

UP NORTH

By Johnny Wright

MAYA Productions in association
with LittleMighty presents

TOUR PACK

Co-Produced with Harrogate Theatre





“Booms with passion and energy...It’s not a voice I’ve really heard before. And it’s 100% true to its original voice.”

Nina Steiger, Associate Director, Soho Theatre, now senior dramaturg at National Theatre



IS THERE ANY FOOTAGE?

Yes! There’s some footage from the scratch here:
<https://vimeo.com/136112647>

FIND US ONLINE:

mayaproductions.co.uk
@Mayatheatre
/mayaproductionslondon/

What’s the show about?

Up North is a potent hip-hop journey through friendship, the North/South divide and black male identity.

A struggling Yorkshire rap group quit their jobs and move to London to follow their dreams. With a complex about his light complexion, XYM has always felt he isn’t fully accepted by other black people. Kofi dreams of being a modern day black revolutionary. Yorkie is white, not interested in race, and wants class revolution.

When a record label offers some of the group a chance in a lifetime, their friendship faces its toughest challenge yet. Created by writer and hip-hop artist Jonny Wright (Talawa, Film 4), the show smashes together an urgent theatricality with hip-hop storytelling to tell a powerful story of contemporary Britain.

How was the show developed?

The play was originally created when writer Jonny Wright was a member of the Soho Young Writers Core Group.

It was then developed through a week’s residency at Soho Theatre, working with the director, actors and a music producer. This resulted in a rehearsed reading of the play to over 60 industry professionals and guests.

From here, Harrogate Theatre came on board as co-producers.

In March 2016, we presented extracts at the BEAM Mercury Musical Showcase to an audience of promoters, who said they found it **‘refreshing’, ‘full of energy and attitude’, ‘speaking directly to the audience with strong, engaging performances’** and **‘very funny’**.

We will premiere the piece in March 2018 at Harrogate Theatre, before heading out on tour. The show is available for touring from 12 March 2018.

“We have so few musical theatre projects that are exploring these sort of contemporary music territories, this project has potential to speak to a wide audience, many of whom may feel alienated from so much theatre.”

James Hadley, Arts Council England / Musical Theatre Network

What about wraparound activity?

The play is supported by a range of supporting outreach activity. Do get in touch if you have specific ideas about what could work in your venue.

POST-SHOW DISCUSSION

Each performance can be accompanied by a post-show discussion with the cast and writer/rapper Jonny Wright.

How do rap and playwriting connect? Where do the worlds of hip hop and musical theatre come together or collide? How can we create a piece of theatre that has the buzz of going to a gig but also tells an incredible theatrical story?

WORKSHOP: ROLE MODELS, IDENTITY AND HIP HOP

Aimed at young people (including students and youth theatre members), this two-three hour workshop is led by writer/rapper/actor Jonny Wright and other members of the Up North team. Following the themes of the play, it helps participants explore identity, roots and role models. Through theatre, freestyle performance and a lyric writing session participants will be invited to challenge stereotypes and find inspiration about how to be comfortable in their own skin.

Who is the show for?

Up North offers a unique spin on contemporary musical theatre. It has a wide appeal to different audiences, many of whom may not be regular theatre attenders. It has a strong appeal for venues who want to introduce their audiences to great new work by remarkable BAME artists. It will attract BAME audiences keen to see identifiable characters represented on stage, as well as introducing core audiences to new forms and voices.

OTHER KEY AUDIENCES INCLUDE:

Spoken word audiences, who will appreciate the piece's nuanced use of language and poetry.

Musicians and music fans, who will identify with the show's story of trying to make it in a tough and competitive industry.

Students in Higher and Further Education, who are thinking about what they want to achieve in life and are engaged with issues of identity.

People involved in local political and social action and discussion groups.

Due to some mature content the show is suitable for anyone aged 13+.



"I am over 60, and a complete Hip Hop virgin...I came out feeling totally surprised that I enjoyed the production so much. The story about identity and friendship is gritty and sentimental without being mawkish."

Scratch performance audience member



“I felt it had a universal message of staying true to who you are, so it’s not just for Hip Hop fans”

Scratch performance audience member

Who are MAYA productions?

Maya make diverse theatre to create change: socially, politically and culturally.

Our vision is of a world where people of all ages, abilities, culture and classes have the opportunity to experience theatre.

We want to change what takes place on our stages and screens. We find stories that don’t often get told and we look for new ways of telling them. We invite a wide range of people to get involved with the arts. We value a global world and believe connections across borders are important.

Our work includes producing and touring new work, mentoring and supporting artists and creating participation projects that cross and combine art forms. We do this through collaboration, with artists, young people, community organisations, academics and cultural leaders.

