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Roller-skating Musical tells history of Merseyside's buses

Bus Regulation: The Musical

by Ellie Harrison

Saturday 15 July 2023, 2pm & 3:30pm

The Black-E, 1 Great George Street, Liverpool, L1 5EW

FREE tickets available at: busregulation.eventbrite.com

The award-winning '[Bus Regulation: The Musical](#)' is back in Liverpool this Saturday 15 July, for two special free shows at The Black-E community arts theatre to coincide with Liverpool City Region's important [public consultation](#) on bus 'franchising' this summer.

Staged in collaboration with [Better Buses for Merseyside](#), the Musical features local performers on roller skates playing the 'buses' to tell the history of public transport provision on Merseyside from the post-war period up to the present day, and going into the future.

Bus Regulation: The Musical's creator, artist Ellie Harrison, says: "it's a really fun and family-friendly show, inspired by my own childhood memory of seeing 'Starlight Express' at the theatre in London. Just as Andrew Lloyd Webber's famous 1980s hit musical uses performers on roller skates to portray trains, I'm working with skaters from local roller derby leagues to tell the lost history of Merseyside's buses. This is an important history, as it clearly shows how proper governance and regulation are vital for making public transport work in the interests of local people".

Beginning with the municipal ownership of buses in the 1960s, through the 1968 Transport Act which created the Merseyside PTE and the coordination of public transport across the whole region in the 1970s, [‘Bus Regulation: The Musical’](#) takes audiences into the chaos caused by bus deregulation in 1986, the numerous mergers & takeovers of the 1990s that followed, right up to the fragmented and expensive system we’re left with as a result. The Musical concludes with a celebration of Liverpool City Region’s [current proposals](#) to re-regulate the buses in order to create a fully-integrated and affordable public transport network fit for the 21st century.

Better Buses for Merseyside campaigner, Matthew Topham, says: “it’s just brilliant to have [‘Bus Regulation: The Musical’](#) back in Liverpool this summer to help create awareness for the [public consultation](#) on bus ‘franchising’. This consultation offers Merseysiders a once-in-a-generation opportunity to take our buses back into public control – one that cannot be missed. We need as many people as possible to respond in favour of these proposals to give our Metro Mayor the mandate he needs to implement them. This would make Liverpool City Region only the second in the UK, after Greater Manchester, to proceed with re-regulating its buses since the disastrous policy of deregulation in 1986.”

[Bus Regulation: The Musical](#) (Merseyside) is the final part of Glasgow-based artist Ellie Harrison’s ambitious Trilogy of roller-skating musicals telling the history of public transport in three of the UK’s biggest post-industrial city regions: [Greater Manchester](#), [Strathclyde](#) and [Merseyside](#). These have been staged numerous times over the last four years in collaboration with local public transport campaigns. In January, Harrison was awarded the [Stephen Fry Public Engagement Award](#) for her work on the Musical Trilogy.

The Merseyside musical was developed with funding from Arts Council England and premiered at the Bluecoat in November 2022. This new production at [The Black-E](#) is produced in collaboration with [Better Buses for Merseyside](#) and funded by the [Foundation for Integrated Transport](#), UNISON North West branches and [We Own It](#). It features roller skaters from Liverpool Roller Birds and Wirral Roller Derby.

Praise for the Strathclyde Musical:

★ ★ ★ ★ “Ellie Harrison’s glorious piece of agitprop theatre”
— Neil Cooper, [The Herald](#)

“Highly Recommended Show” — Donald Stewart, [FringeReview](#)

★ ★ ★ “For those interested in the relationship between theatre and politics... it offers a powerful piece of agitprop, and an excellent campaigning tool”
— Joyce McMillan, [The Scotsman](#)

For further information please contact:

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High-resolution images are available to [download from here](#) (credit: Brian Roberts)



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