

An Improbable and Royal and Derngate Northampton Production

AN IMPROBABLE MUSICAL



THEATRE AS LIVE AS IT GETS
FRI 21 - WED 26 OCT 2022

H3 HACKNEY
EMPIRE

Improbable

WELCOME

We are thrilled to welcome you to this performance of An Improbable Musical.

This show was co-produced by Royal & Derngate, Northampton and Improbable with support from Arts Council England's Ambition For Excellence Fund. We received support from Cultural Recovery Fund and the Weston Culture Fund during the pandemic to keep imagining and re-imagining this production. Without this support bringing this show to the stage would not have been possible.

Today you will see a 90-minute improvised musical full of glorious live music, improbable characters, uplifting songs, magical puppetry made from the unlikeliest of materials and perhaps something darker and stranger than you might normally expect from an improvised show.

What will today's show be about? No one knows till the audience provide a couple of suggestions and the music begins...

Making it up onstage are some of the most experienced and brilliant improvisers there are: Lee Simpson and Josie Lawrence, Ruth Bratt and Niall Ashdown with beautiful puppetry from Aya Nakamura and Clarke Joseph-Edwards.

This is theatre as live as it gets.



AN INTRODUCTION FROM DIRECTOR LEE SIMPSON

Dear Member of the Audience,

Hello there. Thank you so much for coming to see the show. In doing so you have already shown yourself to be something of an intrepid theatre goer but I wondered whether a few words from me might help you relax about what is going to happen.

This evening is improvised. I assume you know that. It might be one of the reasons you have come (if so, thanks again). As someone who may have seen a fair bit of improvisation you'll understand the basics: we have no script, no story, no lyrics, no score, in fact none of the content you are about to see has been seen or performed before. It's a first night every night and tonight is no different. But that's what improv is right? It is, but saying the show is improvised doesn't really tell you much because improvisation comes in many styles, genres, aesthetics and intentions. So where does what you will see tonight come from? Why are we doing it? What the devil is going on? I'll try to explain.

The "Improbable" of the title is not only there to give you a hint that this may not be the traditional way of creating a musical but it also refers to the name of the theatre company that worked with Royal & Derngate to make the show. We are Improbable. I'm one of the artistic directors and the other is Phelim McDermott.

The origins of this show go way back to when Phelim and me first met. It was 1986. Phelim was in an award-winning physical theatre company and I was doing scruffy improv gigs on the comedy circuit. We met at an improvisation workshop and sussed out that we were both interested in what lay between our two worlds. We started to explore the No Man's Land between contemporary, maybe slightly experimental theatre and improvisation. We liked it there and decided to stay.

I should say, of course, that both I and Phelim continue to do comedy improv gigs. I am a proud member of the Comedy Store Players and Paul Merton's Impro Chums and consider that making people laugh with improv is a noble pursuit. Furthermore current hit shows that are improvised such as Showstopper! An Improvised Musical and Austentatious are brilliant (I'm a big fan of both) so this show you will see tonight, which is perhaps a little different in its aesthetics and intentions is simply an attempt to broaden what improvised theatre can be and perhaps broaden what musical theatre can be. High falutin' aims for sure but worth a try we reckon.



Not all the shows Improbable make are improvised in performance but they all have improvisation at the heart of them, whether as a way to generate content and devise a script, or as a way to rehearse a text. Previous Improbable shows that were improvised live on stage include Improbable Tales, Animo, Lifegame, Lost Without Words and The Still. Although sometimes hilariously funny, these shows did not set out to be comic. Our aim is to make theatre happen in the moment, and that might mean it is moving, affecting, gripping, challenging, intriguing, whatever. It is undeniably riskier and more delicate and sometimes it just doesn't work but sometimes it is sublime because we end up improvising not just theatre, but new ways to create theatre. An Improbable Musical is a show in that lineage. It explores the landscape between improvisation and theatre and wonders what happens if you add singing and music to the mix. Tonight we plan to find out.

Yours faithfully,
Lee Simpson



Photo: Marc Brenner

120 YEARS OF UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCES AT HACKNEY EMPIRE

Since 1901, Hackney Empire has lived life as a music hall, a television studio, a bingo hall, and since 1986, has stood as a modern, variety theatre in the heart of Hackney, serving its local community whilst still holding the stories of the last 120 years in its very walls.

We kicked off our celebrations on 9th December 2021 (120 years exactly since our opening date) and we're now coming to the end of 12 months of festivities, culminating on 8th December 2022.

On 9th December 1901, the Hackney Gazette described how we were opening for 'the public of Hackney and its environs.' Hackney Empire has always been a building that works with and for the people within this borough and throughout our birthday year we've been working to honour that in how we celebrate, focusing on people who have lived locally and interacted with our building in some way during our history.

