

PRESS RELEASE  
Friday 9 August 2019

## THE ROYAL COURT THEATRE AND EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL ANNOUNCE FULL DETAILS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE CRISIS PLAYS TAKING PLACE IN THE FESTIVAL THEATRE STUDIO IN EDINBURGH TUESDAY 13 AUGUST – SATURDAY 17 AUGUST 2019



*Chen Si'an, Amy Jeptha, Luanda Casella, Ghiath Mhithawi, Swati Simha*

The Royal Court Theatre returns to the Edinburgh International Festival for a major new residency that culminates next week with a series of lunchtime performances of new short plays written by some of the most significant international new voices. The five writers from Brazil, China, India, South Africa and Syria will share urgent perspectives from across the world on the global climate crisis through plays specially commissioned to premiere at the Festival. Each performance is open to the public and free to book and will be followed by a short Q&A with the writer. This series has been created in partnership with the British Council.

The International Climate Crisis Residency will take place Tuesday 13 August – Saturday 17 August 2019 each day at 12 noon in the Festival Theatre Studio in Edinburgh.

Writers include: **Luanda Casella (Brazil), Amy Jeptha (South Africa), Ghiath Mhithawi (Syria), Chen Si'an (China) and Swati Simha (India).**

Translators include: **Victoria Lupton, Stefan Tarnowski and Jeremy Tiang.**

Directors include: **Milli Bhatia, Joe Douglas, Aisha Khan, Sam Pritchard and Bryony Shanahan.**

Performers include: **Hiran Abeysekera, Jeremy Ang Jones, Taj Atwal, Luanda Casella, Amir El-Masry, David K.S.Tse, Rebekah Murrell, Alison O'Donnell, Kwami Odoom and Lara Sawalha.**

Each artist's residency will also involve a visit to another partner organisation across the UK who has supported the development of their work, including further performances of some of the commissioned plays. Alongside the Royal Court (Luanda Casella), these include



HighTide Festival (Amy Jephta), Leeds Playhouse (Ghiath Mhithawi), Live Theatre (Si'an Chen) and the Royal Exchange, Manchester (Swati Simha).

During their residency, the writers will also spend time forging new relationships with other international artists in Edinburgh and collaborators from across the UK. Taking part in the You Are Here strand of work, including The Departure Lounge project and the Morning Manifesto series at the Festival.

This project is curated in partnership with and supported by the British Council.

**Tuesday 13 August, 12 noon**

**Ocean Hotpot (<海水火锅>)**

**by Chen Si'an**

**Translated by Jeremy Tiang**

**Directed by Joe Douglas**

An idyllic island in the midst of boiling oceans. Hot enough to cook a hotpot. One maverick entrepreneur sees a development opportunity and begins to devise the most absurd schemes for environmental protection.

Cast includes: David K.S.Tse, Jeremy Ang Jones.

**Wednesday 14 August, 12 noon**

**The Abyss**

**by Ghiath Mhithawi**

**Translated by Victoria Lupton and Stefan Tarnowski**

**Directed by Aisha Khan**

'I climbed up quietly, their screams became louder and farther away, I reached the top of the chimney and looked inside the Abyss.' One conversation around a German dinner table turns to the topic of the climate crisis.

Cast includes: Lara Sawalha, Amir El-Masry, Alison O'Donnell.

**Thursday 15 August, 12 noon**

**This Liquid Earth: A Eulogy in Verse**

**by Amy Jephta**

**Directed by Milli Bhatia**

2080. A global climate-refugee crisis looms. The Southernmost tip of Africa is the last place able to sustain human life. As refugees arrive from Europe and the Americas, two people find themselves on opposite ends of the largest mass migration in history.

Cast includes: Rebekah Murrell, Kwami Odoom.

**Friday 16 August, 12 noon**

**Climate Crisis Killjoy Quiz**

**by Luanda Casella**

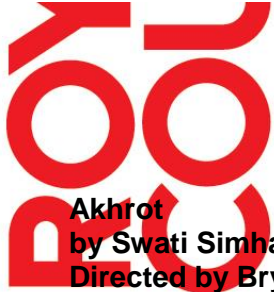
**Directed by Sam Pritchard**

What does it mean to kill happiness when we talk about the climate crisis? This ironic and interactive quiz explores the power behind fossil fuel lobbying, governmental policies, regulation acts, climate agreements...and the language that shapes them.

