

PRESS RELEASE
7 APRIL 2017

ROYAL COURT THEATRE ANNOUNCE LEMN SISSAY'S THE REPORT DIRECTED BY JOHN E MCGRATH

- For one night only
- Julie Hesmondhalgh to read *The Report* to Lemn Sissay live on Royal Court stage



Lemn Sissay: Photo credit Hamish Brown

Julie Hesmondhalgh

*“One reader. One table. And me. And **The Report.**”*

Lemn Sissay MBE is a poet, playwright, broadcaster and actor.

Lemn was brought up in care and he is taking the social services to court for stealing his life. As part of the legal proceedings Lemn has had to undergo a 5-hour psychological assessment.

When a person claims abuse by the system a report is written. *The Report* unveils everything.

Just before Lemn turns 50, he will hear a reading of *The Report* for the first time live on the Royal Court stage. He invites the public to join him.

The Report will be read by Julie Hesmondhalgh (*God Bless The Child*/Royal Court, *Coronation Street* / ITV) and is directed by John E McGrath (Artistic Director of Manchester International Festival) and produced by Sarah Sansom (*Time Won't Wait*). It will be performed as a one-off performance in the Royal Court Theatre Jerwood Theatre Downstairs at 6pm on Sunday 30 April 2017.

Excerpt from Lemn Sissay's Blog March 20th 2017;

*"A few weeks ago I sat down in a beige interview room in the legal district of Leeds City Centre. I thought it was going to be easy. The man sat behind the table opposite me had been appointed by my lawyer. He was neither friendly 'we're going to be five hours at least' or unfriendly 'There's a lot to get through.' He clicked his ballpoint pen and the psychological interrogation of my life began. Mid way through the interview I broke down. This week I received *The Report* via my lawyer. He said it brought him to tears. I've decided to listen to it for the first time on stage, supported by an audience."*

Commenting on the project director John E McGrath states;

*"Having worked with Lemn on his theatre pieces since 2002, and in particular having explored his personal journey of discovery in *Something Dark*, it is an honour to support him through this uniquely brave artistic and personal project"*

Any profits from the performance will go towards the set up of the Lemn Sissay Foundation.

For full biographies see below.

Ends:-

Notes to editors:

For more information or images please contact Anoushka Warden on 0207 565 5063 / AnoushkaWarden@royalcourttheatre.com

Twitter @Royalcourt @lemnsissay #Reportatthecourt

Lemn Sissay is author of a series of books of poetry alongside [articles](#), [records](#), [broadcasts](#), [public art](#), [commissions](#) and [plays](#). He was the first poet commissioned to write for the [London Olympics](#). His [Landmark Poems](#) are installed throughout Manchester and London. They can be seen in The Royal Festival Hall and The Olympic Park. His Landmark Poem, *Guilt of Cain*, was unveiled by Bishop Desmond Tutu in Fen Court near Fenchurch St Station, London. Lemn is associate artist at Southbank Centre, patron of The Letterbox Club and The Reader Organisation, ambassador for The Children's Reading Fund, trustee of Forward Arts

Foundation and inaugural trustee of World Book Night and an Honorary Doctor of Letters from the University of Huddersfield. His book *Gold From the Stone*, an anthology of new and selected poems, was published in 2016. His 2015 interview on Radio 4's Desert Island Discs was made pick of the year for 2015.

Lemn's installation poem *what if* was exhibited at The Royal Academy alongside work by Tracey Emin and Antony Gormley. It came from his Disko Bay Expedition to the Arctic alongside Jarvis Cocker, Laurie Anderson, Ryuichi Sakamoto, Leslie Feist and KT Tunstall. His 21st century poem was released on multi-million award winning album *Leftism* by Leftfield. A violin concerto performed at The BBC by Viktoria Mullova was inspired by his poem *Advice For The Living*.

Lemn's award winning play *Something Dark* directed by John McGrath has been performed throughout the world and his stage adaptation of Benjamin Zephaniah's Novel *Refugee Boy* at West Yorkshire Playhouse toured Britain in 2014. A BBC TV documentary, *Internal Flight*, and a radio documentary, *Child of the State*, were both broadcast about his life and his Ted Talk has close to a million views. His documentary on the late Gil Scott Heron was the first public announcement of Scott-Heron's comeback.