We left memories boxes across the local area to collect the unforgettable experiences that people have had at Hackney Empire. We've heard from people who had their first experience of theatre with us from as young as 3; locals who walked past Hackney Empire surrounded by rubble during the Blitz; audience members who remember the thrill of seeing Frankie Vaughan in the 90s; performers and how they felt stepping out onto our stage for the first time, and so many more.

To help you to celebrate in style, we've made 120 seats in our auditorium available for our Dedicate a Seat campaign. Come and join the likes of Alan Davies, Dame Judi Dench, Leona Lewis, Ralph Fiennes, Sir Lenny Henry and Fanny the Wonder Dog by securing your very own seats in our iconic building. Visit hackneyempire.co.uk/120seats to find out more!

Find out what's coming up at Hackney Empire and to hear more about being part of our 120th birthday celebrations by joining our mailing list at hackneyempire.co.uk.



Photo: Mark Senior



Photo: Marc Brenner

THOUGHTS FROM MUSICAL DIRECTOR CHRIS ASH

Musicals can move us like no other art. The blend of words, harmony, character, rhythm, story, melody (and more) speaks to our human experience like nothing else. Yet, an open secret: musicals can be hard to put together. Columnist George Ade writes in 1903 that ‘W.S. Gilbert once said: “Comic operas are not written; they are rewritten.” That is why the first-nighters are to be envied. They hear lines and musical numbers which are denied the latecomers, who drop in after the performance has been “whipped into shape.”’ The same is true, perhaps even more so, for modern musicals. The late, great Stephen Sondheim (amongst others) has echoed the same refrain: Musicals are “rewritten”. This process of rewriting is a kind of improvisation. Ade, in his 1903 column, highlights two key ingredients: the ‘whipping’ of shape, and the audience itself. You, dear reader, are to be envied, Ade says, as a “first-nighter”; a witness to a deep process of creativity.

Music and Improvisation have always been close friends. From a Ray Brown walking bass line to a J.S. Bach figuredbass continuo; from Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane’s free jazz movement, to Suzanne Ciani’s experiments with electronics - musicians have always been excited to add, subtract, stretch, manipulate, mess around; to play.

Whether you're Jelly Roll Morton - underscoring striptease through the night in a New Orleans brothel, or Mozart - leaving a gap ("cadenza") in your latest piano concerto for an impromptu flourish to impress Vienna's finest, both are entering an infinite game of asking for new sounds inspired by, and forged within, the present moment. Back towards the world of Musical Theatre, "preview" performances and workshops are crucial parts of the development process.

Through the invitation of audiences of various sizes and shapes, Musical Theatre writers and performers discover how their show really sings. The Wizard & I from *Wicked* would not exist without the space given for it to grow from *Making Good* (the original song). Sondheim's first hit show as composer/lyricist, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, would not have its iconic opening number *Comedy Tonight* without the space for it to evolve from *Invocation and Love is in the Air*. This improvisational exploration can take weeks or months. An *Improbable Musical* has invited you here to witness an attempt to do all that in one night; to be in the room with us as we mix the blend, whip the shape, and sing our way into a jam session of words, harmony, characters, rhythm, story, melody, and life.



Photo: Marc Brenner

MEET THE TEAM...



CREATIVE TEAM

Director Lee Simpson
Associate Director, Angela Clerkin
Musical Director, Christopher Ash
Puppet Director, Aya Nakamura
Designer, E.M. Parry
Lighting Designer, Colin Grenfell
Sound Designer, Oscar Thompson
Sound Designer, Will Thompson
Movement Director, Pauline Mayers
Audio Describer: Ess Grange
BSL Interpreter: Jacqui Beckford

PRODUCTION TEAM

Production Manager, Jack Boisseux
Dep Production Manager, Jack Grenyer
Company Stage Manager, Will Edwards
Production Electrician, James Stokes

CAST

Niall Ashdown
Ruth Bratt
Josie Lawrence
Aya Nakamura
Lee Simpson
Clarke Joseph-Edwards

MUSICIANS

Keys: Chris Ash
Flute: Max Gittings
Percussion: Joley Cragg
Cello: Juliet Colyer

Thanks to James Chapman and the carpentry team at Royal & Derngate, Northampton

BIOGRAPHIES

CREATIVE TEAM

Lee Simpson

Director (also cast)

Lee couldn't get into showbiz so he became an improviser. The money was bad but the people seemed nice. This led to all sorts of shenanigans including being in the Comedy Store Players; writing plays for the National Theatre and Royal Court; directing Paul Merton's one man show; doing Radio 4 comedy like Just a Minute, being one of Paul Merton's Impro Chums and doing a very poor poodle act at the London Palladium.

