

PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cast revealed for European premiere of *The Book of Will*

Co-production from Octagon Theatre Bolton, Queen's Theatre Hornchurch and Shakespeare North Playhouse of Lauren Gunderson's award-winning play

- European premiere
- Marking the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's First Folio
- With award-winning cast and creative team

A brand-new production of **Lauren Gunderson's** award-winning comedy, *The Book of Will*, is coming to UK audiences this year in its European premiere.

This hilarious love letter to theatre is a co-production from **Octagon Theatre Bolton, Queen's Theatre Hornchurch** and **Shakespeare North Playhouse**.

Opening at Queen's Theatre Hornchurch from **Thu 27 April – Sat 13 May**, before transferring to Octagon Theatre Bolton from **Wed 17 May – Sat 3 June** and Shakespeare North Playhouse from **Thu 19 October – Sat 11 November**.

Featuring a stellar company of 10 actors, the cast has now been revealed.

The full cast includes: *Hollyoaks* stars **Jessica Ellis** and **Helen Pearson** alongside **Zach Lee** (ITV's *Coronation Street*, *Emmerdale* plus *Bouncers*, John Godber Company, *A Christmas Carol*, Hull Truck); **Tomi Ogbaro** (*Seagulls*, Octagon Theatre Bolton, *The Wonderful World of Dissocia*, Theatre Royal Stratford, *Jayne Eyre*, Stephen Joseph Theatre and New Vic).

They will be joined by Radio 4 favourite **Carrie Quinlan** (BBC Radio 4's *John Finnemore's Souvenir Programme*, *Orpheus Descending*, Theatr Clwyd/Menier Chocolate Factory); **Russell Richardson** (ITV's *Coronation Street*, *Last Tango in Halifax* plus *A View From The Bridge*, *Hindle Wakes* – Octagon Theatre Bolton); **Callum Sim** (ITV's *Emmerdale* and *Coronation Street*) and **Tarek Slater** (*The Jungle Book*, Oldham Coliseum, *Beauty and the Beast*, the Dukes).

Completing the cast is star of stage and screen **Bill Ward** (ITV's *Coronation Street*, *Emmerdale* & BBC's *Eastenders* plus UK tour of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, UK tour of Bath Theatre Royal's *Shakespeare in Love*); and **Andrew Whitehead** (*The Book Thief*, Octagon Theatre Bolton, *A Christmas Carol*, Hull Truck).

Octagon Theatre, Howell Croft South
Bolton BL1 1SB
octagonbolton.co.uk
01204 520661



Directed by the Octagon's Artistic Director, **Lotte Wakeham**, *The Book of Will* tells the hilarious and moving story of the breath-taking race against time to gather all of Shakespeare's works and save them for the ages.

This wonderfully witty, funny and fast-paced play tells the story of The King's Men as they band together for a near-impossible plan – to collect all of Shakespeare's plays and compile the First Folio. No easy feat, and what follows is a bonkers race against time through 1620s London.

The creative team includes: **Carla Goodman** (designer); **Simeon Miller** (lighting designer); **Andy Graham** (sound designer); **Jonnie Riordan** (movement director); **Olivia Barr** (casting director); **Natalie Grady** (accent coach); **Ryan McVeigh** (assistant director); and **Ngozi Ugochukwu** (observer director).

On the casting announcement, The Book of Will director Lotte Wakeham commented:

"I am thrilled to announce this incredibly talented cast of actors and fantastic creative team for our highly anticipated co-production of The Book of Will. Our brilliant playwright Lauren Gunderson is one of the most frequently produced playwrights in the world, and I'm delighted to share her talent with UK audiences, where I'm sure she'll quickly become a firm favourite.

"2023 marks 400 years since the First Folio was first published, so I am really excited that this European premiere production will honour this special anniversary, which celebrates the legacy of our greatest playwright in a thoroughly joyful and accessible way, whether you're a die-hard Shakespeare fan or completely new to his work.

"It is wonderful to be collaborating with Queen's Theatre Hornchurch and Shakespeare North Playhouse so audiences across the country will get to enjoy this hilarious love letter to theatre."

The Book of Will comes to the Octagon from **Wed 17 May – Sat 3 June**

Tickets start from £15 and are on-sale now.

Find out more and book tickets via the Octagon **Box Office** on **01204 520661** or at octagonbolton.co.uk

-ENDS-

The cast and creative team are available for interview.

For interview and other press requests please contact **Dan Hicklin** on

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Octagon Theatre Bolton, Queen's Theatre Hornchurch and Shakespeare North Playhouse present

The Book of Will

by Lauren Gunderson

Directed by **Lotte Wakeham**

Queen's Theatre Hornchurch dates:

Thu 27 April – Sat 13 May 2023

Press Night: Sat 29 April

Octagon Theatre Bolton dates:

Wed 17 May – Sat 3 June

Press night: Thu 18 May

Shakespeare North Playhouse dates:

Thu 19 October – Sat 11 November

Press Night: Fri 20 October

Octagon Theatre Bolton

Octagon Theatre Bolton is a regional producing theatre that makes popular, bold and adventurous theatre of the highest quality. We believe theatre matters because everyone's story matters and aim to entertain, inspire and engage as many people as possible through theatre. We are leaders in ensuring arts and culture thrive in Bolton working with thousands of young people and community groups every year. The Octagon reopened in May 2021 following a major redevelopment, funded by Bolton Council and Arts Council England. The redevelopment is the largest transformation of the building in the Octagon's history and will ensure the future of the Theatre for generations to come.

Queen's Theatre Hornchurch

Queen's Theatre Hornchurch (QTH) is a vibrant producing theatre, working in Outer East London, Essex and beyond. As a cultural hub, over 210,000 people enjoy the programme each year. Audiences are guaranteed a warm welcome from a three-year winner of UK Theatre's Most Welcoming Theatre (2016 – 2018) and London Theatre of the Year 2020 (The Stage Awards), the first Outer London theatre to receive this prestigious award.

www.queens-theatre.co.uk

Twitter/Facebook: @QueensTheatreH

Instagram: @QueensTheatreHornchurch

Shakespeare North Playhouse

Located in Prescot, ground-breaking new venue **Shakespeare North Playhouse** is home to the only 17th-century style, timber-built "Cockpit" theatre outside London, able to be configured in to two formations end-on and in-the-round. Built entirely during the pandemic thanks to public funds and donations, the new venue is anticipated to attract over 140,000 visitors a year to the region. Lead architect for the project is Helm Architecture, and Austin-Smith: Lord as support architect.

Housed inside this modern, energy-efficient building, the venue is also home to a fully-accessible outdoor performance garden funded by the Ken Dodd Charitable Foundation, exhibition gallery, 60-seater studio theatre, learning centre, events spaces, and a café and bar with outdoor piazza: shakespearenorthplayhouse.co.uk

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