

THE CHANGING SHAPES OF RED LADDER



The Agitprop Street Players – as Red Ladder was originally known – emerged when a group from a socialist information service performed a play at the Trafalgar Square Festival of 1968.

The plays were short and biting, morale-boosting sketches often relying on striking visual images to get the message across, they were highly portable relying on few props and were performed at mass political demonstrations, tenants association meetings, weekend schools etc.

Gradually the basis of the work broadened and plays that fed directly into particular struggles and issues developed; such as 'The Big Con' against the Industrial Relations Act and 'The Cake Play' against productivity bargaining,

The 60's were an era of riots, demonstrations and revolt – economic prosperity served to broaden political debate and theatre wanted to

take part in this revolution of ideas. As it was conventional theatre changed little so the 'alternative' emerged in the shape of fringe theatre. Red Ladder became a prominent member of the fringe movement, known as one of the best established political theatre companies in Britain.

By 1971, the name Red Ladder evolved, after a much loved and used prop. There also evolved a policy of taking theatre to 'working class' audiences in places where working people usually find their entertainment, this now included trade union clubs.

By 1973 the commitment of the company was recognised with an Arts Council grant of £4,000 and in 1976 the company moved from London to Leeds, Yorkshire and is still based in the city, although it continues to tour on a national basis.

While early Red Ladder plays 1968-73 fed directly into political disputes of the time, below is a list of full length plays produced from 1974 together with changes in Artistic Policy.

'Taking our Time', was a watershed in Red Ladders Artistic development: creating a more analytical approach to story telling as opposed to the simple solutions of Agitprop. The early 1980's became another watershed as it made the company consider the role and practice of political theatre in 1980's, a very different environment to that of the sixties & seventies. It led to a year of experimentation with new ideas, building on the experience of the past.

1985/86 led to another changing shape for the company from a Collective to a Hierarchy with the appointment of a Board of Directors who in turn employed an Artistic Director – Rachel Feldberg. Therefore the company developed a New Policy.

The Company's aims were as follows:

- To create an artistically exciting socialist feminist theatre.
- To take this work to audiences who would not normally see theatre, young people 14 - 25 and the adults who work with them. To perform on their own ground, in Youth Clubs and places where they normally meet, rather than in theatre venues.
- To make our work accessible to all young people and in particular to reach young people for whom there is little or inadequate provision; young disabled people, Black young people (within which we include Asian and African Caribbean teenagers), young people in inner cities and isolated rural areas.

- To offer theatre of the highest possible standard which is exciting and challenging both for the audience and performers, which uses a wide variety of forms and which seeks to develop the vocabulary of this form of theatre by offering young people 'the best'.
- To base this work on issues of concern to our audience and to develop the ways in which theatre can be used which parallel groups and professions (for instance Youth Workers). To encourage these workers to use theatre as part of their work with associated training, preparation and follow up.
- To continue to implement and develop the Company's Equal Opportunities Policy (including our Anti-Racist strategy and Action Plan on Disability) placing it at the core of our work and seeking to achieve a fully integrated Company at all levels.
- To raise the profile of this area of work amongst other Companies, funding bodies and professional workers and to encourage Regional Arts Boards and Local Authorities/Youth Services to work in partnership.

The Artistic and Audience Developments were as follows:

- An innovative tri-part programme for Asian girls to include parallel projects in India and the North of England, coupled with development of a new, long term, Asian women's theatre project based in the North.
- A consistent development of the Company's work for disabled teenagers through a series of experimental projects - using sign theatre, dance and an environmental installation.
- A continued development of the Company's work with disabled performers, pursuing adequate funding for their support.
- A continued exploration of work with teenagers in unusual and artistically challenging environments, through a promenade piece and a mobile performance space for isolated rural areas.
- An emphasis on work which draws on different artistic and cultural forms. 'Bilingual' work will be a focus of the three small scale 'Work In Progress' projects.
- An extension of the Company's role encouraging new writing from under represented groups through the creation of an annual 'Work In Progress' slot backed by dramaturge attachment.

In 1994 there was the Appointment of Kully Thiarai as Artistic Director.