He is also co-founder and co-Artistic Director of Improbable, working on shows including 70 Hill Lane, Lifegame, Sticky, Spirit, Theatre of Blood, Satyagraha, Opening Skinner's Box, Lost Without Words, Still No Idea and The Paper Man.

EM Parry

Designer

E.M. Parry trained at Motley and Wimbledon School of Art. They are an Associate Artist of Shakespeare's Globe and a previous winner of the Jocelyn Herbert Award for Scenography.

Theatre credits include: As You Like It (Northern Broadsides); Dorian (Reading Rep); The Strange Undoing of Prudencia Hart (New Vic Theatre); Translyria (Sogn go Fjordane Teater, Norway); Hamlet, As You Like It (Shakespeare's Globe); Grimm Tales (Unicorn Theatre); Sketching (Wilton's Music Hall); Effigies of Wickedness (Gate Theatre/ENO); Rotterdam (UK tour/ Arts Theatre/59E59/Trafalgar Studios 2/Theatre503 - Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in an Affiliate Theatre); Here I Belong, Milked, Each Slow Dusk (Pentabus); Posh (Nottingham Playhouse/Salisbury Playhouse); The Nightmares of Carlos Fuentes (Arcola Theatre); The Miser Watermill Theatre); Electric Hotel (Fuel/Sadlers Wells - Costume Design); The Magna Carta Plays (Salisbury Playhouse); Katy Brand's Big Ass Show Live (Leicester Square Theatre/UK tour - Set Design); Without You (Menier Chocolate Factory - Co-designer with Timothy Bird); Don Juan Comes Home From The War (Finborough Theatre); Crushed Shells and Mud (Southwark Playhouse); Lesere (Jermyn Street Theatre); Other Hands and Sense and Sensibility (UK tours).

Opera and Ballet credits include: Landings (Glyndebourne); La liberazione di Ruggiero (Brighton Early Music Festival); Betrayal (Barbican); Neige (Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg); Noye's Fludd (Southbank Centre); Les Dialogues des Carmelites (Trinity Laban); Carmen (Allen & Overy/City Music Services, Sadler's Wells); and The Fairy Queen (Brighton Theatre Royal). Their designs were included in Staging Places: UK Design for Performance (V&A Museum).

Chris Ash
Musical Devisor and Director

Chris is a composer, multi-instrumentalist, sound designer, and musical director. He trained in composition with Diana Burrell at Guildhall School of Music & Drama. Highlights as composer: "Wasted. The Brontës. They Rock." World Premiere Live Rockumentary (Southwark Playhouse, book/lyrics Carl Miller, dir. Adam Lenson - Offie-nominated 2019 Best New Musical); "Lucky Petra" (Promenade Speed-Brass Musical) selected as BEAM Spotlight Showcase 2018, then NPYA Development Scheme at NYU Steinhardt/Provincetown Playhouse; "Frankenstein" original score for electronics, live android choir, and 180° Virtual Reality sequence (Southwark Playhouse & NYT, dir. Emily Gray) ; "The Passion of Albert Nobbs" selected twice as finalist in MMD Stiles & Drewe Best New Song Prize 2018 & 2019; "Say Along Shakespeare" educational smartphone game (Megaverse) music & sound; "I Know You Different" (words Adey Grummet) commission for Barnes Community Choir 10th Anniversary; Sarah-Louise Young's "The Silent Treatment" original score, song arrangements & sound design, Pick of The Fringe 2022 (Summerhall Festival).

Tutor in Musical Theatre Improvisation at Royal Academy of Music, Music Theatre Writing/Composition at Royal Central School of Speech & Drama, and Goldsmiths.

Founding member & Assistant Musical Supervisor of Olivier Award-winning Showstopper! The Improvised Musical. Also as improviser, Chris has created live horror soundscapes for The Society of Strange, spontaneous film scores for Mischief Movie Night, impromptu parlour music for Austentatious, sci-fi scores for Starship Improvise, and searching songs in Pippa Evans' The Question. He has been a guest musical director for many of the London 50-hour Improvathons, and at festivals in Oslo, Rome, Edmonton, Hamburg, Canmore, Copenhagen, Birmingham, and beyond.

Angela Clerkin
Associate Director

Angela Clerkin is a Theatre Maker, Director and Facilitator. She is an Improbable Associate Artist and has performed in many of their shows including Panic, LifeGame, Animo & Cinderella. Improbable has commissioned Angela to co-direct an online project Outside the Frame with Adedamola Bajomo, currently in development.

