



**A fierce new musical unearths the forgotten female gladiators of Ancient Rome**

*CF Creative Productions presents*

## **GLADIATRIX**

An original musical debuting at this year's Edinburgh Festival Fringe, GLADIATRIX tells the story of female gladiators in ancient Rome through powerful songs and hard-hitting stage combat.

In 200 AD, Emperor Septimius Severus decreed that women could no longer compete in the Gladiator Games. Though at their worst, the games were home to *Ludi meridiani* (public executions) for many women, the arena was a place to exist outside of typical gender norms. What happens when an empire mandates how women use their bodies? Inspired by true events, this electrifying production explores the strength, sacrifice and resilience of the women history left behind.

Book writer and lyricist Paul Bianchi was drawn to the unsung history of female gladiators while researching for his mythology podcast, **Mythunderstood**. In only a couple of words, Ancient Roman historian Cassio Dio recalled the Emperor's inciting decree, women were "*henceforth forbidden*." Bianchi was intrigued and resolved to tell the story as a stage musical- a departure from the male gaze sword-and-sandal films where one would previously find a gladiatrix.

Bianchi teamed with choreographer Kirsten Longmuir to craft a unique balance of stage fighting and rhythmic movement. Musical directors Tony Gonzalez and Sam Johnides injected dark intensity into the songs. As the show developed, politics around the world vibrated against the themes of the show. While executive orders threaten to erase the existence of marginalised people, a meme has become popular about how often men think about the Roman Empire.

"As long as we're thinking about the Roman Empire," jokes Bianchi, "*We might as well learn from it.*"

Gladiatrix is interested in shedding light on an untold story and holding up a critical mirror to our world today. It doesn't resurrect its characters as heroes or revolutionaries, but as women who lived in contradiction - choosing combat in a society that offered them little else.

Previous work by Bianchi includes satirical musicals *Ctrl Alt-Right Delete*, *Future Dystopia*, and viral successes *Deadpool Musical 1 & 2*. Johnides and Gonzalez have musically directed for *Bachelor The Musical*, *The Real Housewives Musical*, and *Supportive White Parents*. *Gladiatrix* is their first collaborative effort.

**Venue:** theSpace @ Venue45  
63 Jeffrey Street  
**Times:** 19:40 (50m) [11th-16th Aug]  
20:50 (50m) [18th-23rd Aug]

**Tickets:** £12.50 (£11.00)  
**Dates:** 11-23 Aug  
**Box Office:** 0131 226 0000  
**Website:** [www.gladiatrixthemusical.co.uk](http://www.gladiatrixthemusical.co.uk)

For further information, images, or to request a media ticket please contact **Paul Bianchi** or **Calum Fleming** at [hello@gladiatrixthemusical.co.uk](mailto:hello@gladiatrixthemusical.co.uk) or 0736 187 5817.

## **The Voice UK's Bukky Oronti Joins the Cast of Gladiatrix the Musical**

### **From The Voice UK Stage to the Gladiator Arena: Bukky Oronti Trades Microphone for Sword and Shield.**

Bukky Oronti (The Voice UK 2019) has joined the cast of *Gladiatrix the Musical*, taking on the role of Deireoe in this new female led action history musical. Bukky was thrilled to be cast and said this about her journey from the Voice UK to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival:

"I remember Jennifer [Hudson] telling me to never dim my light or be afraid to take up space, and that advice really stuck with me as I navigated the music scene as a young woman. *Gladiatrix* feels like a full circle moment as there's really no choice but to take up space when you're wielding a sword and shield, screaming at the top of your lungs as a fierce female gladiator!"

See Bukky's Viral Blind Audition where Jennifer Hudson and Will.i.am said YES [here](#).

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## **An original musical unearths the forgotten women of Ancient Rome**

### **Where history wrote silence, they sing.**

Making its world premiere at the 2025 Edinburgh Festival Fringe, *GLADIATRIX* brings a rarely told chapter of ancient history to vivid life — the stories of the female gladiators who once fought for survival, spectacle, and something resembling freedom. Set against the brutality of Rome's arenas and the backdrop of imperial politics, this new musical confronts the state's power over women's bodies — in the past, and in haunting echoes of today.

In 200 AD, Emperor Septimius Severus issued a decree: women were "henceforth forbidden" from the gladiator games. With those two words, an entire population of female fighters was struck from history — their stories left to fade into myth. *GLADIATRIX* doesn't resurrect them as heroes or revolutionaries, but as women who lived in contradiction — choosing combat in a society that offered them little else.

Book writer and lyricist Paul Bianchi (Mythunderstood podcast) was captivated by the mystery of these erased figures. Drawing from his background in stage combat and a passion for ancient myth, Bianchi has teamed up with choreographer Kirsten Longmuir and musical directors Tony Gonzalez and Sam Johnides to create a bold and visceral work that blends classical themes with contemporary resonance.

Through evocative music, dynamic movement, and unflinching storytelling, *GLADIATRIX* explores who gets remembered, who gets erased — and how the state decides what women can and cannot do with their bodies. It's not a call to arms. It's a call to look closer.

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## **A fierce new musical battles into the Edinburgh Festival Fringe**

### **Female warriors. Ancient Rome. Unstoppable voices.**

In an original musical debuting at the 2025 Edinburgh Festival Fringe, *GLADIATRIX* storms the stage with the untold story of female gladiators who defied the Roman Empire — and history's silence. Combining evocative songs, gripping drama, and pulse-pounding stage combat, *GLADIATRIX* is a powerful celebration of women who dared to fight.

Set in 200 AD, as Emperor Septimius Severus decrees an end to female participation in the Gladiator Games, *GLADIATRIX* brings to life a world where the arena offered women not just violence — but freedom. Inspired by real events, the show explores the bodies, battles, and bravery of women who chose defiance over silence. When the Empire draws its line, will they cross it?

Written by Paul Bianchi (Mythunderstood podcast), *GLADIATRIX* was born from a single historical phrase: "henceforth forbidden." That spark ignited a bold theatrical vision blending Bianchi's stage combat background with the dynamic choreography of Kirsten Longmuir and the rich musical direction of Tony Gonzalez and Sam Johnides. As the show developed, its themes of autonomy, identity, and rebellion gained urgent relevance amid today's global political landscape.

Presented by CF Creative Productions, *GLADIATRIX* delivers a visceral, genre-defying experience for fans of musical theatre, classical history, and feminist storytelling. With the sword in one hand and a song in the other — these women are ready for battle.