

LEEDS ARTS CENTRE PRESENTS...

# A CHRISTMAS CAROL



*Presenting Charles Dickens'  
classic throughout West Yorkshire  
communities this Festive season*

## SHOW PROGRAMME

Recommended Donation £2

# A CHRISTMAS CAROL

by Charles Dickens

Adapted for the stage by Spike Marshall

## Cast in Order of Appearance

**Aiman Salehuddin** as Jacob Marley

**Paul Comaish** as The Lighthouse Keeper/Ensemble

**Jennifer Michel** as Martha Cratchit/The Sailor/Ensemble

**Lindsay Leng** as Matilda/The Musician/Ensemble

**Camilla Asher** as Clara/Tiny Tim/Ensemble

**Ibrahim Knight** as Ebenezer Scrooge

**Simon Henson** as Bob Cratchit/Christopher

**Melissa Fenton** as Amelia the Caroler

**Matt Haines** as Fred

**Michelle Whitaker** as Mrs Cratchit

**Jay Lockwood** as Ghost of Christmas Past

**Chelsea Issott** as Fan

**Laura Marshall** as Belle/Belinda Cratchit

**Maya Delayahu** as Ghost of Christmas Present

**Jack Pickup** as Ghost of Want/Peter Cratchit/The Miner

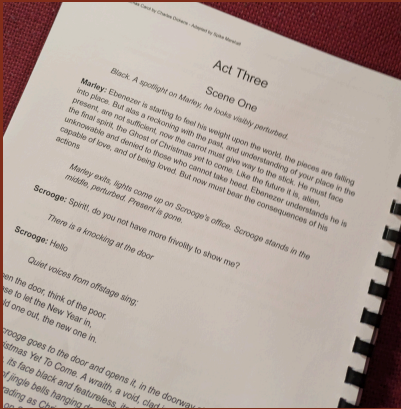
**Barry Green** as Ghost of Ignorance/John

On Thursday 11 December the role of Martha Cratchit/The Sailor/Ensemble will be played by **Chelsea Issott**





# Notes on Adaptation



Throw a stone in Leeds right now and you'll likely hit a production of *A Christmas Carol*. The text is so foundational, so ingrained in our psyche, that it feels less like a novel and more like folklore. So, why adapt it again? Why mount it amongst so many illustrious peers? Primarily, because Dickens is a phenomenal storyteller, and this structure begs to be played with.

I was drawn to this adaptation by an absolute love of the story. From watching dozens of film adaptations to devouring the novel as a child, this tale was always special to me

My intent was to create a psychological underpinning to Scrooge's journey, to move beyond the distanced fable and focus on the redemption of a man not so different from you or me. To make his redemption feel earned and natural.

I was fascinated by the modern rise of 'influencers' who prey on young men lacking direction, building cargo cults of masculinity that preach cruelty as a necessity for survival. I wanted to explore how a person is convinced that the only way to survive is to become a 'manufactured ogre'. That fear resonated with me, how can you not be fearful of a world where resources are tight and the wolves are never far from the door?

I also wanted to draw from the novel Scrooge's connection with the common person. In the novel *Present* transports Scrooge across the country to see Christmas being celebrated in numerous homes, in this adaptation that action is transposed to a bustling street, where Scrooge gets to meet Miners, Carolers, Musicians, Sailors, Lighthouse Keepers and understand what makes the season so special.

I hope this adaptation doesn't beat you over the head with parallels, nor with the kinship this autistic author feels with the title character, a man often baffled by the secret rules of play and social gaiety. Instead, I hope it offers understanding for lost men, showing that while the world is hard, we need not harden our hearts to survive it.

If that sounds heavy, be assured: this is not a gritty, joyless take. We have mirth, horror, surprises, and songs in abundance. This show is meant to be enjoyed, and I hope you, my dear audience, enjoy it with a full heart and wide smiles.



Spike



First established in 1945, Leeds Arts Centre (LAC) originally comprised Fine Arts, Musical, Literary, Film and Children's Theatre groups based at the Civic Theatre, (now Leeds City Museum). They moved to their new home at the Carriageworks in 2005.