New Mission Statement

Red Ladder is a national Touring Company, recognising that investment in young people is an investment in the future and is dedicated to:

- Creating and providing artistically exciting high quality theatre for young people who have little or no access to, or experience of the theatre;
- Touring new work nationally which, through exploring issues specifically designed for young people, is pure theatre;
- Developing strategies which offer young people the opportunity to become involved in the artistic life of this country;
- Striving for artistic excellence in its performance and presentation in a way which is accessible and challenging to its audience;

- Developing new writing and other theatre skills.

Again in 1998 there was the Appointment of Wendy Harris as Artistic Director. As well as our professional touring productions 2002 saw the appointment of Madani Younis as director of the Asian Theatre School. Under Madani's direction the school created.

2004 Mission Statement:

To inspire and challenge the lives of young people.

Red Ladder Theatre Company is:

- A high quality theatre experience for young audiences.
- National tours
- New work
- After show work
- The Asian Theatre School

2004 Artistic Policy:

- To create theatre of the highest quality.
- To tour this work nationally targeting young people who have little or no access to theatre.
- To continue the artistic growth of the Asian Theatre School.
- To take artistic risks and explore new ways of working.
- To create excellent resource material and provide after show work.
- To work collaboratively with artists to create new work
- To run development weeks and creative labs for artists to experiment.
- To be informed by the young people and audiences we aim to reach.
- To embrace new technologies, high quality production standards and highly skilled creative teams to offer a unique artistic experience in non-theatre spaces as well as in theatres.
- To offer an alternative view of the world through theatre.

Recognised as the UK's leading new writing company for youth audiences producing accessible theatre of the highest quality.

Red Ladder also provides:

- After show Chat backs
- Resource material for young people

2006 saw the Appointment of Rod Dixon as Artistic Director, and Madani Younis won the South Bank Award for Diversity.

Mission statement:

To make theatre which celebrates, inspires and challenges young people, developing in them the desire and ability to express ideas and strengthen social and cultural cohesion.

Artistic Policy To:

- include young people in the creative processes of making theatre
- embellish current text-driven practice by experimentation with new theatre practice – including working with other art forms
- inspire a new generation of theatre makers through the quality and originality of our creative practice
- tour this work nationally, targeting young people who have little or no access to theatre

- seek international collaboration actively and to engage with theatre making in troubled parts of the world – helping ordinary people investigate global issues
- create a reputation for a unique Red Ladder artistic process and a 21st Century style – to compliment the reputation that precedes us.
- continue to raise our local and regional profile particularly through enabling and inspiring emerging local artists
- celebrate and build upon Red Ladder's 40 year history of making theatre.

Red Ladder Theatre Company is:

- A high quality theatre experience for young audiences.
- National tours and after show "Chat Backs".
- Red Grit Actor Training Project
- Customised Participatory Workshops

In 2007 The Asian Theatre School moved to Bradford to become its own independent organisation, and was rebranded as Freedom Studios.

1970's Production List

1974-75

A Woman's Work Is Never Done (also known as Strike While the Iron is hot)

Published by The Journeyman Press

About the role of women at work and home and their growing political awareness.

1975-76

***It makes You Sick* by Frances McNeill**

A club show about the N.H.S.; devised and written in close collaboration with N.U.P.E.

1976 –77

***Anybody Sweating* by Steve Trafford**

A club show about unemployment, high-rise flats, and Britain in 1976. It became known as 'Would Jubilee It', Red Ladder's contribution to the celebrations in 1977.

1978

***Taking Our Time* by Steve Trafford & Glen Parkes**

Published by Pluto Press

A play with music about industrialisation of the weaving industry in Yorkshire and the rise of Chartism. Massively successful, it attracted a wide popular audience throughout Yorkshire and the North; supported by the union of Dyers & Bleachers.

1979- 80

***Nerves of Steel* by Steve Trafford & Chris Rawlence**

Explored the impact of the demands of working in the steel industry and the impact, overtime and shift working had on family life.

***Power Mad* by Steve Trafford**

A reworking of the Faust legend around the subject of nuclear power and arms.

1980's Production List

1980

Ladders to the Moon

An account of a strike in 1893 at Featherstone Pit in Yorkshire which resulted in the army shooting and killing several miners.

1981

Circus by Rony Robinson

An allegory in which the state of Britain in 1981 was likened to an ailing circus of the 1930's, where the owner deceives the workers who have no real control over their work.

The Blind Goddess by Ernst Toller

The first extant script the company produced.