On social media Lemn describes dawn in one tweet every day. *One Morning Tweet* became an award winning building MVMNT Café commissioned by Cathedral group designed and built by Supergroup's Morag Myerscough. It is the only building in the world built from a tweet. Cathedral also commissioned Lemn's Landmark Poem, *Shipping Good*, which is laid into the streets of Greenwich.

Lemn was the first Black Writers Development Worker outside of London. He created and established Cultureword (part of Commonword) where he developed supported and published many new writers who've gone on to a life of creativity. Lemn received an MBE from The Queen for services to literature and an honorary doctorate from University of Huddersfield and University of Manchester. University of Huddersfield run *The Sissay PhD Scholarship* for care leavers: the first of its kind in the UK.

The Guardian newspaper heralded the arrival of his first book *Tender Fingers In A Clenched Fist*. "Lemn Sissay has Success written all over his forehead". He was 21. But he had other matters in mind. Between the ages of 18 and 32 he tracked his family down across the world. Although many people know his story...his career as a writer happened in spite of his incredible life story not because of it.

In June 2015 Lemn was elected Chancellor of The University of Manchester. He stated "my role is to inspire and be inspired".

Lemn is a prolific public speaker, speaking engagements (2016) include *The Moth*, *Letters Live*, World Health Organisation International Conference, StAnza International Poetry Festival, Ennis Book Club Festival, World Book Day Launch, TEDX Manchester and Future Everything. Lemn appeared at WOMAD, Greenbelt Festival, Edinburgh Book Festival and Going Global, Cape Town and St Clementun Literature Festival, France i 2016.

Lemn has made various BBC radio documentaries on writers such as Gil Scott Heron, The last Poets, JB Priestley, Edgar Allan Poe and poetry films. Lemn presented two Ten Pieces Proms for the BBC at the Albert Hall in July 2016 and a BBC radio series called Origin Stories. Lemn's head is in London where he's based, his heart is in Manchester where he is not, his soul is in Addis and his vibe is in New York where his mother lives. He blogs openly for personal reasons.

<http://lemnsissay.com/biography/>

John E McGrath is the Artistic Director of Manchester International Festival. Appointed to the role in 2015, John was previously Artistic Director of National Theatre Wales, which he launched in 2009, achieving a reputation for large-scale site-specific work, digital innovation, international collaboration and community involvement. Productions directed for NTW included *The Radicalisation of Bradley Manning* by Tim Price, *in Water I'm Weightless* by Kaite O'Reilly, *Love Steals Us from Loneliness* by Gary Owen, and *The Opportunity of Efficiency* by Alan Harris. John trained as a theatre director in New York, where he also worked as Associate Director of Mabou Mines, and was Artistic Director of Contact Theatre in Manchester from 1999 to 2008. Awards include the National Endowment for Science Technology and the Arts (NESTA) Cultural Leadership Award (2005) and an Honorary Doctorate from the Open University (2015).

Julie Hesmondhalgh was born and grew up in Accrington, Lancashire. She trained at LAMDA and set up Arts Threshold Theatre in the early 90s. She co-runs Take Back Theatre Collective in Manchester.

Theatre includes: *Wit* (winner of Best Female Performer 2017 MTAs); *Black Roses: The Killing of Sophie Lancaster* (winner Best Studio Performance 2012, MTAs); *Blindsided*: all at Manchester Royal Exchange; *God Bless the Child*, Royal Court Jerwood Theatre Upstairs.

TV includes: *Broadchurch* (ITV); *Happy Valley* (BBC1); *Black Roses* (BBC4) (Royal Television Society Best Actress 2014); *Moving On: Taxi for Linda* (ITV); *Inside No 9: La Couchette* (BBC2); *Cucumber/Banana/Tofu/Screwdriver* (Channel 4); *Hayley Cropper* in *Coronation Street* 1998-2014 (National TV Award 2014, Royal Television Society Award 2013).

Julie is also a regular voice on BBC Radio 4 in various dramas and as an occasional presenter of *Pick of the Week*.

Listing Information:

The Report

Directed by John E McGrath

Jerwood Theatre Downstairs, Royal Court Theatre, Sloane Square, SW1W 8AS

Sunday 30 April, 6pm 2017

Standard Tickets £25 /£16 /£12