

EXODUS

How far will a
politician go?

A NOTE FROM THE WRITER AND THE DIRECTOR

This play took its first breath in the winter of 2018. By then, the spectacle of politicians strutting along the coast of Kent, pointing at destitute people in dinghies had become a regular fixture of British politics. It is a ritual that is striking for its cynicism, its dystopian theatricality, and the proximity of tragedy to farce.

Sitting somewhere on a spectrum of genre between ‘farce’ and ‘hysterical comic opera’, *Exodus* is unabashedly comedic. It was written in a spirit of experiment, while wrestling with anxieties about the fate of political comedy post-2015. As the times grow darker, we may laugh at our current political context, but to what end? Sure, we may have chuckled and mocked and satirised but isn’t our political situation just as grim and languid as ever? Worse yet is the anxiety that the laughter has served as some sort perverse coping mechanism, a release valve that enables us to ‘laugh off’ our indignation at our current state-of- affairs, thereby enabling its continuation.

In an essay entitled *The Politics of Farce*, Joseph Farrell writes of the Italian playwright Dario Fo’s notion of a laughter that avoids this catharsis. “Dario was fond of quoting Molière to the effect that while tragedy was emotionally comforting, laughter was defiant.” (Farrell, p. xxxi) “Laughter denotes a critical awareness; it signifies imagination, intelligence and a rejection of all fanaticism.” (Fo, p. xxxi). Fo believed it was possible for ‘laughter to provoke anger’, to hold and fortify a people’s sense of injustice rather than dissipate it.

Exodus is set against the backdrop of a fictional Tory leadership contest and features a candidate of colour exploiting the tragedies of asylum seekers for political gains. As the play went into rehearsals in July 2022, it became apparent that *Exodus* would open against a context of a real-life Tory leadership contest, with candidates of all colours exploiting the tragedies of asylum seekers for political gains.

The government’s current Rwanda policy, as advocated by both current leadership candidates, undermines the human right to seek asylum as enshrined in international law. Like America’s recent Family Separation Policy, it is readily described by its proponents in language that actively obfuscates its darker intent. If this is common sense, what is its logical endpoint?

Philippe Gaulier’s conception of the riotous, cackling *bouffon* has been a great influence on the writing of this play. A visceral and guttural presence, its mocking rumblings expose the cracks in the artifice of authority. In peering through these cracks, may we imagine the possibility of something else. This show has been created in a spirit of hope. May we never look away.

Uma Nada-Rajah and Debbie Hannan 28 July 2022

Farrell, Joseph. “The Politics of Farce.” *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*. Methuen Student Editions, Trans. Simon Nye, Methuen, 2003, pp. v-lxvii.

CAST

Aryana Ramkhalawon	Asiya Rao
Anna Russell-Martin	Tobi Tucker
Habiba Saleh	Haben Haile
Sophie Steer	Phoebe Bernays
Avalon Hernandez	Avalon the Stage Manager

Featuring the voices of **Tyler Collins** and **Lea Shaw**

CREATIVE TEAM

Uma Nada-Rajah	Writer
Debbie Hannan	Director
Alisa Kalyanova	Set and Costume Designer
Laura Howard	Lighting Designer
Mark Melville	Sound Designer/Composer
Rob Willoughby	Video Designer
Olivia Ross	Assistant Director
Rosie Kellagher	Dramaturg
Laura Donnelly CDG	Casting Director
Janet Lawson	Fight Director

PRODUCTION TEAM

Elle Taylor	Production Manager
Avalon Hernandez	Company Stage Manager
Katie Stephen	Deputy Stage Manager
Katrina McMillan	Assistant Stage Manager (Rehearsals)
Reegan Graham	Assistant Stage Manager (Rehearsals)
Malcolm Stephen	Technical Manager
Patrick Hepplewhite	Lighting Supervisor
Josh Brown	Lighting Programmer
Hana Allan	Sound & Video Supervisor
Heather Grace Currie	Costume Supervisor
Kathryn Weaving	Costume Technician

ACCESS

Amy Cheskin	BSL Performance Interpreter
Ali Gordon	BSL Performance Interpreter
Louisa McDaid	Captioner
Emma-Jane McHenry	Audio Describer

THE COMPANY WOULD LIKE TO THANK:

Nebli Basani, Tim Birkett, Charlene Boyd, Emma Callander, Nalini Chetty, Debra Choong, Tyler Collins, Dundee Rep, Julie Ellen & Amy McCallum, Vinnie Heaven, Anna Hodgart, Michael Howell, Hannah Jarrett-Scott, David James Kirkwood, Iain Laird, Julia Lynch, Camille Marmié, Lizzie Powell, Pretty Scenic, Hiftu Quasem, Gabriel Quigley, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Deepa Shastri, Lea Shaw, Andrew Smith, Ashley Smith, Michelle Tiwo, Kaysha Woolery, the Workers Theatre.

Audio and video footage courtesy of Glasgow Stand Up To Racism; Andrew Learmonth; David Millar & NotAMob.com; and Steve Urquhart.

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We want to bring the joy of theatre to everyone. Since we were founded in 2006, we have produced hundreds of shows and toured all over the world. We strive to amplify the voices that need to be heard, tell the stories that need to be told and take work to wherever audiences are to be found.

Jackie Wylie Artistic Director & Chief Executive
Brenna Hobson Executive Director
Seona Reid DBE Chair

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