A thriving community group, LAC encourages engagement and interest in the arts, both onstage, backstage, socially and creatively, with new writers. Presenting four productions a year at the Carriageworks, LAC seeks to maintain a high standard of production with a wide range of ways to get involved. Holding regular socials and play readings in Leeds, new members are always welcome.

LAC is a registered charity and nonprofit making organization. Our members range in age from 18 to 80+. If you are interested in joining please speak to a member of the team or visit [www.leedsartscentre.org.uk](http://www.leedsartscentre.org.uk) for more information.



LAC is a proud member of Leeds Community Arts Network (Leeds CAN). Leeds CAN comprises theatre, musical theatre, youth theatre and other arts societies working closely with Leeds City Council and the Carriageworks, (where most performances take place), to produce a varied programme. For more information visit: [leedscan.org.uk](http://leedscan.org.uk)



Whether you are staging a musical, an opera, a play, a concert or a pantomime, as the UK's leading amateur theatre membership organisation, NODA is here for every show, every rehearsal, every curtain call – here for our members every step of the way.

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For every stage

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# Reflections on Direction

To paraphrase our miser, touring shows are “not in our line.” Still, I was determined to create a show that was as accessible as possible. This would not just be with affordable Pay What You Can tickets, but also by bringing the performance into the heart of the community.

I adapted quickly to present the show to different communities, aiming for a "Pay What You Can" experience without financial strain. The uniqueness of this production comes from both the remarkable cast and the talented creative team behind the scenes.

In this programme, I want to recognize the dedication that brought this show to not just ONE but FOUR stages throughout West Yorkshire. To start, here's a reflection from Tash, the Assistant Director, my right hand. She led workshops and scene work while I managed lights, projections, shadow puppets, and other technical aspects!

"Assistant directing this show has by no means been a small feat. Having to boss around people that I haven't met before when I'm probably the youngest was strange to get used to! I've loved every second of taking a step back from on-stage work and being able to get into the nitty gritty of each character. I've found myself thinking about and planning bits of this show in most of my waking moments (which I'm sure my boss is thrilled about lol).

My confidence has skyrocketed with Spike giving me the ability to play around with scenes and really cut my teeth on directing. I'm honestly thinking of sticking with mainly directing, which says a lot when I have over 6 years of acting experience! The cast and crew have been an absolute delight to get to know, and it's been brilliant immersing myself in Theatre again!"



This is Tash's first foray into LAC shows, and it definitely won't be her last! As a recent graduate specialising in Theatre and Literature, she's had no shortage of theatrical experience – being the Vice-President of her uni's theatre society, she's done countless acting in shows, but has only shadow directed one show before.

This is Spike's hat trick with LAC, pulling off his third show in three years! Last year, Treadlight Theatre took a leap of faith with his debut playscript, and this year, they teamed up again to unleash Beowulf onto the stage. But wait, there's more! Spike also writes and produces the Wryter's Comedy Hour radio sketch show at Chapel FM.



# Reflections from Scrooge



There is a considerable cast and crew, and everyone brings something to the table. It was really great to work as part of such a diverse team. Spike is such an amazing director: generous . I think that's an important quality when you're collaborating on something like this, it is conducive to the creative temperament. It allows you the space to explore, and to find the character.

I'm a great believer in discovery , and allowing that process to happen, and I think ultimately it is the characters who are revealing things to us about ourselves, rather than the other way around!

I feel there is something universal about Scrooge. The regret, the fear. That's what he is, after all! A bundle of fear and anxiety and lost opportunities. How many of us close ourselves off to potential opportunities and relationships for that same reason? And with the cost of living , we've all had to scrimp and save at times! Yes of course Scrooge doesn't have to do that, and that's the point, but the incentive which underlies it is the same.

He's afraid. I think if you can find that emotional core of a character, the heartbeat , that's all that matters. I think perhaps the biggest challenge was wallowing in Scrooge's misery, and boy is there a lot of it! The scenes with Belle really broke my heart! I've really gotten to know Scrooge over the weeks and months. He sort of follows me around everywhere now, even into the gas station at times! I can't seem to shake him!

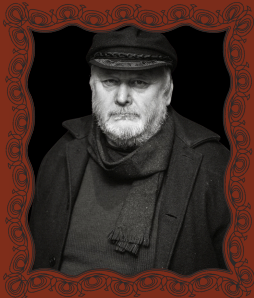
*Ibrahim Knight*



# Cast in Order of Appearance

**Aiman Salehuddin** as Marley

Prior to this production, Aiman had engaged in amateur theatre with the Hull University drama society. On a professional level, he has built and designed lighting, props, and set pieces for a pantomime company.



