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SUSIE MCKENNA

Writer/Director

An actress, writer and director, Susie is currently the Creative director at Hackney Empire and has written and directed every Christmas show and the critically acclaimed pantomimes there since 1998 including this year's *Cinderella*.

This year she was nominated for League of professional theatre women's Gilder/Coigney International Theatre Award .

Earlier this year she directed *La Variete*, re introducing burlesque and modern variety to the Empire, *Praise Singer* and a hip hop adaptation of *The Tempest* with emerging young artists. Susie and her writing partner composer Steven Edis are currently writing a musical adaptation of Ian Seraillier's *The Silver Sword* as part of his centenary celebrations for 2012. Their adaptation of *A Christmas Carol* played at the Arts theatre in London's West End in 2009.

Also in 2009 she directed a revival of Stephen Flaherty and Lynn Ahren's *Once On this Island*, a real crowd pleasing musical that was a co production between Birmingham Rep, Nottingham Playhouse and the Hackney Empire. She also directed some of the Empire's Artist in Development – the Hackney Harlem theatre Company - in *A Midsummer Nights Madness* - which saw 17 young artists performing in New York as part of the Harlem Week Festival at the National Black theatre in Harlem. Their production *A Midsummer Night's Madness* has gone on to sell out runs at the Edinburgh Festival and Hackney Empire main house in 2011.

Her other Hackney Empire credits include; *A Mother Speaks* by Judd Batchelor (which toured to Ipswich Wolsey and Birmingham Drum theatres) and *Naked Splendour* both in the studio theatre, the Kat and Tameka show and the British Premiere of *Beau Jest* by James Sherman. In 2007 she assisted Steven Berkoff, directing *Sit and Shiver* which transferred from the New End Hampstead. Other credits include: *Sass Soul Sequins*, *International Women's Week*, *The Ultimate Knees Up*, *Face Value* and *Best of the Empire*.

Her other directing credits include *A Christmas Carol* at the Arts theatre London, *Sophie Tucker's One Night Stand* which played sold out runs at the New End and Kings Head Theatres London as well as the Edinburgh Festival in 2006, *The Happy Prince*, *Farm* and *I Married Wyatt Earp* for musical futures at Greenwich Theatre, *Slappers and Slapheads* at Liverpool Empire and Manchester Opera House, *Sleeping Beauty* at the Paul Robeson theatre and *Everyone Loves Me* for M.M.D. at the Arts theatre in London, writer and director for Haringey Shed for 6 years.

She has worked as an actress in TV, film and theatre for over 30 years. She spent the early part of her career in regional theatres all over the country, playing such roles as Nancy in *Oliver*, Linda in *Blood Brothers* and Doreen in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*. During this time she worked on many world premieres including Rosie Logan's *Queerfolk* and Mike Harding's *Last Tango In Whitby*. She toured nationally with *Hair*, *The Rocky Horror Show*, *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *In the Midnight Hour*. She was Nottingham Playhouse's Principal boy in their acclaimed pantomimes for 7 years.

In London's West End she has appeared in *Chicago* as Mama Morton, *Cats* as Gumbie and Grizabella, *The Witches Of Eastwick* as Eudora and Felicia and the highly acclaimed *Ragtime* as Emma Goldman. She also went on to play Gumbie in the Polygram video of *Cats*. She also appeared in the workshop for Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Woman In White* at the Sydmonton Festival.