Recent directing credits include 1972 for London Bubble, Moll and the Future Kings, a candle-lit Drag King cabaret at the Globe/Sam Wanamaker, Breaking the Spell for Bird la Bird at the Maritime Museum and The Time is Now at the Ugly Duck for Rose Bruford MA Collaborative Theatre Making. Angela's company ClerkinWorks has toured the UK with highly acclaimed 4* shows The Bear and The Secret Keeper. She produces and facilitates Through the Door, improvisation workshops for women and non-binary people at Shakespeare's Globe and more recently online. Last year Angela was a Creative Fellow at the University of Leicester, curated the Festival of Radical Care and was an Artist of Change at the Albany Theatre. Acting credits include: shows at the Barbican, National Theatre, Young Vic, Sydney Opera House, Jane Theatre New York, Old Vic, Almeida, BAC, The Yard, and lots of Rep theatres. Television credits include: Coronation Street, Doctor Who, Humans, Holby City, EastEnders, Dalziel & Pascoe, My Family, Sugar Rush and The Office (series 1).

Aya Nakamura

Puppet Designer and Director (also cast)

Aya is a London-based theatre-maker, puppeteer and puppet maker originally from Japan. Aya has been a regular collaborator with such companies as Polka Theatre (Charlie and Lola's Extremely New Play, Charlie and Lola's Best, Bestest Play); Horse+Bamboo Theatre (Hansel and Gretel, The Nightingale, Twittering Machine); Oily Cart (All Wrapped Up, Something Love - Cubbious); MEI (Sarah and Duck's Big Top Birthday, Twirlywoos Live!); A Bird in the Hand Theatre (Woodland Lantern Creatures, A Sweep of Swallows, The Bewonderment Machine); and Icelandic company Handbendi Brúðuleikhús (Duvet Day, Meadow). She has worked on many other children's and adult puppet productions for a variety of theatre companies including Little Angel Theatre (There's a Rang-Tan in My Bedroom); Norwich Puppet Theatre (The Frog and The Princess); Theatre-Rites (Talking Rubbish); Touched Theatre (The Gift); Whalley Range All Stars (Imaginary Friends); and Wattle&Daub Figure Theatre (The Depraved Appetite of Tarrare the Freak). Works on screen include Argos Alien Family Christmas campaign and Newzoids for ITV. She will be performing in Famous Puppet Death Scenes by Canadian company The Old Trout's Puppet Workshop in this coming London Mime Festival.

Aya also runs the multi-award-winning company Rouge28 Theatre, which has toured productions nationally and internationally.

Oscar Thompson

Sound Designer

Oscar is a Theatre Sound graduate from the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, predominately basing his work in musical theatre as a sound designer or production engineer. Oscar is also the managing director of Show Works Ltd, a sound hire company based in Ascot.

Professional shows Include: Burn The Floor (UK tour, Sound Designer); Rob Brydon Songs and Stories (UK tour, Sound Designer); Dopamine Land (London, Production Sound); Money Heist: The Experience (London, Production Sound); Stranger Things: The Experience (London, Network Engineer); Showstopper! The Improvised Musical (Various, Head of Sound); The Gruffalo (Alexandra Palace, Sound Designer); BBC Big Band (UK tour, Sound Operator) and Tokyo Rose (UK tour, Production Sound).

Will Thompson

Sound Designer

Will trained at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. Previous sound design and composition credits include: The Awakening of Cheerful Feelings Upon the Arrival of Single Men (of large fortune) (Embassy Theatre); The Marriage of Figaro (Waterperry Opera Festival); Dopamine Land (Fever UK); Salomé (Southwark Playhouse – Off West End Award finalist for best Sound Design); Elixir of Love (Waterperry Opera Festival); Lovesong, Knives in Hens (Carne Studio Theatre LAMDA); Chess (The Electric Theatre); Spamalot, The Best Little Whorehouse In Texas (Eve Lyons Studio Theatre)

Previous Associate Sound Design credits include; Beauty and The Beast (Epsom Playhouse); The Gift (Theatre Royal Stratford East); Afterglow (Waterloo East Theatre); Collapsible (Bush Theatre); J'ouvret (Theatre503); Handbagged (York Theatre Royal); and Maggot Moon (Unicorn Theatre).

As well as Sound Design, Will also regular works as a Production Sound Engineer and Number 1, most notably with Rob Brydon (UK tour), Animal Farm (UK tour), Madhouse (Ambassadors Theatre West End), Death Drop Back in the Habit (UK Tour and Garrick) and Showstopper! The Improvised Musical! on the West End, livestream and on tour.

Colin Grenfell

For Improbable: Tao of Glass (Manchester International Festival), Theatre of Blood, Lifegame, Lost Without Words (National Theatre), The Paper Man (Soho Theatre), Spirit (Royal Court Theatre, NY Theatre Workshop), The Hanging Man (Leeds Playhouse, BAM, Lyric Hammersmith), Panic (Barbican), Beauty and the Beast, 70 Hill Lane, No Idea, Still No Idea, Coma, The Tempest, The Still and Animo.

