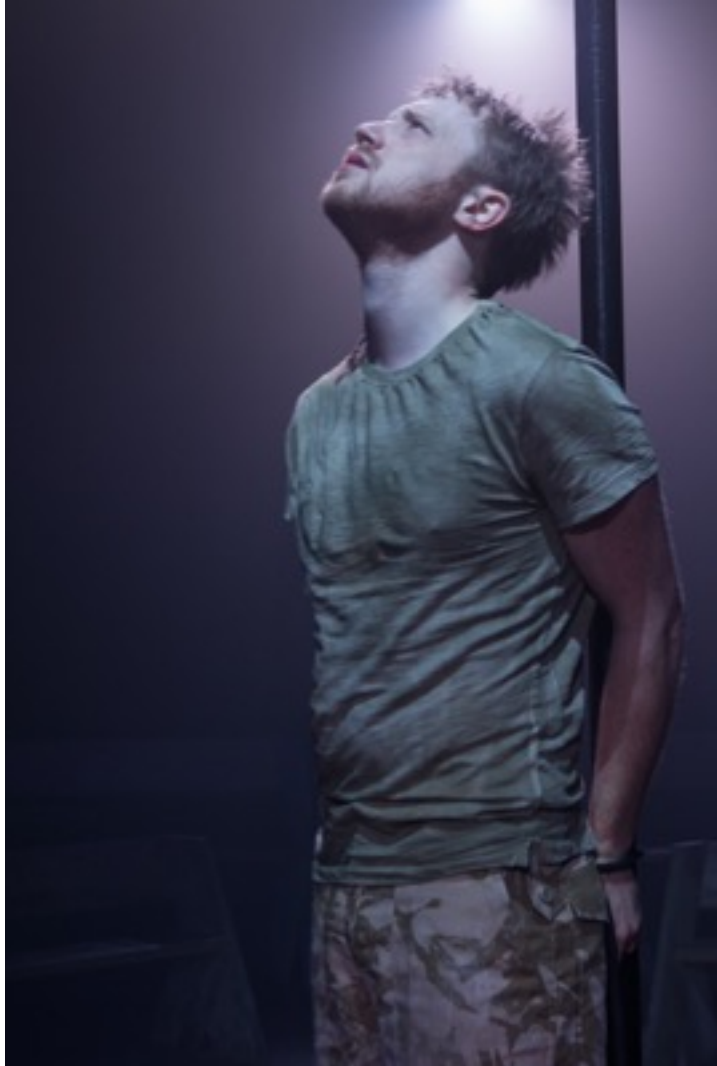




Wound Up Theatre & Sofi Berenger Productions present

BISMILLAH

Touring Autumn 2018



'Bismillah means like...in the name of Allah, most gracious, most merciful...kind of...it means more than that: Its basically the essence of the whole Qur'an, and he shouldn't be using it in some stupid song.'

'...Well you boys round here aren't doin' a great job of living up to its mantra are ya?!'

Dean joined the army, Danny joined the Islamic State. Bismillah! is their time together as captive and guard.

Set in a basement in Northern Iraq Bismillah! uses humour and compassion to approach an incredibly vital discussion around the experiences of disenfranchised young people in modern Britain.

This hilarious and heartbreaking production examines the impact of racial, social, economic and religious politics on youth in society. It's a show which tackles huge contemporary issues: from rising social tensions and the fall out of interventionist foreign policies to working in Wetherspoon's and the ever-rising price of a standard meal deal.

About Bismillah!

Initially developed by **Soho Theatre's** Young Writers Company *Bismillah!* was written in response to the targeted radicalisation by extremist groups of disenfranchised young people in Britain. The play tells of the encounter between a young British prisoner of war from Leeds and an London born young British Muslim boy who, who has defected to join the Islamic State.

The Edinburgh production in 2015 played to rave reviews, including **5 stars from Broadway Baby**. The show has subsequently enjoyed support and development from London's **Theatre Royal Stratford East** since the Edinburgh debut. It has also been the subject of discussion and praise at *Mock the Week – Comedy and the Politics of Representation*, an academic conference in 2016 hosted by Teeside University, at which writer Matthew Greenhough was invited to speak.

The new script, along with a new director, creative team and cast has recently finished at run at London's **VAULT Festival** where it sold out and was critically acclaimed including **4 stars from The Stage** and will be transferring to **The Pleasance, London** for 3 weeks in April 2018.



**A STORY OF DISENFRANCHISEMENT,
SOCIAL ALIENATION, PREJUDICE,
RADICALISATION AND THE ROCK
BAND QUEEN**

Reviews

★★★★★ “Bismillah! is one of the best shows I have ever seen at the Fringe or anywhere else.”
- Broadway Baby

★★★★★ “Bismillah! is a shining example of how theatre can educate, evoke empathy and open the minds of its audience on a complex and heartbreaking subject matter.”
- The Live Review

★★★★★ “Never before have I been gripped so much in 75 minutes watching a conversation between two people than I have seeing this show.”
- My Theatre Mates

★★★★★ “Powerful, hilarious and gripping.”
- The List

“Designed purely to explore the shared humanity in men who exist in different worlds and in this it is highly successful.”
- The Plays the Thing UK

★★★★★ “This is a black comedy of the highest order.”
- The Reviews Hub

★★★★★ “a wonderfully sympathetic piece of writing, brimming with insight, humour and humanity.”
- The Stage

★★★★★ “awe-inspiring dialogue”
- The Upcoming

“As far as compelling two handers go, *Bismillah* is, in my books, on par with *Heisenberg: The Uncertainty Principle* by Simon Stevens.”
- A Younger Theatre

“The jokes are side-splittingly funny”
- The Mortal Fool

★★★★★ “Brilliantly acted, lots of funnies”
- Hiive

★★★★★ “This really is a powerful, deep and meaningful play that really makes you think.”
- LondonTheatre1

★★★★★ “extremely entertaining, subversive and most importantly opens up conversation.”
- Arthur’s Seat

“laugh-out-loud comedy and some very distressing truths”
- I Watch Plays and Stuff

“Matthew Greenhough and Elliot Liburd give a riveting performance.”
- British Theatre Guide

Being part of a dialogue...