Cast includes: Luanda Casella.

**Saturday 17 August, 12 noon**





**Akhrot**  
by Swati Simha

Directed by Bryony Shanahan

A theatre director is appointed by the State to create a street play for the local community about energy conservation. But in a town which has only had electricity for a decade, a struggle breaks out over what the message of the play should be.

Cast includes: Taj Atwal, Hiran Abeysekera.

## Biographies:

### WRITERS

#### **Luanda Casella** (Climate Crisis Killjoy Quiz)

Luanda Casella is a Brazilian writer, storyteller and performer living and working in Belgium since 2006. Her research and practice focus broadly on the ways individuals relate to narratives in order to create a sense of identity, to form their opinion, and ultimately to protect themselves. Highly influenced by post-modern literature, Luanda's writings often employ metafiction to comment language construction on a philosophical and political level. Her latest work *Short of Lying* premiered last year at the Belgian summer festival TAZ and is now on international tour. This piece has granted her the playwright price SABAM Theaterschrijfprijs, 2018.

#### **Si'an Chen** (Ocean Hotpot (<海水火锅>))

Si'an Chen (陈思安) is a playwright, theatre director, poet, short story writer and literary translator. She was born in Inner Mongolia and now lives and works in Beijing. She has written six plays including *Underpass* which was performed as a rehearsed reading at the Royal Court Theatre in 2018; *Drowning*, 2012, Penghao Theatre, Beijing; *Rabbit Hole*, 2012, Trojan Theatre, Beijing; *The Spacing of Silence*, 2013, Beijing International Fringe Festival; *Mountain Temple*, 2015, published in *Today Magazine*; *Fake Brand Life*, 2019, Shanghai Dramatic Arts Center.

#### **Amy Jephta** (This Liquid Earth: A Eulogy in Verse)

Amy Jephta is a filmmaker, playwright, screenwriter, director and academic from Cape Town. As a playwright, her work has been published in South Africa, performed at the Fugard Theatre in Cape Town, the Riksteatern in Stockholm, and at the Bush Theatre, Theatre 503 and the Jermyn Street Theatres in London. Amy has previously been named as one of the *Mail & Guardian's* 200 Top Young South Africans, is the 2017 recipient of the national Eugene Marais Prize for Drama for her play, *Kristalvlakte*, and the 2019 Standard Bank Young Artist Award Winner for Theatre.

#### **Ghiath Mhitawi** (The Abyss)

Ghiath Mhitawi is a playwright and filmmaker from Damascus, holds a Bachelor's degree in theatrical studies from the Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts in Damascus/Syria. He worked as a trainer and writer for social theatre in Syria and Lebanon and conducts research in the realm of theatre. His play *the final Return* was presented at the Royal Court Theatre in 2015 as part of *Told from the Inside*, a series of Syrian play readings.

#### **Swati Simha** (Akhrot)

Swati is a playwright and research scholar based in New Delhi. She received her Masters from Shanghai Theatre Academy, China and is currently pursuing a PhD at the Centre for Comparative Politics and Political Theory at Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi. She won the Toto Award for creative writing in 2018. She was one of the playwrights commissioned for





the Blrth Festival at Royal Exchange, Manchester. Her play Flypaper Trap was written under the mentorship of Royal Court Theatre at the Writer's Bloc residency.

## TRANSLATORS

### **Jeremy Tiang** (Ocean Hotpot (<海水火锅>))

Jeremy Tiang has translated plays by Xu Nuo, Zhan Jie, Wei Yu-Chia, Quah Sy Ren and Cao Yu, as well as more than ten books, including novels by Yeng Pway Ngon, Li Er, Chan Ho-Kei and Zhang Yueran, and most recently Jackie Chan's memoir Never Grow Old. He is also a fiction writer and playwright; his plays include The Last Days of Limehouse (Yellow Earth) and A Dream of Red Pavilions (Pan Asian Rep, NYC), and his novel State of Emergency won the Singapore Literature Prize in 2018. Jeremy lives in Brooklyn and is the Managing Editor of Pathlight Magazine.

