

Press Release 1<sup>st</sup> May 2024

## PENTABUS AND NEW PERSPECTIVES ANNOUNCE CO-PRODUCTION *MAKE GOOD*, A NEW MUSICAL ABOUT THE POST OFFICE SCANDAL, BASED ON SUB-POSTMASTER INTERVIEWS



*Image credit: Angel Reid*

*"If we knew that this was going to happen to us, that we were going to become criminals by buying a Post Office, we would never, ever have done it. They are the criminals. Behind closed doors they have secretly been doing this to us. This show opens up those doors and in doing so, it tells the story that the nation needs to hear. The story of what really happened to us and other post-masters and post-mistresses."* Sub-postmaster Rubbina Shaheen.

**Book by Jeanie O'Hare | Music and Lyrics by Jim Fortune | Additional Music and Lyrics by Maimuna Memon | Additional Material by Ed Gaughan | Directed by Elle While**

To mark both [Pentabus](#) and [New Perspectives](#) 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, and a combined 100 years of world-class rural touring theatre, both companies are pleased to announce *Make Good*, a new musical three years in the making that tells the story of the Post Office Scandal, now recognised as one of the gravest miscarriages of justice in British history. The show will tour in Autumn this year with dates and venues to be announced in the coming months.

*Make Good* is directly informed by conversations writer Jeanie O'Hare has conducted with affected sub-postmasters since 2021. Entirely innocent, they nevertheless had their lives torn apart and faced bankruptcy, isolation, and jail. The epic fightback to prove their honesty started in a tiny village hall in Fenny Compton and is still ongoing. Capturing in song the bravery and determination of these exemplary public servants, *Make Good* shows what can happen when powerless people find their voice. On a recent rehearsal room visit, Mohamed Hami, affected by the scandal, commented:

*“The musical is full of feeling. And that’s what we need to portray to people now, so that they can feel and understand what we felt, all the heartache that we went through. The songs bring so much to the story, they’re heartfelt and there’s humour in it too, it’s funny. It made me smile as well as being touching.”*

The Post Office Scandal saw over 900 sub-postmasters in the UK wrongly prosecuted for stealing because of incorrect information from Fujitsu’s Horizon computer from 1999 - 2015. The recent ITV drama *Mr Bates vs The Post Office* is credited with igniting public interest in the scandal and led to demands for former Post Office CEO Paula Vennells to be stripped of her CBE, and PM Rishi Sunak to announce new legislation to exonerate wrongly convicted sub-postmasters. The public inquiry is ongoing.

*Make Good* will be a musical testament to the astonishing resilience of families facing incredible odds in a system stacked against them with the sub-postmasters’ experience and community at its heart.

Elle While, Artistic Director of Pentabus and Director of *Make Good*, commented: *“When Jeanie approached me with the idea of making a musical inspired by the stories of the wrongly accused sub-postmasters, I knew this was a Pentabus story. Their campaign started in a village hall and it feels apt that Pentabus and New Perspectives intend to take this heroic story back into the villages and kind of community spaces where this fightback began.”*

New Perspectives Artistic Director Angharad Jones added:

*“When Pentabus and New Perspectives got together to discuss this co-production, we couldn’t have imagined the distance travelled in the public consciousness about the shameful miscarriage of justice shown to sub-postmasters helped by Gwyneth Hughes marvellous TV drama. Theatre is a vehicle for activism and drama can be a call to arms. And this fight is not over. We’re honoured to bring this story to the stage for the first time, but also raging it needs to be told in the first place.”*

Book writer Jeanie O’Hare commented:

*“When the pre-election bluster of politicians has run out of spit, the heartache will still be there. The family bonds that held the sub-postmasters and postmistresses together were built on love, community and hope. Song is how you celebrate that.”*

The first few dates of the tour are now on sale: <https://pentabus.co.uk/make-good-post-office-scandal> . Further dates to be announced.

Sign up to Pentabus and New Perspectives mailing lists to be informed of the latest news on *Make Good* here: [www.pentabus.co.uk](http://www.pentabus.co.uk)      [www.newperspectives.co.uk](http://www.newperspectives.co.uk)

*Make Good’s* development has been supported by the RSC and the National Theatre Studio’s Generate Programme. It was commissioned by Pentabus and is produced by Pentabus and New Perspectives.