Other work includes: Brave New World (Royal & Derngate); Pride & Prejudice* (*sort of) (West End); Christmas Dinner (Lyceum Theatre Edinburgh); This is Paradise, Still, On The Exhale (Traverse Theatre); Leopards (Rose Theatre); Gypsy, Macbeth, The Cherry Orchard, Kes, Separate Tables (Royal Exchange, Manchester); Tamburlaine (Royal Shakespeare Company); The Mentor (Theatre Royal Bath & Vaudeville Theatre); Black Watch, 365, Men Should Weep, The Bacchae, Granite (National Theatre of Scotland); The Village Social (National Theatre of Wales); The Thief of Baghdad (ROH Linbury); The Full Monty (UK tour); The Caretaker (Liverpool Everyman, Trafalgar Studios, BAM); When the rain stops falling, Through a glass darkly (Almeida Theatre); A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Mother, Wild Goose Dreams, Xmas Eve (Theatre Royal Bath); Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (Theatr Clwyd, Best Lighting -Wales Theatre Awards); The Elephant Man (Best Design CATS award). Opera credits include: Pelleas et Mellisande (LA Philharmonic); The Pirates of Penzance (Scottish Opera); La bohème (ETO); Fidelio (OTC); Norma, Così fan tutti, La bohème, Eugene Onegin, Rigoletto, Queen of Spades, Il trovatore, Kata Kabanova, L'Elisir d'amore. (Opera Holland Park).

Television credits include: A Christmas Carol, Peter Pan, The Snow Queen, Alice in Wonderland, Hansel & Gretel, Thumbelina and The Nutcracker (Cbeebies).

Pauline Mayers

Pauline is a multidisciplinary writer and movement artist. Originally from London, she trained at the Rambert School, London. Following a 15 year dance career, dancing, teaching and taking the role of rehearsal director for contemporary dance companies across the UK, Pauline focussed on her solo work. Her critically acclaimed show 2017's What If I Told You, written and performed by Pauline, toured to theatres throughout the UK and was a shortlisted nominee for the Amnesty International Freedom of Expression Award.



CAST



Niall Ashdown

Niall has improvised with the Comedy Store Players, Paul Merton's Impro Chums, and Ross Noble and is a regular member of Impropera and The Actor's Nightmare.

Other stage work includes: Annie Get Your Gun, Public Enemy (Young Vic); Lifegame (Improbable Theatre); Tristan and Yseult, Ubu! (Kneehigh); Henry Purcell in Burying The Dead; and Prosper Merimee in Creating Carmen.

Television credits include: Whose Line Is It Anyway, Angel Cake, Outnumbered, Chambers and Parents.

He has written and appeared in the radio plays Hungarian Birdsong and Tunnel Vision for BBC Radio 4 (both adapted from solo stage plays); Losers for BBC Radio 4; Confessions on BBC1; as sports pundit Robbo on BBC Sport Online. He has contributed poetry and prose to Radio 3's Nightwaves and The Verb.

He teaches improvisation at Oxford School of Drama.



Ruth Bratt

Ruth is writer/performer/improviser. As an improviser, she is a regular guest with The Comedy Store Players, is one quarter of The Glenda J Collective with Josie Lawrence, Pippa Evans and Cariad Lloyd, a half of A Very Serious Play with Lee Simpson, is often in Actors Nightmare, and Whose Line Is It Anyway Live. She is a founder member of Showstopper! The Improvised Musical, touring worldwide, and performing regularly at the Edinburgh Festival and in the West End, following their Olivier Award-winning run in 2015.

She played Roche in BAFTA-winning show People Just Do Nothing (BBC), and wrote and performed Trodd En Bratt Say Well Done You with Lucy Trodd (BBC Radio 4).

Other credits include: Man Down, Derek (Channel 4); Mongrels (BBC3); Unite, Mrs Hudson's Radio Show, Ankle Tag (BBC Radio 4); and Sarah Millican's Support Group (BBC).



Josie Lawrence

Josie is an award winning British stage and television actress. Theatre credits include: Our Lady of Blundellsands (Liverpool Empire); Oklahoma! (Chichester Festival Theatre); Edmond de Bergerac (Birmingham Rep & National tour); Mother Courage (Southwark Playhouse); Amedee, Hapgood (Birmingham Rep); Bryony Lavery's premiere of Frozen, The Alchemist (National Theatre); Loves-Lies-Bleeding (Coronet Printroom); The King and I (London Palladium); Acorn Antiques The Musical (Theatre Royal Haymarket); Much Ado About Nothing (Royal Exchange, Manchester Evening News Best Actress Award); Whose Line Is It Anyway? (Adelphi and London Palladium). For RSC: The Cherry Orchard, Faust and The Taming of The Shrew (Dame Peggy Ashcroft Award for Best Actress).