**Paul Comaish** as Lighthouse Keeper/Ensemble

This is Paul's second production with LAC. He has acted in various plays at the Civic Theatre, such as *The Fifteen Streets* and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, and has directed favourites like *Stags and Hens* and *The Playboy of the Western World*.

**Jennifer Michel** as Martha Cratchit/Sailor/Ensemble

A new member of LAC, Jennifer is returning to the stage for the first time since university. A lover of theatre and musicals, she's excited to swap her daytime spreadsheets for a chance to get her creative juices flowing on stage.



**Lindsay Leng** as Matilda/Musician/Ensemble

Lindsay has been incredibly fortunate to have performed on stage, from portraying Fairies and Princes in pantomimes to singing and dancing in numerous delightful musicals. Lindsay is thrilled to join LAC and has found the team to be very welcoming

**Camilla Asher** as Clara/Tiny Tim/Ensemble

In her 15 years with LAC Camilla has worked both on and off stage, most recently playing Sybil in *Daisy Pulls It Off* and directing last autumn's award winning show, a double bill we titled "A Night of Crime Theatre". Camilla started Treadlight Theatre last year, they have put on Two of Spike's plays.

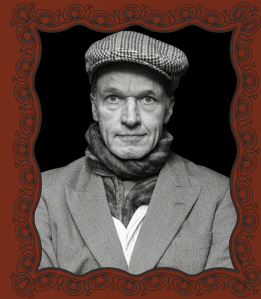


# Cast in Order of Appearance

## **Simon Henson** as Bob Cratchit/Christopher

This is Simon's second production for Spike and Bob Cratchit is the polar opposite of Harry Wade in Hangmen, who was a tough talking landlord with a dark past. Bob couldn't be nicer, too nice for his own good, unfortunately!

Simon is a gifted comic and plys his trade as part of the Wryter's Comedy Hour alongside Spike and a few other members of the cast!



## **Ibrahim Knight** as Ebenezer Scrooge

Ibrahim Knight is an actor, best known for his work on *The Strangers' Case*, which won at the Leeds International Film Festival in 2019. In his spare time, he enjoys writing fiction, and is planning on sharing some of this with the public for the first time very soon. His appearance in *A Christmas Carol* will be his debut on the stage.

## **Melissa Fenton** as Amelia The Caroler

Melissa joined LAC a year ago and has been involved in several productions, most recently in *The Actor's Nightmare*, where she spent half the play in a bin. She has really enjoyed rehearsing alongside the very talented Ibrahim, as Scrooge, and trying her best to ruffle his feathers.



## **Matt Haines** as Fred

Matt joined LAC in Summer of 2025 and started in the workshop with set building, before moving onto Props, and now for the first time acting (with LAC) in *A Christmas Carol*. He has enjoyed attending rehearsals (especially when they've been at pubs around Leeds).

## **Michelle Whitaker** as Mrs Cratchit

This is Michelle's first production with LAC, which she has thoroughly enjoyed. Exploring Mrs. Cratchit's character has been a joyful experience, and she finds the Cratchit scenes fun to perform. Michelle feels privileged to be part of this timeless Dickens adaptation, having watched Leonard Rossiter as Scrooge at Grand Theatre as a child. After completing a Theatre Studies degree and pausing their career to raise a family, she is now excited to return to theatre as her children grow older, with LAC providing a wonderful journey back.





# Cast in Order of Appearance

## **Jay Lockwood** as Ghost of Christmas Past

Jay is fairly new to acting, having been a member of LAC for around two years in various backstage roles such as costumes and props. They have very much enjoyed getting a chance to put on a fancy outfit and skulk menacingly on stage.



## **Laura Marshall** as Belle/Belinda Cratchit

Laura has been a member of LAC for over 2 years and has taken on various backstage and on stage roles. The only thing Laura loves more than theatre, possibly even her friends and family, is Christmas. So was of course absolutely thrilled to be a part of this wonderful production.