**ENDS**

For more information contact Tom at [press@pentabus.co.uk](mailto:press@pentabus.co.uk) or Emma [emma@mobiusedustries.com](mailto:emma@mobiusedustries.com)

## Notes to editors:

### Further quotes:

*Make Good* composer and lyricist Jim Fortune further commented:

*"I'm deeply honoured to share this emotional story in musical form. Songs are the most direct and powerful way to express all that is great about our country, but also to question it and to bring to life the resilience, humour and sheer bloody mindedness of the very best of us - our wronged postmasters."*

Maimuna Memon, who is providing additional music and lyrics, said:

*"I feel hugely privileged to be part of this project, one that is so incredibly important and necessary, and one that I hope can amplify and empower the stories of such dignified and hardworking people."*

### Biographies

#### Jeanie O'Hare | Writer (book)

Jeanie O'Hare is a writer, dramaturg and creative producer. She collaborates on books for musicals, edits classical texts and writes original plays. She was Director of New Work Development at the Public Theater in New York, and Chair of Playwriting at Yale School of Drama. She trained at the Royal Court Theatre and worked as Company Dramaturg for the Royal Shakespeare Company where her work included Michael Boyd's *Histories*, and over thirty large-scale productions by writers such as Tarell Alvin McCraney, David Adjmi, Debbie Tucker Green, and Ukrainian writer Natal'ya Vorozhbit. She commissioned and developed *Matilda the Musical*. In 2018, her play *Queen Margaret*, premiered at the Royal Exchange, Manchester, rescuing Queen Margaret from four Shakespeare history plays and creating a single drama. She is a published short story writer. Current projects in development as story consultant include *Gatsby* (musical), composed by Florence Welch & Thomas Bartlett with a book by Martyna Majok. She is a regular judge on major playwriting prize juries. She is the co-author, with Elizabeth Freestone, of *100 Plays to Save the World* a collection of essays detailing the current climate science alongside dramas that tackle the climate emergency.

#### Jim Fortune | Composer (music and lyrics)

Jim's recent work includes the musicals *Cowboys* (Royal Court, RSC); *The Odyssey, Hex, Pericles* and *Mr Gum and the Dancing Bear: The Musical!* (Olivier Award nomination 2020) (National Theatre); *We Begin Again* (National Theatre and The Guardian); *The Beautiful Cosmos of Ivor Cutler* (winner of Best Music and Sound at the Critics Awards for Theatre in Scotland) (Vanishing Point and National Theatre of Scotland). *Mother Courage and her Children* (Royal Exchange); *Twelfth Night* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Shakespeare's Globe); *Teh Internet is Serious Business* and *Posh* (The Royal Court). *Shibboleth* (Abbey Theatre, Dublin).

As a singer and musician, Jim Fortune has toured the world, working with, amongst many others, Tom Jones and Blondie. He has recorded sessions for BBC Radios one, two and three and has been an EMI recording artist appearing on many tv shows and festivals. Jim Fortune was a BAFTA music judge 2022.

#### Elle While | Director

Elle is the Artistic Director of Pentabus Theatre and an Associate Artist of Shakespeare's Globe.

Directing includes: *Driftwood*, *One Of Them Ones & Idyll* (Pentabus); *As You Like It*- Int. kidscreen Nomination & *Twelfth Night* (cbeebies); *Private Peaceful* (Nottingham Playhouse & UK Tour); *The Silence and The Noise*- Winner Best Film & Best Actor Broadstairs Int. Film Festival, Off West End Award (Best Online Production) & *Destiny* – Offie Finalist (Pentabus/ Rural Media); *Blue Stockings* (Storyhouse); *Richard III*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *As You Like It* and *Hamlet* (Shakespeare's Globe); 2017/2018 Revival director UK and International tour of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* and *West End* (Gielgud); *Dance Nation*, *Blindsided* and *RAGE*- UK Premiere (RWCMD); *Wretch* (Shoreditch Church and London homeless shelters); *Glory Dazed* (Soho Theatre, Adelaide Festival and Underbelly, Edinburgh-Winner of Holden St. Theatre award and Critics Choice award); *Country Music* (West Yorkshire Playhouse); *Frisky and Manish: Just Too Much* (Udderbelly, London and Edinburgh); and recording director for The Old Vic's production of *Cause Celebre* on Radio 4.

## **Maimuna Memon | Composer (additional music)**

Maimuna Memon is a Lancashire born musician, composer, writer and performer.

Acting theatre credits include: *Into the Woods* and *Hobson's Choice* (Manchester Royal Exchange); *Buskers Opera* (The Park Theatre); *Lazarus* (Kings Cross Theatre); *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Regents Park Open Air); *Electrolyte* (Edinburgh Fringe); *Band Plays On* (Sheffield Crucible); *Ghost Quartet* (Boulevard Theatre); *Nine Lessons and Carols* (Almeida Theatre) and *Standing At The Sky's Edge* (National Theatre and Sheffield Crucible), for which Maimuna received an Olivier Nomination for 'Best Supporting Lead In A Musical'.

Writing credits include: Music and Lyrics for *Electrolyte* (Edinburgh 2018/19 and National Tour), *Nine Lessons and Carols* (Almeida Theatre), *Welcome to Iran* (Stratford East, National Theatre, BBC Radio 3), *Henry VIII* (Globe Theatre) *Manic Street Creature* (Edinburgh Fringe and Southwark Playhouse) and *Portia Coughlan* (Almeida Theatre).