Television credits include: Good Omens (Amazon/BBC), Stella Humans, You Have Been Watching with Meera Syal, The Kennedys, Jonathan Creek, Robin Hood, EastEnders, Minder, Skins, Doctors, The Old Curiosity Shop, Casualty, Holby City, Wizards and Aliens, The Last Detective, Josie, A Many Splintered Thing, Keen Eddie, Outside Edge, Fat Friends, The Flint Street Nativity, SWALK, Lunch in the Park with Paul Merton, Whose Line Is It Anyway?, Downwardly Mobile, Bill's New Frock, Absolutely Fabulous, The Green Man, Miss Marple, Poirot, Not With A Bang, Friday Night Live and The Complete Guide to Parenting.

Film credits include: Finding Your Feet, Enchanted April, The American Way, The Sin Eater, Round Ireland with a Fridge, Bonobo and A Clever Woman

Josie is a member of the improvisation group The Comedy Store Players, and created the all-female impro group The Glenda J Collective. She is also a regular guest on BBC Radio 4's Just A Minute.



Clarke Joseph-Edwards

Clarke is an actor/puppeteer and has been performing in shows since 2013 following his graduation from Central School Of Speech and Drama.

Theatre credits include: Big Up (Theatre Rites), Tails of Sailortown (Moth Physical Theatre) and The Very Hungry Caterpillar live show (Mei Ltd)

This will be Clarke's Improbable debut.

MUSICIANS



Juliet Colyer

Cellist, composer and facilitator specialising in interdisciplinary collaboration. Her work has taken her to venues such as the Barbican Centre, Wigmore Hall, LSO St Luke's and Snape Maltings, as well as more intimate and non- conventional spaces including The Spitz, Arts at The Old Fire Station, art galleries, public gardens and studios.

Recent work includes the commissioning of a new immersive solo work for Cello and Electronics, I See You, for Emergence festival in Frome. As a composer-facilitator with Spitalfields Music, Barbican Creative Learning, Southbank Centre and the RPO. She has worked extensively with people living with dementia, young people with disabilities, hospital patients, prisoners and young musicians. Juliet leads the Learning and Participation programme for Echor Music. She studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama where she completed a BMus in Performance and an MMus in Leadership.



Joley Cragg

Percussionist. Trained at the Royal College of Music, and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

Theatre work includes: Henry VIII, I, Joan and Women Beware Women (as Musical Director/Percussion) at Shakespeare's Globe, alongside Twelfth Night, Swive, Love's Labour's Lost and Romeo and Juliet (Percussion); Antony and Cleopatra (deputy Musical Director/Percussion) and Hex The Musical, 2020 Olivier Award- nominated Mr Gum and the Dancing Bear the Musical (percussion and/or drums) at The National Theatre; Cymbeline, and Queen Anne (Royal Shakespeare Company). Joley is a member of the Luminaire Orchestra.

Orchestral work includes Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, London Mozart Players, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, London Contemporary Orchestra, London Concert Orchestra, Orchestra of the Swan, and the Philharmonia. In 2019 Joley performed as one of the soloists in the premier of Karl Jenkins new work Miserere and featured as a soloist at Turner Sims hall, performing composer Benjamin Oliver's concerto Changing Up+ for solo percussion and ensemble. The work was written for and is dedicated to Joley.

Joley is a Cosmic Ears and Dream Cymbals artist and will be returning to the National Theatre in November 22 with Hex the Musical.



Max Gittings

A specialist on a wide range of Global Flutes and Woodwind instruments, Max is well versed in many musical traditions and idioms. He has performed at home and abroad for theatre productions, at major musical festivals, recorded sessions for soundtrack CDs, TV shows and bands, and has taken part in gallery and site specific performance pieces.

Max has played for the RSC in Stratford-upon-Avon, Barbican Centre and on nationwide tours and tours to the Far East and America. Productions have included *The Tempest*, *The King and Country* cycle, *Troilus and Cressida* and *King John*.

He has worked with Sampad, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham Rep and *Come From Away* at the Phoenix Theatre, is a founder member of Megafolk band *The Destroyers* (Commonwealth Games opening ceremony, Glastonbury and Cambridge Festivals), and has worked with the UK Chinese Ensemble, *The Jasmine Moon Ensemble* and jazz ensemble *Surge* (Cheltenham and London Jazz festivals).

Max has recorded several CDs of music from RSC productions, for BBC Wildlife's *The Hunt*, on the three albums by *The Destroyers* and for producer Gareth Cousins and composers Frank Moon, Tom Gibbons, Dave Price and Richard Shrewsbury and music production house Manike Music.

