an MA in Dramatherapy from the University of Roehampton in 2019. She is the Associate Dramatherapist at the Bush Theatre supporting staff and productions.

Recent credits include: **Unfinished Man**, **Samskara** (The Yard); **For Black Boys Who Have Considered Suicide When the Hue Gets Too Heavy**, **Is God Is**, **seven methods of killing kylie jenner** (Royal Court); **Red Pitch**, **Old Bridge**, **10 Nights**, **Overflow**, **Pink Lemonade**, **Lava**, **The High Table** (Bush); **Rockets & Blue Lights** (National); **Can I Live?** (Complicite); **Get Up Stand Up! The Bob Marley Musical** (West End); **White Noise** (Bridge); **Queens of Sheba**, **Curious**, **Shuck n Jive**, **TYPICAL** (Soho); **For Black Boys Who Have Considered Suicide When the Hue Gets Too Heavy** (Nouveau Riche/Boundless/New Diorama); **Love and Other Acts of Violence** (Donmar); **Blue/Orange** (Royal & Derngate, Northampton); **The Merchant of Venice**, **Romeo & Juliet** (Globe); **Little Scratch**, **The Death of a Black Man** (Hampstead); **Sessions**, **May Queen**, **Black Love** (Paines Plough); **846 Live** (Theatre Royal, Stratford East).

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Kimisha Lewis

Movement Director

Kimisha is a proud Cov kid, a movement director and an actor.

She has previously starred in several shows at the Belgrade, including their alternative B2 Christmas show, **Over the Top** (2018), **Rise Up** (2015), **Noughts & Crosses** (2019) and **I Ain't Dumb** (2022).

Kimisha trained at Rose Burford and did a placement with RTYDS. Her love for movement and experience stems from being a core member of Strictly Arts Theatre Company, where she worked on the award-winning show **Freeman**.

She is excited to join the team on the revival of **May Queen**.



Debbie Harlow
Stage Manager

Debbie joined The Belgrade Technical Team in March 2022. Prior to this she has worked at Theatre Royal Wakefield within the technical team and as a Stage Manager as well as being a freelance Company Stage Manager and Deputy Stage Manager since 2011.

Debbie has worked alongside John Godber with The John Godber Company and Jim Cartwright with Theatre Royal Wakefield. She has worked with Leicester's Curve Theatre on a number of tours, including two that have previously brought her to The Belgrade as a co-producing house: **Wipers** in 2016, written by Ishy Din and **Pink Sari Revolution** in 2017 adapted to stage by Purva Naresh, written by Amana Fontanella-Khan, both Directed by Suba Das (Associate Director at Curve, now Creative Director at Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse Theatres).

Debbie has often worked on new pieces of writing that bring challenging subject matters to the stage. **May Queen** follows suit and Debbie is pleased to once again be supporting a company through their journey.

Special mentions...

Paines Plough
Kaleya Baxe
Bella Kear
Richard Howell
Kloe Deen
Sarah Dickenson
Jacob Sparrow
Rhianon Hawthorn
Esme Benjamin
Sam Ohlsson
Aimee Neeme
Benjamin Smith
Philip Thackray
Ella Stewart
Ruth Porter

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