Performed by two actors, Wound Up Theatre have created an accessible script to discuss this complex issue - a story that at its heart is about two young men finding their place in the world. Writer Matthew Greenhough's quick witted script provides endless laughs and tears throughout.

The production has already been endorsed by **Dr. Anshuman A. Mondal** - Academic and author of '*Nationalism and Post-Colonial Identity*' and '*Young British Muslim Voices*', who has published widely on contemporary Muslim identities and cultures, nationalism, and multiculturalism. It has also enjoyed support from **Nihal Arthanayake of the BBC Asian Network**, and the **Active Change Foundation** - London's only youth charity which focus' on tackling radicalisation in disadvantaged communities.

Bismillah! examines themes of racism (specifically Islamophobia), disenfranchisement, radicalisation and alienation in society, while promoting a powerful message of tolerance, compassion and multiculturalism. *Bismillah!* is an incredibly relevant and powerful piece of theatre which tackles prevalent but often undiscussed experiences of young people in Britain.

The productions uniquely comedic approach to the subject matter, fulfils the companies ambition of creating politically charged theatre which is accessible which encourages to discussion of otherwise uncomfortable subjects. *Bismillah!* aims to contribute to a dialogue on the wider social implications of the issues discussed in the play, encouraging audiences to politically engage with the themes of the shows – whilst approaching the subject neutrally and from a humanist standpoint.

Fundamentally, at its heart – the show is about youth in Britain and this production aims to connect to younger audiences in an accessible and informed way. In a 2014 report published by the United Nations they discussed the fact that **youth are 'particularly vulnerable to economic shocks, social instability, and conflicts'** and in this post 9/11, digitally savvy world, radicalisation is a hugely complex phenomenon. Feelings of vulnerability, otherness, alienation and expert grooming techniques has led to 800 Britons going to Syria from 2012-2016 to fight for or support ISIS and a further 600 caught trying to enter.



The Production and Creators

Matthew Greenhough - Writer & Performer

Writer Matthew Greenhough is an award-winning theatre maker, playwright, actor and comedian. *Bismillah!* is his second project produced by **Wound Up Theatre** and most recently his work *#Vile: The Untimely Demise of a Manufactured Pop Star* premiered at the **Edinburgh Fringe in 2017**. His Debut was 2013's *Delusions of Adequacy*.

As an Actor he has appeared in a number of high profile music videos and award winning short films and has won the **Dioiz International Theatre Festival** in Croatia for a devised piece: *In Our Hands*.



Jonny Kelly - Director

Jonny is a theatre director and dramaturg, who has been involved in the development of *Bismillah!* for over a year, after being introduced to the project by **Theatre Royal Stratford East**. As co-founder of **NorthSEE Theatre**, he has recently directed *Hyem* (Theatre503 and Northern Stage) and *The Passing Of The Third Floor Back* (Finborough Theatre). Other direction includes *A is for Ali* (Old Red Lion Theatre), *Money Womb* (Theatre503), *The Special Relationship* (Southwark Playhouse), *Boys Will Be Boys* (Soho Theatre), and *Call Centre* (New Wimbledon Theatre).

Associate and Assistant Direction includes assisting Justin Audibert on *Flare Path* (No. 1 National Tour) and Nina Raine on *Donkey Heart* (Trafalgar Studios). He was Assistant Director on both *The Hard Man* and *Unscorched* at the Finborough Theatre. He was also the resident assistant director of **Papatango Theatre Company**.

Upcoming shows include *A Princess Undone* at the **Park Theatre** in London, *Revolting Women* with **Mikron Theatre Company** and *She's leaving home* with NorthSEE (both national tours)

Sofi Berenger - Producer

Sofi is an award-winning theatre and film producer from Melbourne, Australia. Starting her career in film production, Sofi produced a number of award-winning shorts and worked on projects for clients such as World Vision, TopShop, Live Nation, London ZSL Zoo, HSBC and Cornetto.

As an independent producer Sofi has worked in venues such as the Arcola Theatre, Arts Theatre, Jermyn St Theatre and St James' Theatre. Currently, she is the General Manager for **Iris Theatre** and won an **Off West End award** in 2017 for their production *Treasure Island* and her productions are nominated for a further 5x awards this year.

Sofi also produces *London's Free Open Air Theatre Season* at **The Scoop** and is currently working on a new double bill from **Giants Theatre** and producing for **Metal Rabbit** and **Monstro Theatre**.

Technical Requirements

PERFORMANCE SPACE			
STAGE DIMENSIONS	Minimum 5m x 5m	SEATING	Flexible. Preference of In-the-round
HEIGHT CLEARANCE	3m	BACK DROP	Flexible
FLOORING	Flexible	WINGS/CROSS OVER	Flexible. Not required
ACCESS TO STAGE	30 minutes with sound & lights	GET IN	4 hrs
SOUND/LIGHTS		OTHER	
MONITORS	N/A	COMPANY	2x actors, 1x Technical Stage Manager
COMMUNICATIONS	Professional quality stereo sound system with full range speakers and separate sub-bass speakers	RUNNING TIME	75 minutes (No interval)
LIGHTS	Basic rig	GENRE	Political satire, drama, comedy

Contact

For more information about *Bismillah!* including availability, programming and financial conditions please contact:

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