He has appeared with *The Destroyers* live on BBC1 and Sky Arts TV, and has had recordings broadcast on BBC Radio 2, 3 and 4.

Max began his studies on the ILEA run Special Music Course at Pimlico School, London before doing Music and Performance at The University of Birmingham. He has also received tuition and guidance from seminal performers in a number of disciplines including Chinese Flutes, Duduk, Uilleann Pipes and Irish Flute.

AUDIO DESCRIBING AN IMPROBABLE MUSICAL

I've worked for Improbable for 9 years and also trained as an audio describer with Vocaleyes in 2019, I was really interested in addressing the challenges of describing this kind of show. Audio description provides ways for blind, partially sighted and visually impaired people to access live performance events. The usual blueprint for audio-describing scripted shows doesn't apply to An Improbable Musical, so a very different approach was required. Luckily Improbable were also interested in the opportunity to explore this, and I've been able to spend lots of time in the rehearsal room. What I've learnt is that the audio describer essentially has to become another improviser, although not on stage! I've got to know the materials being used, way the tower moves, the personalities of the puppets, and the different energies and skills of the performers.

I've also been practising improv skills of listening for impulses and signals that give a clue to what might be about to happen. The way that images and scenes emerge during an Improbable show can be really poetic and delicate as well, so I also have to find ways to bring this poetry and nuance into the language and delivery of my descriptions in the moment.



An Improbable Musical aims to create each show in response to who has turned up that night – to welcome whomever is in the room. We hope that our embedded approach to audio describing means that blind, partially sighted and visually impaired audience members feel that welcome as warmly as everyone else.

Ess Grange, Improbable Research Associate

You can find all the accessible resources including audio introduction notes for An Improbable Musical here:

<https://hackneyempire.co.uk/whats-on/an-improbable-musical/>

ABOUT IMPROBABLE

Improbable are pioneering improvisers, inventive creators, imaginative collaborators, authentic conversation facilitators.

Improbable is led by Artistic Directors Phelim McDermott and Lee Simpson and occupies a vital space in the landscape of UK theatre. At the heart of their artistic practice is improvisation. Whether in performance, rehearsal or development Improbable use the practice and philosophy of improvisation in the process of creation.

Improbable have staged epic spectacles like Sticky, which was seen by over 250,000 people, theatrical classics like The Tempest at Northern Stage and the Oxford Playhouse, intimate puppetry like Animo in studios across the country, adaptations like Theatre of Blood at the National Theatre, operatic triumphs like Satyagraha and Olivier and Grammy Award winning Akhnaten at the English National Opera, London and the Metropolitan Opera, New York, female led impro project Permission Improbable which nurtures an improvisation culture grown by women and fully improvised productions like Lifegame which toured internationally and at the National Theatre. Our shows are live events encouraging conversation between us and our audience.

"There's never anything ordinary about Improbable"
– The Observer.

IMPROBABLE ARE:

Kathryn Bilyard, Executive Producer
Anna Crisp, Development Officer
Ess Grange, Research Associate
Matilda Leyser, Associate Director
Phelim McDermott, Artistic Director
Ben Monk, Administrator
Vicki Grace, Executive Director
Lee Simpson, Artistic Director

Trustees: Natasha Freedman (Chair), Paul Anderson, Phil Clarke, Stephen Daldry CBE, Dr. David G Knott, Pauline Mayers Elspeth Murray, Chris Sandhu, Griselda Yorke, Ben Yeoh

ABOUT ROYAL AND DERNGATE, NORTHAMPTON

Chief Executive Jo Gordon
Artistic Director James Dacre

Royal & Derngate Northampton is the main venue for arts and entertainment in Northamptonshire and one of the major regional producing theatres in the country, with its acclaimed *Made in Northampton* work touring nationally and internationally. The theatre was recently nominated for Theatre of the Year in The Stage Awards 2022. Eight of its productions transferred to London and the West End in 2019, with *The Worst Witch* winning the 2020 Olivier Award for Best Family Show and *Our Lady of Kibeho* being nominated for the 2020 Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in an Affiliate Theatre and named by The Guardian as one of the 20 Best Shows of the 21st Century. Meanwhile, recently artists have won The Stage Ensemble Award, The Stage Debut Award and the Ian Charleson Award for their work on *Made in Northampton* productions and the adapted screenplay from Royal & Derngate's original play commission of *The Pope* was nominated for Best Adapted Screenplay at the Academy Awards as Netflix's *The Two Popes*.