About socialism in a fascist state, the position of women and the hypocrisy of justice. Translated for Red Ladder by Micheline Wandor.

1982

Playing Apart

A club show about the effects of unemployment on a northern family. It countered the label of 'scrounger' usually levelled at unemployed people of the time. One of the first shows to use a rock band in the play, an area which was rapidly developing within the company.

The Best of British 'whose country is it anyway?'

A club show about life in post war Britain, from the 'never had it so good' fifties, through the 'swinging sixties' and the 'cynical' seventies.

1983-84

Preparations by Paul Goetsee directed by Rob Bettinson

The company's first writing commission from Northern playwright Paul Goetsee.

In a dual storyline the piece looked at a local council Civil Defence committee as they discuss plans for the nuclear armageddon (comedy/satire) and in the other a teenage girl is admitted to a psychiatric clinic suffering from a morbid fear of nuclear annihilation (psychological). The two overlap in a major geopolitical concern that was current in the early 1980s.

Bring out your Dead by Peter Cox

A club show looking at Britain's in 1988, after another term of Tory Government. Big Mac from America was running the privatised health service. The show did not achieve much success.

Dumb Blonde by Peta Masters & Geraldine Griffins

Put together at very short notice following Bring out your Dead cancellations, this was a Busby Berkely style musical written by Masters & Griffiths with music by McGovan/Dougall, which took a light hearted look at women at work.

1984

Happy Jack by John Godber (an extant script)

The play charted the history of a coal miner and his wife through six decades of living on a pauper's wage.

***The Beano* by Rony Robinson**

A writing commission from South Yorkshire writer Rony Robinson

A hilarious yet sensitive account of a brewery worker's day trip to Scarborough in 1914. The revellers frolicked on their one day out, meanwhile the clouds of war were gathering in Europe.

***This Story of Yours* by John Hopkins**

A new path for the company as it was aimed exclusively at Theatre venues.

A policeman is accused of murdering a suspected child abuser during an interrogation. The play explored male violence & sexuality from a highly charged position.

The Danderhall Red Beano

Not a show at all, but a week long festival mounted by red ladder in conjunction with Mid Lothian District Council in the mining village of Danderhall, near Edinburgh. A return to the true spirit and ethos of the Edinburgh fringe.

1985

***Stitchin' the Blues & Mixing it* by Maggie Lane**

A double Bill. 'Stitchin the Blues' was a one women show based on the Lee jeans occupation of 1981. 'Mixing it' looked at what happened when an unemployed CND activist gets a job building a nuclear power station.

***Safe with Us* by Frances McNeill**

A play commissioned by the Confederation of Health Service Employees Union for their 75th Anniversary celebrations. A fast moving play which looked at current issues within the Health service, using comedy & music.

***State Agent* by Rachel Feldberg & Ruth Mackenzie**

A new play for youth clubs about young people and homelessness, exploring what happened to young people who lost their benefit in the now forgotten (but then notorious) ' bed & breakfast' laws.

1986

***Back to the Walls* by Jane Thornton**

A new play based on young people's experience of Youth Training Schemes.

Targeting young people 15+, unemployed people & school leavers.

***On the Line* (devised)**

Beat Box Britain. A country where "there is no such thing as a racist attack". On the Line looks at the origins of racism – where does it come from, who profits and most important, what are we going to do about it? Written for youth clubs, tackling a difficult issue in a lively and accessible way.

Spring 1987

***Winners* by Rona Munro**

Specially written for young women exploring gender issues.

Autumn 1987

***Empire Made* by Paul Swift**

Play for senior youth groups about Racism and police attitudes.

Winter 1988

One of Us

By Jacqui Shapiro & Meera Syal

A comedy about Nishi's life as she grapples with her expectations & the realities of the world around her.
(Targeting Asian Girls Groups)

Spring 1988

***Off the Road* by Rona Munro**

A show comparing rural and city life touring to girls groups.

Autumn 1988

***The Best* by Mike Kenny**

A play exploring deaf issues for young deaf people.

Spring 1989

***Bhangra Girls* by Nandita Ghose**

The first commissioned work touring to young Asian girls groups.

Autumn 1989

***Who's Breaking* by Philip Osment**

Play for mixed senior youth clubs focussing on HIV/Aids issues, integrating **British Sign Language**.