Maimuna's first EP *More Than I Bargained For* was released in October.

## **Ed Gaughan | Writer (additional material)**

Ed Gaughan is a critically acclaimed, award-winning writer, comedian, actor, director, musician and composer. He is the Co-creator, co-writer and star of the BAFTA and BIFA nominated movie *Skeletons*, which won the 'Michael Powell Award For Cinema' at The Edinburgh Film Festival. Ed is a 'Peter Sellers Award For Comedy' nominee.

Acting credits include: *Black Mirror* (CH4) *The Regime* (HBO) and *Fantastic Beasts 2*. He's the voice of multiple animated characters including, Baron Greenback *Dangermouse* (BBC); Gideon in *Brassic* (Sky) (to which he's also a contributing writer); *Q Pootle 5* and *Capture the Flag*.

Ed regularly appears on BBC Radio 4 and he was one of the writer/performer/musicians in BBC Radio 3's much acclaimed *Beautiful Cosmos Of Ivor Cutler*.

A regular on the London and UK comedy scene, Ed works as a solo standup, in double act with Andrew Buckley, and in regular collaborations with Will Adamsdale and cult favourites *The London Snorkelling Team*. He has performed at many UK and international comedy festivals.

As a comedy director, Ed has created shows with some of the UK's most loved stand ups, including Josie Long, Milton Jones, Pappy's, Barry Cryer and Spymonkey.

Ed works in the theatre as an actor, writer, director and composer with companies including Shakespeare's Globe, NT Studios, NT Scotland, Filter Theatre, Lyric Hammersmith, Manchester Royal

Exchange, Bristol Old Vic, Northern Stage, Liverpool Playhouse, and BAC (where he was an associate artist for many years). His scoring work includes *Hamlet* for Shakespeare's Globe and the award winning *Symphony* from Nabokov.

## About Pentabus

*'... One of British theatre's unsung treasures.'*  
The Guardian

Pentabus is the nation's rural theatre company, based in Shropshire. We are the only rural touring company that is committed to producing new work and tours to communities across the UK and beyond.

Our work brings communities and young people together, bringing outstanding contemporary productions with sector leading creative teams, directly to isolated rural communities, as well as platforming rural stories in urban settings.

Over five decades we've produced over 300 new plays, supported 120 playwrights and reached over half a million audience members. We've won awards and created lasting relationships with artists, venues and audiences across the country, and were the first to live stream from a village hall.

We excel at finding and nurturing new talent and have hosted Writers in Residences since 2014. These playwrights have gone on to be commissioned by the Birmingham Rep, Bristol Old Vic, Hampstead Theatre, HighTide, Manchester Royal Exchange, Nottingham Playhouse, Royal Court, The Bush, and the National Theatre.

We champion people of all ages to explore their creativity with particular emphasis on creating pathways into careers in the creative industries for those underrepresented, and people who live rurally under 30. Pentabus Young Company is our initiative offering playwriting workshops in schools, further and higher education, work experience and mentorships. As well as the opportunity to join our Young Writers' Programme, which celebrates its 10th year, and has catapulted many writers into careers in the arts, with recent graduate credits including Radio 4, BBC One, and Bristol Old Vic.

## About New Perspectives

*"New Perspectives has taken on an exciting challenge that proves rural touring companies can produce provocative work of national and international significance"* edfringereview.com

**New Perspectives** is the leading East Midlands' touring theatre company. Founded in 1973, we champion new writing, under-represented voices and powerful stories, touring world class theatre into the heart of communities. The stories we tell are relevant to audiences, have a global outlook and address social and cultural issues.

Our 50-year track record of commissioning and making new writing accessible demonstrates our belief that audiences have a right to see the highest quality new work where they live. Our award-winning body of work has toured the length and breadth of the country as well as to festivals in Brighton, Cologne, Edinburgh, New York and Singapore, and a West End run at Trafalgar Studios. In recent years we have worked in partnership with venues including Brixton House, Headlong, HOME Manchester, Nottingham Playhouse, Soho Theatre, Unicorn Theatre, and with digital partners including Derby Quad, The Space and British Council reaching audiences in more than 50 countries worldwide.

In addition to producing two touring productions each year, New Perspectives also runs New Associates, a bespoke year-long talent development programme that provides opportunities and training to early-mid career artists in the East Midlands. Over the last 5 years, the programme has supported over 50 artists to develop into future cultural leaders and the Alumni still remain strongly connected to New Perspectives to this day.

New Perspectives also run Open Pitch, a programme which gives people in the East Midlands who don't consider themselves as artists an opportunity to tell a story through a partnership with a creative. Since its launch in 2021, New Perspectives have guided, nurtured and supported the development of six unique stories, including: a one-man play about a Nottingham City Council road repairer whose life was saved by Drag; a short film about the first Black woman in the UK to run a theatre-pub; a book published by an 86-year-old Mansfield resident.

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