Recent Made in Northampton productions have included Ralph Fiennes in the world premiere stage adaptation of T.S. Eliot's Four Quartets which transferred to the West End at the end of last year, a new version of Joe Penhall's Blue/Orange, improvised show An Improbable Musical, touring co-productions of Animal Farm and Othello with the National Youth Theatre, the world premiere stage adaptation of Mog The Forgetful Cat, a brand new musical Gin Craze! by April de Angelis and Lucy Rivers, and national tour of The Two Popes.

The venue also presents a diverse range of visiting productions on both the Derngate and Royal stages, featuring musicals, dance, comedy and music, and its two-screen cinema presents the best in world, independent, British and mainstream film. Over recent years the theatre has hosted the UK Musical Theatre Conference, Devoted & Disgruntled 14 and the International Teach First conference. Royal & Derngate's nationally recognised Creative Learning programme engages with schools, families and communities in Northamptonshire and beyond, and its Generate artistic development programme regularly supports hundreds of local artists each year.

Box Office 01604 624811

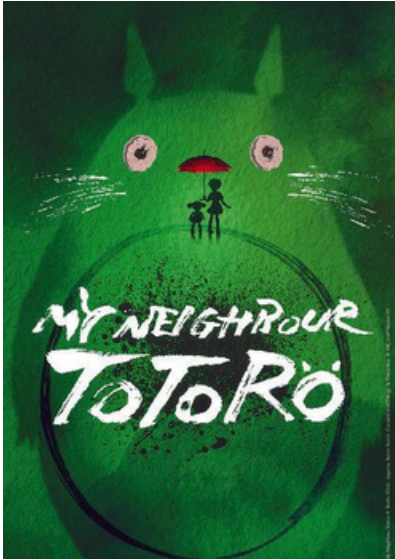
www.royalandderngate.co.uk

Facebook: /royalandderngate Twitter: @royalderngate Instagram: @royalderngate



MORE IMPROBABLE SHOWS ONSTAGE THIS SEASON

Get behind the scenes of all our shows this season with Lee & Phelim on [AN IMPROBABLE PODCAST](#)



My Neighbour Totoro

8 October 22 - 21 January 23

Barbican Theatre

RSC & Joe Hisaishi in collaboration with Improbable and Nippon TV

This enchanting coming-of-age story explores the magical fantasy world of childhood and the transformative power of imagination, as it follows one extraordinary summer in the lives of sisters Satsuki and Mei. Directed by Phelim McDermott.



Perfect Show For Rachel

18 - 26 November 22

Barbican Pitt Theatre

Created by Zoo Co supported by Improbable

Rachel is a theatre-loving, enigmatic 31 year-old who loves Kylie Minogue, people falling over and heckling from the front row. She is a learning disabled care-home resident, and sister to Flo, Zoo Co's artistic director. The show was developed with Rachel, to create her 'perfect show' on her own terms.



The Hours

22 November - 15 December 22

Metropolitan Opera House, New York

In collaboration with Improbable

The world-premiere production of Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Kevin Puts's *The Hours*, adapted from Michael Cunningham's acclaimed novel and directed by Phelim McDermott

SUPPORT IMPROBABLE

Help us make beautiful theatre and create collaborative communities.

Improbable has been a charity since 2014. Each year, we have ambitious fundraising targets to meet so we can keep producing the work that we are passionate about.

We're looking to build a community around our work - to help us fundraise, and to grow a network of theatre-lovers with a particular enthusiasm for creating stories and connections in an Improbable way. We've set ourselves the target of making £10,000 through our Community Supporters Scheme. This is a **pay-what-you-choose** set up so that anyone at any level of contribution can be an active part of the Improbable story. You can give £1 a month or £100 a month (or more!) and be part of the team that makes it possible for Improbable to make work.

As a Supporter, we'll send you a regular specially written pieces about that work: past productions, current events, and future plans. We hope these will help you to know us better and give a special insight into our improbable world.

[BECOME PART OF THE STORY](#)



HIRE IMPROBABLE

Improbable is a world leader in improvisational and emergent practice, a pioneer of Open Space Technology, and has created some of the most acclaimed and ground-breaking theatre and opera from any company over the last 25 years.

It is this successful combination of disciplines that makes Improbable unique. We have a depth and breadth of experience in improvisation practice that is unmatched anywhere in the world. Our past work has spanned a huge variety of art forms, community settings and business contexts.

What could we do for you?



IMPROBABLE FOR BUSINESS

Learn, develop and improve key skills like teamwork, better communication, effective listening and storytelling. Unlock the creative and collaborative potential of your business. Suitable for groups of 5 - 30 people.



OPEN SPACE CONVERSATIONS

Tackle big questions, resolve complex issues and transform the way your organisation works with our expertly facilitated events. Suitable for groups of 5 to 500+ people.

Get in touch on office@improbable.co.uk to find out more

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!

#AnImprobableMusical

@improbable1