1990's Production List

Spring 1990

***Bus Shelter Project* by Lin Coghlan**

Tour for young people meeting on the street concentrating on homelessness & poverty.

Autumn 1990

***Breaking the Silence* by Kate O'Reilly**

Specially written for disabled, Asian and Girls groups, integrating British Sign Language

Spring 1991

***The Scrappie* by Judith Johnson**

Play about loss and separation for mixed senior youth clubs.

Autumn 1991

***Consequences* by Mary Cooper**

Play touring to Asian girls groups.

Winter 1992

***Listen* by Philip Osment**

Play about a deaf young person and family relationships, using B.S.L

Spring 1992

***Though the Heavens Fall* by Lin Coghlan**

Play about justice and law for senior youth club audiences.

Autumn 1992

***Caught* by Julie Wilkinson**

Play for girls groups focussing on teenage pregnancy, integrating B.S.L.

Spring 1993

***No Mean Street* by Paul Boakye**

A joint project between Kuffdem Theatre Co. & Red Ladder exploring HIV/Aids targeting Black young people.

Autumn 1993

***Sleeping Dogs* by Philip Osment**

Play for mixed senior youth clubs focussing on intercommunal strife in Eastern Europe.

Spring 1994

***Mixed Blessings* by Mary Cooper**

Play for girls examining mixed race relationships between African Caribbean & white young people.

Autumn 1994

***The Wound* by Gilly Fraser**

Focussing on domestic violence, touring senior mixed youth clubs.

Sleeping Dogs

By Philip Osment

Retour to Arts Centres and small scale theatre venues.

Spring 1995

***Waking* by Lin Coghlan**

Set in Ireland, a play touring to mixed senior youth exploring clubs issues of cultural identity, family and loss.

Spring 1996

***End of Season* by Noel Greig**

1st International Co- Production with Red Ladder & Theatre Direct, Canada

A play touring to youth club audiences and theatre audiences exploring tribalism youth violence and cultural identity.

Autumn 1996

***Josie's Boys* by Roy Williams**

A play touring to youth club audiences about single parenting, leaving home and ambition.

Spring 1997

***Kaahini* by Maya Chowdhry**

A play touring to youth club and theatre audiences for Asian young people 14+ about gender, duty and kismet.

Autumn 1997

***Crush* by Rosy Fordham**

A comedy about infatuation, fantasy and reality, men and women, and Boy bands!

Spring 1998

***Wise Guys* by Philip Osment**

A co-production with Theatre Centre, exploring male identity and violence.

Autumn 1998

***Crush* by Rosy Fordham**

A national retour to Arts Centre & Youth Service.

Autumn 1999

***Last Night* by John Binnie**

Story of a pregnant teenager, an old man & refugee. Set on New years eve of 1999.

2000+ Production List

Spring 2000

***After the End of the World* by Mike Kenny**

Red Ladder's Millennium Play, a comedy exploring respect and morality with Stick, a teenage boy living with Chintz, his single parent Mum and Wrinkle, his disabled Grandma.

Autumn 2000

***Picture Me* by Noel Greig**

An international story set in England & Mumbai exploring the emotional impact of HIV/Aids on British Asian teenager.

Spring 2001

***Hold Ya* by Chris OConnell**

Story of single parent Dad & his teenage son, a gritty story about love & change mixing club land culture & domestic life.

Autumn 2001

***Lowdown Highnotes* by Andrea Earl**

Story of a 'teenage wannabe' which takes her off to find her real father, using music, video imagery and live vocals.

Spring 2002

***After You* by Brendan Murray**

A story about a youth who searches for the truth with evocative text, video imagery, movement and design, beautifully crafted in this gripping piece of theatre. A chance meeting with a stranger at his dad's graveside sets Chris off on a trail of intrigue and discovery. But Chris uncovers more than he bargained for, forcing him to re-evaluate his relationship with his parents. Cutting edge digital media, design & evocative text is beautifully crafted in this gripping piece of theatre.

Autumn 2002

***Wise Guys* by Philip Osment**

Re –Tour Directed by Wendy Harris

Wise Guys bursts into action with the passion and drama of street culture combined with dynamic Teenage energy. Uproariously funny and deeply moving the play follows the journey of a gang of urban youth, mixing cutting edge digital media with a strong physical theatre style.

