

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jenny Sealey MBE appointed joint Artistic Director for the 2012 Paralympic Games

Graeae is thrilled to share the news that Jenny Sealey, our Artistic Director, has been appointed co-Artistic Director of the Paralympic Games Opening Ceremony, alongside Bradley Hemmings, the celebrated Artistic Director of Greenwich+Docklands International Festival.



This inspired combination guarantees a magnificent event for audiences the world over, fusing Jenny's passion for pioneering accessibility with Bradley's renowned innovation in spatial animation.

The London Organising Committee of the **Olympic Games** and **Paralympic Games** (LOCOG) made the announcement at the Greenwich+Docklands International Festival, against the backdrop of Graeae's set for its new touring show *The Iron Man*.

These latest appointments now complete the selection of artistic directors for the London 2012 Ceremonies, as Jenny and Bradley join **Danny Boyle**, Artistic Director of the London 2012 Olympic Opening Ceremony, and **Kim Gavin**, Artistic Director of both the Olympic and Paralympic Closing Ceremonies.

Jenny is both delighted and excited to accept the position as *'a once in a lifetime opportunity to work collaboratively with leading Deaf, disabled and non-disabled artists to create a unique and unforgettable spectacle enjoyed by millions across the globe.'*

Spanning 20 years' working with Deaf and disabled artists, Jenny's entire career has been dedicated to theatre and performance that pushes beyond what seems ordinarily possible. Passionate in her pursuit of a new dramatic language, Jenny pioneers the 'aesthetics of access' (integrating sign language and audio description, diverse physicality and differing voices) to create experiences that excite all the senses for the widest audiences.

Together, Jenny and Bradley have championed the development of a new and emerging body of outdoor work by Deaf and disabled artists throughout the UK and beyond. Graeae's current production *The Iron Man*, based on the story by Ted Hughes, has its London premiere this week at Greenwich+Docklands International Festival, where previous productions *Against the Tide* and *The Garden* also featured in 2009 and 2010.

With artistic direction from Jenny and Bradley, the opening ceremony for the 2012 Paralympic Games promises to be exceptional.

"I am extremely excited for Jenny and for Graeae. The appointment is testament to Jenny's phenomenal talent and hard work over the past 14 years. It is recognition of both the strong vision of the company and the commitment of the Graeae team. To have Jenny, and by extension the Graeae ethos, acknowledged by the largest sporting and cultural event on the planet is fantastic."

Dawn Langley - Chair, Graeae

"We've worked with and invested in Jenny and Bradley for many years and I can't think of a better team to lead the artistic direction of the Paralympic Opening Ceremony. Their work, both independently and collectively, is artistically thrilling and engaging, pushing boundaries and celebrating diverse practice and influences. In 2012 they will now reach the biggest audience imaginable on the global stage. We wish them every success."

Moira Sinclair, London Executive Director, Arts Council England

"Bradley and Jenny are the perfect team to lead the artistic direction of the Opening Ceremony of the London 2012 Paralympic Games. Both are directors with great experience of creating brilliant live shows and events together. They are respected in the arts world for bringing disabled and non-disabled performers together to create spectacular shows. With just over one year to go, I'm confident that the London 2012 ceremonies are in good hands."

Sebastian Coe, LOCOG Chair

"I feel both excited and privileged to have the chance to work with artists and Paralympians on a Ceremony which, perhaps uniquely, has the power to transform perceptions."

Bradley Hemmings - Artistic Director for the Greenwich+Docklands International Festival

"I am thrilled and proud that these two London-based producers are to helm the Paralympic Games Opening Ceremony. We want disabled artists to be right at the heart of the cultural celebrations which will run alongside the sporting action in 2012 and having worked with Bradley and Jenny on events like Liberty I know they will produce an event that is as surprising as it is category defying."

Boris Johnson - Mayor of London

Notes to editor:

About Graeae

Graeae is a force for change in world-class theatre - breaking down barriers, challenging preconceptions and boldly placing Deaf and disabled artists centre stage.



Artistically led by Jenny Sealey, Graeae's signature characteristic is the compelling creative integration of sign language and audio description, which engages both disabled and non-disabled audiences. Championing accessibility and providing a platform for new generations of artists, Graeae leads the way in pioneering, trail-blazing theatre.

The original disabled-led theatre company, Graeae remains firmly rooted at the forefront of its field in the UK, with the valuable patronage of many high profile artists, directors and actors, including Sir Peter Blake, Jenny Agutter and Richard Wilson.

The company delivers extensive training programmes and opportunities for aspiring and established actors, directors and writers. A recognised authority in accessible aesthetics, Graeae works closely with client organisations to inspire and lead best practice - creating, supporting and advising on the development of accessible environments for all theatre lovers, everywhere.

Artistic vision

Graeae is a force for change, creating world-class theatre which explores new territory and theatrical genres, from contemporary classics to musicals to outdoor circus involving sway poles and giant puppets



Graeae champions the inclusion of deaf and disabled people in the arts through...

- intensive actor and writer training initiatives
- providing access support for all creative and learning situations
- empowering young disabled artists to pursue a career in the arts through workshops led by inspiring role models
- providing training models for the creative sector, from inclusive practice for drama schools to accessible marketing for theatre venues

Jenny - short biography

Jenny Sealey has been Artistic Director of Graeae since 1997. Recent productions for the company include *Reasons to be Cheerful* by Paul Sirett and *Signs of a Star Shaped Diva* by Nona Sheppard (2010/Stratford East and extensive tour); *Whiter Than Snow* by Mike Kenny (2009/Unicorn Theatre and tour); *Blasted* by Sarah Kane; *Flower Girls* by Richard Cameron (co-production with the New Wolsey, Ipswich) and *Static* by Dan Rebellato with Suspect Culture.

Over the last four years Jenny has led the company into outdoor performance in collaboration with Greenwich+Docklands International Festival, Circus Space and Strange Fruit, the Australian sway pole company. *The Iron Man* is the latest outdoor venture using giant puppets for the first time in the company's history. Jenny initiated the *Rhinestone Rollers*, and she now directs the premier power-wheelchair dancing troupe in *Wheels on Broadway*.

Jenny was awarded the MBE in January 2009 for services to disability arts.

Greenwich+Docklands International Festival



Bradley Hemmings is the Artistic Director of Greenwich+Docklands International Festival (GDIF), an organisation with a national and international reputation for creating extraordinary outdoor arts events. Working with a wide range of artists, he has broken new ground in outdoor performance, creating and commissioning new

outdoor work reflecting contemporary Britain. He has been at the forefront of the development of a new and emerging body of outdoor work by Deaf and disabled artists, including Graeae's *The Iron Man* based on the story by Ted Hughes and directed by Jenny Sealey, with whom he has a long-term creative partnership. Bradley also curates and produces Liberty, London's annual disability arts festival for the Mayor of London.

For further information about the Opening Ceremony of the Paralympic Games please contact the **LOCOG London 2012 Press Office** on:

Tel: +44 (0)203 2012 100 or visit the website at **www.london2012.com**

www.graeae.org

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