
The Egg announces national tour of *JOSEPHINE*, a new play for young audiences about 20th century icon Josephine Baker

The Egg Theatre (Bath) has teamed up with Holm Theatre (Wales and South West) to commission and tour *Josephine*, a brand new play about the iconic entertainer, spy and civil rights activist, Josephine Baker. The tour, which opens at the MAC Birmingham on Thursday 30th September, is set to run until April 2022 visiting more than 25 venues across England and Wales, including co-producers **The Egg**, **Oxford Playhouse** and **Wales Millennium Centre** and more than 15 schools.

Using original music, dancing from the Harlem Renaissance and a hatful of historical figures, *Josephine* follows one woman's incredible journey from the oppressive slums of St Louis to the bright lights of Paris and beyond.

Performer, campaigner, spy and mother to the multicultural "Rainbow Tribe", Josephine Baker broke the mould during her lifetime to become a 20th century icon. But almost 50 years after her death, Café Josephine, a down-at-heel New York eatery dedicated to her memory, faces closure. Nobody remembers Josephine, who she was or what she did. Co-owners Jack and Marie and former Rainbow Tribe members are determined to turn the business around but have wildly different opinions on how to do it. That is until a knock at the door, an unexpected visitor and a tumble back through their family history that some would prefer forgotten...

Playwrights **Leona Allen** and **Jesse Briton** commented: "When we stumbled across the story of Josephine Baker, we were amazed by two things: how could she have done so much and how could we not have heard of her? We wrote *Josephine* to answer those questions and inspire a whole new generation to reimagine their relationship with the past."

Born in St Louis, Missouri in 1906, **Josephine Baker** performed in the chorus line in New York before sailing to Paris in 1925 where she found fame and won legions of admirers including Ernest Hemingway and Pablo Picasso. In 1927 Baker was the first Black woman to star in a major motion picture. In 1937 she became a French national, raising her 12 internationally adopted children dubbed the "Rainbow Tribe" in France. She aided the French Resistance during WWII for which she was awarded the Croix de Guerre, the Rosette de la Résistance and the highest French order of merit, the Chevalier of the Légion d'honneur by General Charles de Gaulle. In 1963 she spoke at the historic March on Washington alongside Martin Luther King. This November, Josephine Baker will become the first Black woman to be entered into France's hallowed Panthéon mausoleum, a memorial in Paris for great national figures in French history from the world of politics, culture and science.

In *Josephine*, writers Leona Allen and Jesse Briton have embraced all aspects of Josephine Baker's extraordinary and at times controversial life in a bid to artistically address anti-racism and diversity training in schools.

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Josephine is directed by Holm Theatre's **Jesse Briton**, with music composed by **Nadine and Simon Lee** (Wise Children), choreography by **Ingrid MacKinnon** and design by **Debbie Duru**. With additional support from ACE and Innovate UK, the live production comes with a brand new digital education innovation: **The Learning Portal**.

Kate Cross, Director of The Egg, said: "The Egg's passion is to get live theatre in front of as many children as possible. Schools are the gateway but, with the kind of pressure they have faced in recent years, we set out to provide as much support as we could for teachers. After a 16 month production period, The Learning Portal is to Teacher Resource Packs what Smart Phones were to tin cans on a string! We have spent lockdown producing this learning resource and are grateful to the variety of creative brains we have consulted along the way."

The Learning Portal is a classroom-based, teacher-led, film-based, learning asset. Delivered in spoken English and sign supported English, with a choice of English or Welsh captions, this free resource is available to any school that sees the live performance. Classes of 8 to 15 year olds can chose their own pathway and pick alternative endings as they travel through the multiple lives of Josephine Baker and the making of the stage production.

With a stylised graphic look, The Learning Portal contains 27 films, 18 activity slides, 11 philosophical musings and 13 lesson plans for KS2 and 13 for KS3 Drama. A class can chose to learn about the Harlem Renaissance, Rent Parties, Paris 1920, Josephine's iconic banana skirt, the French Resistance, The Rainbow Tribe, the March on Washington, how to make a play about an historical figure and a lot more.

Josephine is a co-production by The Egg Bath, Wales Millennium Centre and Oxford Playhouse

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Spring 2022 - Venue Tour Dates:

The Egg, Wales Millennium Centre and Oxford Playhouse's co-production of Holm Theatre's *Josephine*

**Written by Leona Allen and Jesse Briton, Directed by Jesse Briton, Designed by Debbie Duru
Musical Director Nadine Lee, Movement Director & Choreographer Ingrid Mackinnon**

29-30 Jan	Lyric Hammersmith
1 Feb	Redmaids School, Bristol
2 Feb	A Cardiff School
3 Feb	Newport Live
4 Feb	Bedales School, Petersfield
5 Feb	Chats Palace, London
8-10 Feb	Spark Arts, Leicester
12-13 Feb	Curve, Leicester
15 Feb	Luton – Full House Theatre
16 Feb	Southbank Centre, London
18 Feb	The Citadel, St. Helens
19 Feb	Dukes, Lancaster
22 Feb	Ffwrnes, Llanelli

24 Feb	Lighthouse Poole
28 Feb	Torquay School
1 March	Brewhouse Taunton
2-5 March	Polka Theatre
7-10 March	Yate Library
11-12 March	Half Moon Theatre, London
16 March	Sheffield Theatres
18 March	Rugby School
19 March	Z Arts, Manchester
22 March	Holyhead
24 March	Take Art Somerset, Croscombe
27 March	Take Art, Norton Sub Hamdon

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