Spring 2002

STREETS OF RAGE: A CREATIVE RESPONSE FROM THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF BRADFORD

Directed by Madani Younis & Sarah Brigham

Performed by the Asian Theatre School



Streets of Rage opened eyes to the events of the Bradford riots of last summer. Mixing cutting edge digital media, the play gave a new voice to a group of young men and women from Bradford, heard on stage for the first time.

Devised by the Asian Theatre School participants, in response to the views of local people of Bradford the opportunity to re-tell the events of the riots from their perspective.

This well researched and innovative piece of theatre is the result of news footage analysis and interviews with members of the public who lived through the riots, and who are still dealing with the issues that were brought to life.

2003

Silent Cry

Directed by Madani Younis & Sarah Brigham

Performed by the Asian Theatre School



Silent Cry...

A family looking for justice.

We hear the voices of an ordinary family who once had an ordinary life.

A death in Police custody.

We see a Mother's journey that begins as her son's life ends.

A system with no answers.

We tell a story based on true documented evidence and interviews.

Following the unprecedented success of **STREETS OF RAGE** the Asian Theatre School brings untold stories from the hearts of communities to the stage. ATS has its finger on the pulse of a multi-cultural modern Britain. The show performed to full houses at Bradford Alhambra Studio & the West Yorkshire Playhouse.

"It is educational, painful, and a pleasure." Bradford Telegraph and Argus

2003

***The Dreaming of "Bones"* by Damian Gorman**

Red Ladder & Contact Theatre , Manchester Co production

Directed by Shabina Aslam



The heart-hitting story of a heart-scalded young man.

Xavier 'Bones' MacMillan, like many young people, dreams of a special, beautiful life for himself.

In preparation for a stay at the local "Thin Bin" he rehearses the story of his past and present life: his 'over-worrying' mum, his estranged dad, his cool mate Lenny and his dream girl, Nicola Price all play their part.

Weaving dramatic monologue, poetry, movement and original music "The Dreaming of Bones" looks at how the strong, true yearning of one young person can overcome the often warped, harsh realities of life pressing in around him.

Damian Gorman is one of the most socially significant contemporary Northern Irish writers working in both film & theatre. He has won numerous awards, including 4 Peacock Ulster Theatre awards Northern Ireland's first BAFTA and an MBE for his service to the arts.

2004 Tour April – July

***Soulskin* by Esther Wilson**

Directed by Wendy Harris



A story about fractured families, loyalty, destructive pride, and taking responsibility. Suitable for 13+ Chrissie, the child of a teenage pregnancy, has been brought up by her Gran, Mary. She's hasn't seen her Mum, Bernie, in years until Mary dies. It's the night of the funeral and the eve of Chrissie's sixteenth birthday. She's alone in the house, waiting for Bernie (Mum) to pick her up. As she packs Chrissie tries to make sense of the painful memories and secrets that have kept the family apart. But as the sun sets, Chrissie's memory plays tricks, conjuring up strange meetings, with real and imagined situations haunting her until.... Mary herself appears and Chrissie has to face up to her part in the fragile relationship between mothers & daughters. Walking into the future is hard. This is about finding the courage to do it amid a blur of Fantasy, memory and reality. A brilliant new work with an original sound track and evocative film imagery

"Superb....hard hitting and attention grabbing – not only a splendid piece of theatre, but a powerful tool for influencing lives." Reviewgate.com

2004 Tour Sept – Dec
Tagged by Louise Wallwein
Directed by Faroque Khan



Developed in collaboration with Half Moon Young People's Theatre, London

Time is ticking by for Chris. He's electronically tagged and on a 7o'clock curfew. If he breaks it he's going down. Two friends, a bike, a pylon, a tractor and a police helicopter conspire to keep Chris from his freedom. Exclusion and frustration rule this molotov cocktail of poetry, quick fire dialogue and urban sound-and-visions capes. The young audience entered the theatre chatting during the opening scenes; by five minutes into the narrative they were gripped. This wonderful new play about society's desire to tag anything that moves is a real eye-opener.

- Glenn Meads (reviewed at Manchester's Contact Theatre)

2005 Tour April – July

Free Falling by Madani Younis
Directed by Wendy Harris



*Roof tops a jumping,
Kites flying as high as,
A school that's failing
Gang o' youth waiting,
Hot summer burning,
A generation that's free falling...*

A new play developed with young people in Yorkshire and a team of artists from Red Ladder - inspired by the urban sport of Free running (or le Parkour) with strong visual imagery and storytelling that will connect with youth across Britain. Suitable for anyone over 13 years. This play contains strong language.