## **Maya Delayahu** as Ghost of Christmas Present

Maya is a new member; this is her first production with LAC! An avid theatre goer and performer, she has much dram experience around the country, particularly loving performing Shakespeare, or working backstage in costumes. Maya is excited to play the role of Christmas Present, the joy and energy comes naturally to her, and is really looking forward to this production.



## **Jack Pickup** as Ghost of Want/Peter Cratchit/Miner

Jack has been a LAC member since July of this year. They have been involved in four green room productions as part of the prop team, but this is their first time acting in a production. They are overjoyed to be playing three characters in it, and it's for one of their favourite stories



## **Barry Green** as Ghost of Ignorance/John

Baz is a veteran of the LAC family having appeared in numerous productions spanning many years. His most recent plays include Hangmen and previous to that A Midsummer Night's Dream.

# The Ghosts

## Jacob Marley



The nature of adapting a novel means that often you're desperately in need of a narrator. The greatest adaptation of *A Christmas Carol* expertly deploys Gonzo The Great as Charles Dickens himself. So what of this show? Well, this show uses none other than Jacob Marley as its narrator, framing the entire evening as his desperate mission to save his friend. A silver tongued devil, using his charm for one singular act of good.

Marley in this show is a playful presence, orchestrating things with an impish glee. In my mind, Scrooge was the terse, analytical force. Marley, conversely, was the the mouthpiece; the one who conned, cajoled, and connived people to sign up to their terms. Having repented in the afterlife, that side of Marley is diminished but still present in how he commands a room

## Ghost of Christmas Past

We are unapologetically pro-Ghost in this production, but I wanted the hauntings to feel extracted from Scrooge's own psyche. As a solitary child, Scrooge found comfort in books; it makes perfect sense that his mind would conjure this 'ancient and pagan' priest, a figure straight out of the folklore he loved.

But this spirit is not just a historic image; they are a mirror. They operate with the dual voices of his parents: the spiteful, belittling nature of his father, and the distanced calculation of a cold mother. They do not merely show the past; they weaponise it.

Jay Reflects on this: *"Past is relentless and at times cruel, drawing out painful memories from Scrooge....breaking down his long held beliefs about his childhood, and about the world. I personally felt a great amount of sympathy for Scrooge, and an instinct to give him a nice cup of cocoa and a blanket, but as Past I had to be merciless.*

*The original character concept included runes painted on the ghost's face and hands. I chose runes that symbolised Scrooge's journey throughout the play, going from a man obsessed with wealth and security, fiercely defensive and with a need that could never quite be satisfied, through his painful but necessary awakening, and into a new sense of joy and connection.*



# Ghost of Christmas Present

If Past is the nagging voice of history, Present is a reflection of the here and now - specifically Scrooge's recent encounters with the Caroler, his nephew Fred, and his clerk. Present represents the thunderous joy of the season, but also the righteous urge to do good. She is the friendliest of Scrooge's spirit companions, yet she possesses the sharpest bite when provoked. Maya truly is the "thunderous sound of the here and now"



Maya, who brings the spirit to life, reflects on this intensity: *"One of the major characterisations of the ghost was her fierce embodiment of any present moment. Whether that is happy, sad, or angry, we had chosen that Present would feel the emotion to the max. This was definitely tricky to maintain, feeling and showing the moods of the scene consistently, even when Present is only listening."*

## The Ghosts of Ignorance and Want

The big change from the novel is the repurposing of Ignorance and Want. Here, they are no longer voiceless children, but are transposed to become the terrifying mouthpieces of The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come.

Dressed like living nutcrackers, they are the sadistic, gleeful, vindictive, vision of the 'rough handed society' that Scrooge is so terrified of. They take the silence of the Future and fill it with the echoes of Scrooge's own cruelty. Jack and Barry taking characters that were already antagonistic and adding a vicious glee that I adored. This is a family friendly show, but when Ignorance and Want show up we do start to channel a little bit more EVIL DEAD 2 than you would expect for A Christmas Carol

Jack, who plays Want, reflects on this darker energy: *"....really confronts Scrooge on what his current values are and what those values will eventually lead to. Want is such a threatening, animated and unsettling character, and with my partner in crime Barry.....we have really tried to push the horror of Scrooge's hauntings."*





# Shadow Puppets

One of the challenges of A CHRISTMAS CAROL is how to present the reminiscences of Scrooge as guided by the Ghost of Christmas Past. Luckily Catherine McRae provided a perfect solution, rendering these reminiscences as dreamy shadow puppets. Catherine talks below about the process



"Like many people my age, my introduction to Dickens - and to puppetry as a whole - was through A Muppet Christmas Carol (1992). So doing a different type of puppetry for this production feels like a full-circle moment.

