# Gods of Salford: young working-class actors reshape myth and identity at the Lowry Theatre



In the city of Salford, Greater Manchester, a new original play titled "Gods of Salford" has made its debut, blending Greek mythology with stark working-class realities. Staged at Manchester’s Lowry Theatre, the production is a collaborative effort with the non-profit organisation Not Too Tame and features 25 young actors from working-class backgrounds, many of whom are first-time performers. The play serves as a bold, unflinching testimony to class defiance and community strength.

"Gods of Salford" reimagines ancient myths—featuring deities such as Zeus, Hera, and Hermes—as metaphors for contemporary power struggles and class issues. These Olympians wrestle not only for control over mortals but for their own freedom, mirroring struggles faced by those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Jimmy Fairhurst, both director and actor playing Zeus, emphasised the local pride the play embodies. Speaking to The Independent, he said, “It shows people what Salford’s made of and to remember us. We’re not something small. We’re here, we’re big, we’re bold, we’re northern, and that’s what the show’s all about.” His own journey mirrors this theme, as he describes himself as a modern-day Billy Elliot who overcame numerous doubts about his right to pursue a career in the arts, referencing the cultural message many working-class individuals face to "not make a fuss."

This production emerges amid wider conversations about the representation of working-class communities in British media and theatre. A recent study highlighted a significant decline in working-class representation in TV and film, with only 8 per cent of industry participants identifying from working-class backgrounds. The play and its cast challenge this trend, presenting working-class voices prominently on stage.

Jenny Riding, director of learning and engagement at the Lowry Theatre, acknowledged the actors’ personal challenges in embracing their roles and talents. “Giving themselves permission has been a massive challenge for the actors,” she told The Independent, noting that many performers have struggled with self-sabotage rooted in their backgrounds and circumstances.

The project is deeply person-centred, providing bespoke support to the young actors, many of whom have faced significant difficulties such as mental health issues, homelessness, and foster care. From fidget spinners aiding those with anxiety or ADHD during rehearsals to transport assistance, the production prioritises the wellbeing of its cast. Fairhurst pointed out the importance of pastoral care, noting, “Sometimes, because they don’t feel that they’re worth it, it can feel easier to quit and leave than it is to be told that you’ve failed again.”

The opportunity extends beyond the stage, illustrating broader potential for working-class individuals in the arts. Fairhurst shared a personal anecdote where a longstanding friend discovered a media career after years working as a joiner, proving it is “never too late to change your life.”

Individual stories from the cast highlight the transformative impact of the production. Callum, 19, who lives in supported accommodation, first encountered the Lowry Theatre through a programme offering free theatre tickets to those at risk of homelessness. After attending a show, he pursued acting and is now performing on the very stage he once aspired to. “I said, ‘one day I’m gonna be on that stage’ and now a year later, I am on that stage,” he told The Independent. His ambition includes hopes of starring in the long-running British soap opera Coronation Street.

Similarly, 16-year-old Alesha shared how she and fellow cast members bring their own resilience to the production. “I grew up with a lot of bullying as someone who is Black and plus-size... I guess coming into these rehearsals I was worried that I wouldn’t fit in – but it’s diverse and they’ve looked after me.” Emily, 19, who came to the Lowry through a programme for young carers, described the ensemble as akin to a close-knit group of friends, stating, “This is one of the best groups I’ve worked with.”

The choice to use Greek myths is deliberate, offering a lens to explore enduring power dynamics. “Power struggles and this idea of class really permeates all of it,” explained Jenny Riding. The narrative exposes how decisions made at the top affect those at the bottom, highlighting systemic inequities in a familiar mythological framework.

Beyond its narrative content, "Gods of Salford" embodies a profound artistic drive among its cast. Fairhurst recalled an emotionally powerful moment when the group sang a song written by his brother at the performance’s conclusion. “They were looking at each other and crying, but they were also singing it to Media City from the balcony with tears in their eyes, and they were just repeating it: ‘Remember, remember, remember my name,’” he recounted.

"Gods of Salford" marks not only a theatrical celebration of working-class identity but also a mobilisation of young talent seeking to redefine cultural narratives in Manchester and beyond. The production aligns with the Lowry Theatre’s 25th anniversary, standing as a milestone in its ongoing commitment to inclusion and community engagement through the arts.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://thelowry.com/whats-on/387//not-too-tame-presents-gods-of-salford> - This page provides details about the 'Gods of Salford' production at Manchester's Lowry Theatre, highlighting its collaboration with the non-profit organisation Not Too Tame and featuring 25 young actors from working-class backgrounds.
2. <https://quaytickets.esro.seatgeekenterprise.com/en-GB/shows/gods%20of%20salford/events?page=5> - This ticketing page offers information on the 'Gods of Salford' performances, including dates and venue details, confirming the play's staging at the Lowry Theatre in Manchester.
3. <https://www.theatresonline.com/shows/lowry/gods-of-salford> - This page provides ticketing information for 'Gods of Salford' at the Lowry Theatre, supporting the claim that the play is being staged at this venue.
4. <https://www.manchestertheatres.com/whats-on/lowry_salford> - This guide lists upcoming events at the Lowry Theatre, including 'Gods of Salford,' corroborating the play's debut in Salford, Greater Manchester.
5. <https://www.theatre-makers.com> - This website details the Lowry Theatre's 'Theatre Makers' program, which involves young people in theatre productions, aligning with the play's involvement of 25 young actors from working-class backgrounds.
6. <https://www.britishtheatreguide.info/reviews/people-the-lowry-salf-9511> - This review discusses a production at the Lowry Theatre, providing context about the venue's commitment to showcasing diverse and community-focused theatre productions.
7. <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gods-of-salford-lowry-theatre-manchester-working-class-arts-b2741739.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data