Free Falling - a play about success and failure, about a search for beauty about a generation of youth looking for a future. Multi media, hip beats, cool moves and inspirational words challenge young audiences creating visionary theatre that impacts and reflects the diversity of our society.

2005 Autumn Production

Caravan

Written & directed by Madani Younis

Performed by Asian Theatre School



At the end of a run down street with back to back houses that frown at one another and whose gardens have seen better days, the Caravan sits patiently and quietly.

Caravan looks at the lives of ordinary people and how communities endeavour to continue a normal existence in the face of terror, media hype and a global society at odds with itself. The production is inspired by Caravaggio's The Seven Works of Mercy

This new piece of theatre is performed by the Asian Theatre School, whose unique brand of theatre brings stories from the hearts of the cities and communities of multi-cultural modern Britain to the stage.

Pay it Forward

A unique series of artistic partnerships between various performance groups across the region with support from Stage Exchange. A Pay It Forward performance preceded each performance of Caravan.

Proper Job & Suga Brown Thurs 1st Sept,
DAZL & Vera Media performing Fri 2nd Sept
RJC & Leeds Young Authors Sat 3rd Sept

2006 Tour May – July

Worlds Apart by Mick Martin

Directed by Juliet Ellis



Worlds Apart takes us into the life of Sam Harris, a 14 year old girl dealing with life, love, communication and difference in the world around her. At home there's Mum, her step dad Pete and her eight year old half brother Adam. Adam is autistic. At school there's her best mate Kelly to whom she tells everything. Enter Sam's world and share her joys, her confusions and her frustrations as she gives her thoughts and feelings about boys, parents and Adam.

Using multi-media, illustration, original sound and light design, Red Ladder creates visionary theatre that reaches out to teenage and adult audiences. During the making of the play the company was inspired by PECS - The Picture Exchange Communication System - a non verbal communication system that has been successful with adolescents and adults who have a wide array of communicative, cognitive and physical difficulties. The play integrates this system in a creative and stimulating way.

2006 Tour Sept – Dec

***Kaahini* by Maya Chowdhry**

Directed by Rod Dixon

Originally commissioned by Red Ladder and performed to high accolade in the 1990's this was an updated version reaching out to 21st Century audiences. Using high energy movement, film and a hip-hop soundtrack, 'Kaahini' a physical show that speaks directly to young people.

Set in contemporary Britain, using rich poetic language Kaahini reveals the dreams, aspirations and frustrations of adolescence and questions gender and identity in Britain today

"Writing for me is about survival. I wrote Kaahini because of injustices of gender and sexuality, particularly for Asian women. The duality of the central character is loosely based on me. Society gives us 'girls' roles and boys' roles' and this is oppressive. Identity is more fluid – where is there a choice about who you are?" Maya Chowdhry.

July 2007

Doors; This Life was given to me

Devised by the Red Grit Project

Written by Madani Younis

Directed by Rod Dixon

A modern piece of Absurd Theatre made by and for a new generation. Three strangers are caught in a web spun from the mistaken choices of their past. As each one struggles, the web tightens. Giles teases and manipulates like a cruel puppet-master; Jo hides behind his angry mask; Leah comforts herself in fantasy.

Frederick arrives.

Painful old wounds split open – lies and deceit smother the truth.

Can anyone escape this 21st century hell?

We either change the way we live, or the world in which we live changes us forever.

Fusing symbolism, style and physicality the performance refuses to talk down to its audience by pretending to be film or television, aiming instead to raise expectations of what theatre itself can do.

2008 40th Anniversary Year

***Where's Vietnam?* By Alice Nutter**

Directed by Rod Dixon



Performed by a cast of Red Ladder artists and actors from the Leeds community, *Where's Vietnam?* Is the 40th anniversary production of this Leeds-based company. With a soundtrack of sixties soul and dirty funk, this is a black comedy about love, loyalty and not letting disability stand in the way of extreme violence.