COMPANY BACKGROUND:

Maya Productions was founded in 1994, by Sita Ramamurthy and Christopher Preston, immediately leading diversity in theatre by touring the ground breaking *Over Hear* by Neil Biswas with an inclusive cast of ethnically diverse and deaf actors.

Maya champions diverse practitioners, like playwright Michael McMillan and performer Stacy Makeshi and has toured plays to over 30 venues nationally. Until 2009, Maya was vital to the cultural life of Hackney, producing the *Write to Ignite*, Hackney Word Festival (audiences of 4,000 annually, and delivering the *Outwrite* programme (developing playwriting and other skills for 100s of young people). Work included commissioning acclaimed writer Michael Rosen to create new choral piece Hackney Streets.

The company is now led by Artistic Director **Suzanne Gorman**. Her production *Babel Junction* brought together an eclectic mix of five writers from different faith and cultural backgrounds to collaborate on creating one play. Recent achievements include *Superheroes: South of the River*, a project that uses martial arts, comic book storytelling and theatre to explore Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Role Models. It has proven to inspire, and benefit over 200 young refugees and Londoners. *Barefoot Gen* by Keiji Nakazawa that brought older people, school children and Rose Bruford College students together to explore a World War 2 story of a Japanese pacifist family living in Hiroshima.

Who's involved?

Jonny Wright | Writer/Performer

Jonny is a writer, actor and rapper from Yorkshire. He has had commissions from Talawa, Immediate Theatre and Film4. He was selected for B3 Media's Talent Lab, has worked with Mike Leigh, and starred in his own short play, *Swallow The Leader*, at the Bush Theatre. Under his hip-hop name of XYM, aka. 'The Yorkshire Rapper', he has released 6 albums, had radio play on BBC Radio 1Xtra's *Suspect Packages* show, and was featured artist on *I Am Hip-Hop's* October 2014 radio show.

WINNER | BBC 'All Mixed Up' sitcom competition, The Brian Glover short film award

SHORTLISTED | The Alfred Fagon Award, The Soho Theatre's Westminster Prize, The Verity Bargate Award

Suzanne Gorman | Director

Suzanne is Artistic Director of Maya and has a track record in pioneering theatre, which includes: *Tales of the Harrow Road* (Soho Theatre), *Moonwalking in Chinatown* (Soho Theatre, site specific production), *Babel Junction* (Maya Productions) and *Superheroes: South of the River* (Maya Productions). She has worked for theatres across the UK including Soho Theatre, Sheffield Theatres, Immediate Theatre, Derby Live, Leicester Haymarket, Shared Experience, Kali Theatre and Theatre Royal Stratford East.

Supreme Frost | Music Producer

Supreme was born in Rostock in East Germany and worked with a variety of artists from North Germany. He produced the album *Sound fur Umfeld* by Inspeckta and made 6 tracks with XYM for an upcoming graffiti video called 'Lerm'. He is the live DJ for Boombap Clik, the Pafflakz and Mashood.

LittleMighty | Producer

LittleMighty work with remarkable artists to make brilliant theatre happen. Recent work includes *Unfolding Theatre's Putting the Band Back Together* ("Fantastic – funny, big-hearted, moving and truthful" - The Guardian) and *Testament's Blake Remixed*, co-produced with West Yorkshire Playhouse ("An entertaining fusion of hip hop, rap and beatboxing that thrusts the Blake mythology into the 21st Century" -The Stage). Other successes include *Move to Stand's Fat Man* ("Full of wounded heart, this is a show that lingers in the mind" – Lyn Gardner, the Guardian; VAULT Festival Pick of the Year Award).



"Triumphant proof that small-scale need not mean limited ambition."

The Guardian on 'The Honey Man'



What about the technical requirements?

The show is suitable for larger studios and mid-scale spaces, seating between 150 and 450 people. Full technical specification will be made available in advance of the tour.

Company:

5 performers, with 6 on the road. Venue tech support required.

Minimum playing space:

6m wide x 5m deep

Get-in:

From 10am on day of performance.

Get-out:

1 hour following performance.

Sound:

Please provide PA suitable for venue.

Lighting:

Full design available in advance of tour. Pre-rig if available.

Please note that the tour of Up North is subject to a successful application to Arts Council England.

HOW DO I BOOK?

If you are interested in bringing Up North to your venue please get in touch with Dick Bonham to discuss dates and a financial package:

e. dick@littlemighty.co.uk

t. 07956 573 679

www.littlemighty.co.uk

MAYA
MAYA PRODUCTIONS

EST. 2010
LITTLE MIGHTY
- FOSTERING THEATRE - SUPPORT -