

PRESS RELEASE

20 January 2020



PHOTO BY ALEX BRENNER

AD INFINITUM BRING *EXTRAORDINARY WALL OF SILENCE* TO HOME MANCHESTER, WEDNESDAY 12 - SATURDAY 22 FEBRUARY 2020

Through three powerful coming-of-age stories, [*Extraordinary Wall of Silence*](#), a new devised show from Bristol-based [Ad Infinitum](#) co-commissioned by HOME, Birmingham Hippodrome, Bristol Old Vic, Newbury Corn Exchange, In Good Company and in association with Salisbury Playhouse, supported by The North Wall, traces the oppression and ignorance faced by the Deaf community to one pivotal point in history.

With stories drawn from real-life testimonies collected through 40 hours of interviews with Deaf people from all over the UK, *Extraordinary Wall of Silence*, performed by three Deaf actors and one hearing actor, directed by George Mann and devised by the company, sheds light on the relatively undocumented history of oppression experienced by Deaf people.

HOME

Helen, Alan, and Graham are told they are impaired and need fixing. As they begin to question the world around them, their stories unfold, uniting them in a struggle against violence, ignorance and oppression.

Connected through a shared past, they are transported to a crucial moment in 1880 that would impair the way the world viewed D/deaf people for over a century.

In 1880, The Milan Conference passed eight resolutions on Deaf education, and banned the use of sign language in schools all over the world. The conference declared that an oral education (Oralism) was superior to manual (signed) education, and put Deaf children through an abusive regime of speech therapy to make them speak, 'hear', and lip-read. The decision prevailed for over a century despite decades of poor results, including the statistic that over 70% of UK Deaf children left school with a reading age of seven to eight.

The stories of these people have largely gone undocumented as sign languages do not exist in written form, and access to video was, until recently, not widespread. *Extraordinary Wall of Silence* shares these stories in a bilingual performance in British Sign Language and English, using them as a starting point to explore in-depth a culture under threat from fear, prejudice and ignorance.

"The Milan Conference had a huge impact on D/deaf people's lives and communities," says Deaf actor Matthew Gurney, who appeared in Ad Infinitum's show *Light*.

"Deaf adults leaving school were left without power, authority and little ability to communicate in either English or sign language. Since the Milan Conference a slow but steady rebellion has been rising, which has gone unnoticed in worldwide and national media. We want to battle the 'silent voices' who continue to push for the Oralist method, and refuse to listen to us, and to fight for our D/deaf human rights in all areas of life."

"*Extraordinary Wall [of Silence]* is the result of six years of collaboration between Ad Infinitum and a group of exceptional Deaf artists, academics and leaders," explains director George Mann.

"The three inter-linking stories of the piece are drawn from real-life testimonies collected through 40 hours of interviews. We hope that these stories will give audiences an insight into Deaf culture, language and history that challenge and examine more profoundly societal perspectives on Deaf people."



The full cast comprises David Ellington, Matthew Gurney, Moira Anne McAuslan, and Deborah Pugh, with additional work by Charlotte Dubery and Mia Ward. Each performance will be British Sign Language-integrated.

PERFORMANCE CALENDAR

Wed 12 February 2020 19:45

Thu 13 February 2020 19:45 (press night performance)

Fri 14 February 2020 19:45

Sat 15 February 2020 14:15, 19:45

Mon 17 February 2020 19:45

Tue 18 February 2020 19:45

Wed 19 February 2020 14:15, 19:45

Thu 20 February 2020 19:45 (Captioned subtitled performance)

Fri 21 February 2020 19:45

Sat 22 February 2020 14:15, 19:45

Each performance will be British Sign Language Integrated

TICKETS

£10.50-£12.50 (concessions from £5)

<https://homemcr.org/production/extraordinary-wall-of-silence>

@home_mcr

ExtraordinaryWall

For further information - to request review tickets (press night performance Thursday 13 February 2020), images or interviews, please contact: Mike Barnett, HOME Media and Communications Manager, +44 (0)161 212 3462, or mike.barnett@HOMEmcr.org

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HOME is Manchester's centre for international contemporary culture. Since opening in May 2015, HOME has welcomed over two million visitors to its two theatres, five cinemas, art gallery, book shop and restaurants. HOME works with international and UK artists to produce extraordinary theatrical experiences, producing an exciting mix of thought-provoking drama, dance and festivals, with a strong focus on international work, new commissions and talent development. After *Extraordinary Wall of Silence*, the next HOME shows are [Insane Animals](#) presented by Bourgeois & Maurice (28 Feb-14 Mar 2020), [Little Wimmin](#) presented by Figs in Wigs (5-14 March 2020), and [Night of the Living Dead™ - Remix](#) presented by Imitating the Dog and Leeds Playhouse (18-21 March 2020). HOME's ambition is to push the boundaries of form and technology, to experiment, have fun, take risks and share great new art with the widest possible audience. The patrons of HOME are Danny Boyle, actress Suranne Jones, playwright and poet Jackie Kay CBE, artists Rosa Barba and Phil Collins, filmmaker Asif Kapadia, and actress and author Meera Syal CBE. www.homemcr.org | @HOME_mcr | Facebook HOME_mcr

AD INFINITUM is an international ensemble based in Bristol, developing new and original theatre. Founded in 2007, Ad Infinitum is led by Co-Artistic Directors, Nir Paldi and George Mann. They create shape-shifting socio-political theatre to provoke, move and inspire through innovative storytelling and bold experimental styles. Ad Infinitum's work draws upon the power of the body, engages audiences with urgent issues, and ignites passionate debate. Previous shows include *No Kids*, *Translunar Paradise*, *Odyssey*, *Bucket List*, *Light*, and *Ballad of the Burning Star*. Ad Infinitum is Associate Artist at Bristol Old Vic and The North Wall. They are Associate Artist Alumni at the Bush Theatre (2011-2013), The Lowry (2011-2017), and Redbridge Drama Centre (2009-2017). Their work has won awards at the Edinburgh Fringe (including Spirit of the Fringe and multiple Stage Awards), and across the UK (including the Argus Angel Award), and many awards internationally. www.ad-infinitum.org | @TheatreAdIn

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