Hungry for revenge, two brothers, Banks and Arthur set off on a road trip that takes them down the M1 and into a world they don't understand. 1968, and the sexual revolution is stuck in a traffic jam just outside Leeds but Banks and Arthur are about to see beyond the city's narrow perimeters.

A fan of the Kray twins, Banks proudly models himself on Reggie Kray and pushes his gentle giant of a brother into the subservient role of Ronnie. As they hitch across country they encounter a shifting cast of characters, who offer them everything from fish paste sandwiches to balloon based sex. A new world unfolds before them, a world where the young demonstrate and get laid; the last thing Banks wants to do is give peace a chance.

2008 UK Tour Sept – Dec

Forgotten Things

Written by Emma Adams

Directed by Rod Dixon



A dark comic play designed for cross-generational audiences, fusing puppetry and surreal style.

16 year old Toby believes he's a failure. He's losing the will to live.....

His parents are frightened. They don't want to lose their baby.....

Then there's Grandma Lilly - she's just losing her mind having forgotten 'something important' Lilly interrupts Toby to lead him into a mystery of half memories and family secrets. Finding answers might just save both their lives...

2008 Book Published

***Look Back At Anger: Agit Prop Theatre in Britain*” by Swati Pal**

A new book that looks at Red Ladder Theatre Company's extraordinary 40 year history was published by Swati Pal, an academic from Delhi University. Available from Amazon books.

Entitled “*Look Back At Anger: Agit Prop Theatre in Britain*” the book takes an in-depth look at Red Ladder's agit prop beginnings, its progress through the 70s, 80s and 90s, and its current status as one of the country's most enduring theatre companies.

In 1968, a large number of agit prop theatre companies mushroomed in Britain, the Agit Prop Street Players who later renamed themselves as Red Ladder, was one among many. With time other theatre companies surrendered to and became part of theatre history. Not so Red Ladder. It has survived and it is now time for a reassessment. Is agit prop theatre dead or alive? How does such theatrical practice contribute to society/community? These are only some of the questions the book explores. It looks back at all the anger that led to the emergence of Red Ladder and how it surged ahead as a leading theatre company in the multicultural Britain of today. The book's distinctiveness lies in the textual analysis of the plays and the investigative nature of the research undertaken. To anyone interested in theatre history, past and presently in the making, to fellow academics, students, artists, practitioners, youth workers, young people, community activists and the general public, this book will be insightful.

Today Red Ladder is recognised as one of Britain's leading national touring company's and activity for 2009 includes: a Red Grit Actor Training Project culminating in performances at the Carriageworks Theatre, Leeds; a national tour of *Forgotten Things* by Emma Adams and a radical Christmas show with anarchist pop group, Chumbawumba.

Autumn 2009- Edinburgh & UK Tour

***Forgotten Things* by Emma Adams**

Redirected by: John Barber

A dark comic play about finding hope...and what happens when it's taken away. This acclaimed cross-generational story fuses puppetry, innovative theatre and surreal style.

***"Thinking theatre...."* The Stage**

Winter 2009

Riot, Rebellion and Bloody Insurrection – a musical comedy

By Dom Grace & Boff Whalley

Directed By: Rod Dixon



Riot, Rebellion and Bloody Insurrection - a musical comedy by Dom Grace & Boff Whalley Tour Dec 2009 - Jan 2010 Going back to our political roots Red Ladder collaborated with Chumbawamba on this new play. A riotous comedy set in Northern industrial Britain with a mix of theatre, music, banter and action for an audience looking for a world beyond TV Talent Contests and multi-millionaires taking multi-million pound pensions in this winter of recession.

December 1825. England is in the grip of a harsh winter, its army is fighting colonial battles abroad, and hunger and poverty are rife. Thousands are thrown out of work while the landed, property-owning few become indecently rich. Sound familiar? See the story of sassy Luddite rebel Elsie Proud as she wages war against the ruthless rags-to-riches Boss Ernest Hardgristle and career climbing politician, Robert Catchpenny. Experience a riotous mix of theatre and music, banter and action, this show is for an audience looking for a world beyond TV Talent Contests and multi-millionaires taking multi-million pound pensions in this winter of recession.

Come and have a laugh as Red Ladder and Chumbawamba get together to sing, dance, cajole, poke fun and point fingers, all against a backdrop of our nation's radical past.

***"Red Ladderreaching parts other companies don't, won't or can't."* David Edgar - The Guardian**

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