

Manchester Art Gallery

PRESS RELEASE: 19 August 2019



Bus Regulation: The Musical by Ellie Harrison

Saturday 28 September 2019, 2pm & 3pm
Manchester Art Gallery, Mosley Street, Manchester, M2 3JL

FREE tickets available at: busregulation.eventbrite.co.uk

Artist's new performance celebrates Mayor's plans for public transport

Inspired by the 1980s hit musical *Starlight Express*, *Bus Regulation: The Musical* will re-enact the history of public transport provision in Greater Manchester from the post-war period to the present day... on roller skates!

Marking the end of Manchester Art Gallery's exhibition, *Get Together and Get Things Done*, artist Ellie Harrison's new performance will be staged in the Gallery on Saturday 28 September 2019. *Bus Regulation: The Musical* is created by Ellie Harrison in collaboration with the [Better Buses for Greater Manchester](#) campaign, the [Association of British Commuters](#) and local roller skaters.

Glasgow-based artist and activist Ellie Harrison says: "I care passionately about improving public transport. It is vital for addressing the climate emergency and reducing our country's chronic inequalities. I knew I wanted to create a fun, family-friendly event to inspire others with this passion and that's when the childhood memory of watching *Starlight Express* popped into my head. Just as Andrew Lloyd Webber's famous musical uses performers on roller skates to portray trains, I'm working with local skaters from Arcadia Roller Derby to retell the lost history of Greater Manchester's buses. This is an important history, as it clearly shows that proper governance and regulation is vital for making public transport work in the interests of a city's people".

Modern-day agitprop on roller skates, *Bus Regulation: The Musical* will take its audience on a 30 minute whistle-stop tour of 50 years of history - from the municipal ownership of Manchester's buses in the 1960s, through Barbara Castle's radical Transport Act in 1968, which gave rise to the ground-breaking SELNEC integrated transport system of the 1970s, the M-Blem re-brand as Greater Manchester Transport in 1974, through the chaos caused by Margaret Thatcher's policy of deregulation in 1986 to the fragmented system that we're left with in the present day. The performance concludes with a celebration of Our Network - Mayor of Greater Manchester Andy Burnham's 10 year plan to create an integrated public transport network, which includes plans to reform the city region's buses.

Pascale Robinson, campaigner with the Better Buses for Greater Manchester, which is collaborating on the event says: "Greater Manchester is a world-class place and we deserve a world-class bus system. Right now we have unreliable, expensive and irregular buses and we've had enough. We deserve an affordable, easy to use, and publicly controlled bus network, like London has always had. If you think buses are important for a happy, healthy community and environment, and you like a good show, this will be the event of the year!"

For further press information and to request images please contact: Catharine Braithwaite on +44 (0)7947 644 110 or cat@we-r-lethal.com

Notes to editors

Ellie Harrison is an artist and activist based in Glasgow with a passion for public transport. In 2009 she founded Bring Back British Rail, the national campaign for the public ownership of our railways. She is currently the chair of Get Glasgow Moving, campaigning for a world-class, fully-integrated public transport network for everyone in the city region. In 2010, she became the first visual artist to publish an Environmental Policy. In 2016, she slashed her carbon footprint for transport to zero and made headlines with her 'controversial' project *The Glasgow Effect*, for which she refused to leave Glasgow's city limits, or use any vehicles except her bike, for the whole calendar year. Her book about *The Glasgow Effect* launches at the Edinburgh International Book Festival in August 2019.

Better Buses for Greater Manchester is a passenger and staff led campaign, calling on Andy Burnham to bring Greater Manchester's buses into public control, set up and backed by campaign group We Own It. The group's petition for bus regulation has reached over 10,000 signatures, and their recent polling showed that 76% of people in Greater Manchester support the regulation of their buses. Regulation would mean affordable fares, and more evening and weekend services, all with a smart ticket where daily spending is capped. And with eight million miles of bus routes cut from Greater Manchester's network since 2010, regulation would also allow stronger powers for central planning and cross-subsidy, which could start to reduce transport inequalities across the region.

Manchester Art Gallery is the original useful museum, initiated in 1823 by artists, as an educational institution to ensure that the city and all its people grow with creativity, imagination, health and productivity. The gallery is free and open to all people as a place of civic thinking and public imagination. It promotes art as a means to achieve social change with its origins from the Royal Manchester Institution for the Promotion of Literature, Science and the Arts. It has been at the centre of city life for nearly 200 years and has been proudly part of Manchester City Council since 1882. The gallery is for and of the people of Manchester. Through its collections, displays and public programmes it works with all our constituents to ensure creativity, care and consideration infect all aspects of the way we live. This is an art school for everybody and for life.