Shadow puppetry isn't commonly seen in mainstream theatre, which makes it feel special when it appears. It's also an incredibly accessible form of puppetry, which is part of the reason I'm drawn to it. You don't need expensive equipment or materials - light, a screen, and some creative problem-solving can go a long way. For this production, shadow work created a natural visual separation between past and present, making memory something we can see but can't quite touch.

We combined human-scale shadow puppetry with more traditional cut-out forms. Using actors' bodies behind the screen allowed us to achieve fluid, natural movement and striking silhouettes that feel distinctly different from the present-day scenes. Recording these sequences in advance also solved a practical challenge - capturing both audio and visuals together meant the actors could remain fully present in their scenes, moving seamlessly between past and present without technical interruptions.

I hope audiences enjoy discovering what shadow puppetry can bring to Dickens' timeless story."

Catherine McRae is a puppeteer, actress and drama facilitator. This is her first collaboration with Leeds Arts Centre.

Instagram Handle: @cathymcrae

*"Shadowland can be a funny place, everything is sort of skewed in there! Everything is just left of centre, and no one looks you directly in the eye! I am convinced now that all shadows are autistic, elusive, and evasive." - Ibrahim*



*"In shadow acting all the movements have to be very pronounced and exaggerated in a way that feels very unnatural. The experience was a lot of fun however, so big thank you to Catherine for her valuable support throughout the process." - Laura*

# Creative Team: Building The World

Taking a production on the road means leaving behind the luxury of a permanent stage; without the usual technical trappings, our visual storytelling relies entirely on Props, Costume, and Set Dressing. These elements become our production value, and this team has showcased them brilliantly.

Charlotte Riley, our Props Master, found the LAC archives to be a treasure trove, but the true magic lay in what she created by hand. Charlotte reflects on the process: *'I'm a pretty crafty person... so the thing that really interested me was knowing we had to create the Cratchit's Christmas dinner. There was a good amount of digging around online, but also just experimenting to see what worked. I've had some good evenings spent with paper, tinfoil, sponges, balloons, hot glue, and paint, cooking up a feast.'*



Working in tandem with Charlotte is Mia, whose focus is on practical, rapid set dressing adaptable to any venue. She shares: *'I joined to gain experience as I'm pursuing this as a career. I've always been a creative and I love upcycling and making spaces look and feel beautiful and impactful in a sustainable way. I'm enjoying being challenged and allowed to play with creativity and new ideas.'*



Finally, dressing a cast of 15 (many with multiple rapid changes) is a logistical feat. Zoe and her team have done an amazing job creating costumes that are as practical as they are gorgeous. Special mention must go to Margaret Savage, whose construction skills have brought the supernatural to life, creating everything from the Ghost of Christmas Past's robe to Belle's micro-cloak and the terrifying overcloak for the Ghost of Christmas Future. I am always amazed at the sheer passion and creativity of LAC's costume team and this show is a real testament to their work

**If you liked the costumes you saw in A CHRISTMAS CAROL, Leeds Arts Centre's costume is available for hire.**

**For more information visit: [leedsartscentre.org.uk/costume-hire](https://leedsartscentre.org.uk/costume-hire)**

# Sound and Light

A very exciting part of this show is the use of traditional Christmas Music, arranged by Stuart Faulkner especially for this show. I wanted to evoke the period with music that was more folky and earthy

Stu reflects; *"It has been an exciting opportunity developing the soundscape for your new adaptation of A Christmas Carol. I was keen to choose music that could sum up the plays themes of past, present and future. I specifically chose some older, darker pieces which have sinister undertones like Coventry Carol which takes us back to a medieval Christmas and describes Herod's Massacre of the Innocents, the contrasting pieces reflect the joy and sorrow that embody Scrooge's life experience and transformational journey, but also the complexities of the Christmas story."*

The music is performed by Stuart Faulkner on Violin, Paul Stead on Guitar, and Rita Stead on Mandolin



For a touring production, projections become absolutely vital in creating a cohesive visual language that travels with us. While each of our four venues - Slung Low, All Hallows Church, Chapel FM and Oddfellows - brings its own character and challenges, the projections designed and illustrated by Fern Longmuir ensure that wherever you see this show, you're experiencing the same atmospheric world.



These aren't just decorative backdrops; they're essential storytelling tools. Each ghost receives their own unique illustrated tableau for their introduction, establishing their character before they even speak. The projections transform each space - whether it's a church, a studio, or a community venue - into Victorian London, Scrooge's counting house, or the supernatural realm of the spirits.



# Crew

**Director** Spike Marshall  
**Assistant Director** Tash Ford  
**Backstage Managers** Vic Bingham and Chelsea Issott  
**Stage Manager** Louise Redfearn  
**Sound Design** Chris Watson  
**Sound/Projection Technician** Chris Watson  
**Voice Production** Spike Marshall  
**Lighting Design and Technician** Spike Marshall  
**Prompt/Backstage Assistance** Gary Allenby  
**Propmaster** Charlotte Riley  
**Set Design and Production** Mia Thomsen  
**Ghost of Christmas Future Puppet** Aiman Salehuddin  
**Costume Lead** Zoe Freedman  
**Costume** Jennifer Becker, Maria Kwater, Margaret Savage, Jo Scott  
**FOH Coordinator** Shirley Broadbent  
**Music: Arranger/Violin Performer** Stuart Faulkner  
**Music: Arranger/Guitar Performer** Paul Stead  
**Music: Mandolin Performer** Rita Stead  
**Shadow Puppet Designer** Catherine McRae  
**Projection Backdrop Design** Fern Longmuir  
**Publicity** Spike Marshall  
**Programme Design** Spike Marshall

# Thanks

**LIDOS** for loan of Ignorance and Want's jackets, **The Bridge End Social** for rehearsal space, **The Crowd of Favours** for reading and rehearsal Space, **The Fox and Newt** for rehearsal space, **Phil Dodgson & Partners** for preparing LAC Accounts

And to our incredible partners at Slung Low, All Hallows Church, Chapel FM and Oddfellows for staging our show

A huge thanks to Mark Hillyer at True North Studio for his amazing photos featured throughout this programme. If you are looking for headshots or event photography you won't find better than True North!  
For more information visit: [truenorthuk.com](http://truenorthuk.com)



**TRUENORTH**

# Upcoming Leeds Can Shows At the Carriageworks Theatre



## **Pinocchio**

**Presented by LIDOS**

**Friday 16 January to Saturday 24 January**

Geppetto, an old toy maker, wishes for a son, and one night, with help from the Blue Fairy and a cricket, his puppet Pinocchio comes to life. However, the evil showman Stromboli wants the enchanted puppet for himself. With assistance from Dame Mamma Mia and her son Lampwick, will Pinocchio discover what it means to be a "real boy"?



## **The Snow Queen**

**presented by Leeds Children's Theatre**

**Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March**

The Snow Queen is a captivating theatrical experience highlighting love, bravery, and friendship. Adapted by Ron Nicol from Hans Christian Andersen's tale, it follows young Gerda as she embarks on a daring quest to save her friend Kai from the Snow Queen. With engaging characters and humor, this adaptation is suitable for all ages.



## **1984**

**Presented by Leeds Arts Centre**

**Wednesday 29 April to Saturday 2 May**

Winston rewrites history for the Ministry of Truth, concealing his resentment. He quietly disobeys, finding others who share his struggle, understanding that he feels already dead. In George Orwell's 1984, adapted by Matthew Dunster, the story explores Winston's mind in a world where the government dictates reality and Big Brother watches constantly,



## **A Bright Room Called Day**

**Presented by Leeds Arts Centre**

**Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> June to Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> June**

What do you do when your world feels out of control? Set in Berlin, 1933, "A Bright Room Called Day" by Tony Kushner explores friendship and the struggle against tyranny. It examines the moral dilemmas faced by ordinary people over nearly 100 years, highlighting the consequences of inaction in the face of oppression and injustice.



**Tickets Available Now!**  
**Leeds Ticket Hub**