### **Victoria Lupton** (The Abyss)

Victoria Lupton is Founding Co-Director of Seenaryo, an arts and education organisation working with marginalized communities in Lebanon and Jordan. In her role at Seenaryo, she has co-directed several major theatre productions in Beirut and London. She is based in Beirut but was previously based in New York as Executive Director of Social & Economic Action for Lebanon, an economic development organisation supporting rural cooperatives in Lebanon. She previously worked as a producer in contemporary art organisations in Beirut and London including Ashkal Alwan, Chisenhale Gallery, The Showroom and Studio Voltaire. Her collaborative performance work includes Another Place, an audio walk she created with Syrian writer Doha Hasan which has toured to London, Brussels and Santiago and is soon to reach Berlin; translating the play The Final Return by Ghiath Mhithawi from Arabic to English alongside Stefan Tarnowski for the Royal Court Theatre; and producing At Home in Gaza and London, a digital theatre project by Station House Opera taking place in both cities.

### **Stefan Tarnowski** (The Abyss)

Stefan Tarnowski is a writer, researcher and translator. He is currently a PhD candidate in Columbia University's Anthropology Department and ICLS. His research focuses on Syria since the 2011 revolution and its relation to new media technologies. He graduated from Oxford University in Middle East Studies in 2010. He previously worked at Beirut Art Center (2010-13), and was a participant on Ashkal Alwan's Home Workspace Program (2012-13). He has also worked as a research assistant for a number of artists and filmmakers. He recently translated and wrote the introduction for Dork Zabunyan's The Insistence of Struggle (IF Publications, 2019).

## DIRECTORS

### **Milli Bhatia** (This Liquid Earth: A Eulogy in Verse)

As director, for the Royal Court: seven methods of killing kylie jenner, Dismantle This Room, Shine (Young Court).

As assistant director, for the Royal Court: Inside Bitch, Poet in da Corner, One For Sorrow, Instructions for Correct Assembly, Girls & Boys.

As director, other theatre includes: Dismantle This Room, The Hijabi Monologues, My White Best Friend/This Bitter Earth [part of Black Lives Black Words] (Bush); My White Best Friend [and other letters left unsaid] (Bunker), I Have AIDS [Jerwood Assistant Director Programme] (Young Vic); Rats (Duffield Studio, National); Three Wheels On the Wagon (Birmingham Rep); EmpowerHouse (Theatre Royal, Stratford East); No Cowboys Only Indians (Courtyard).







As associate director, other theatre includes: *What if Women Ruled the World?* (Manchester International Festival).

As assistant director, other theatre includes: *Lions & Tigers* (Sam Wanamaker Playhouse); *Cell Mates*, *Filthy Business*, *Luna Gale* (Hampstead); *The Quiet House (& Park)*, *The Government Inspector (& tour)*, *What Shadows* (Birmingham Rep).

Milli was previously Trainee Director at the Royal Court and is now a Literary Associate. She is co-artistic director of DISMANTLE.

### **Joe Douglas** (Ocean Hotpot (<海水火锅>))

Joe has been Artistic Director of Live Theatre since April 2018, where he has directed *Clear White Light*, *The Cheviot*, *The Stag and the Black*, *Black Oil* (a co-production with National Theatre of Scotland and Dundee Rep) and co-directed *Christmas Crackers* and *Fed Up*. Previously he was Associate Artistic Director at Dundee Rep, where he directed *The Cheviot...*, *Death of Salesman*, *Spoiling*, *The BFG*, *George's Marvellous Medicine* and *The Resistable Rise of Arturo Ui*. He was also Co-Artistic Director of touring company Utter, where he directed *Stand By*, *Bloody Trams* and wrote and performed *Educating Ronnie*. Other work includes *The Red Shed*, *Showtime from the Frontline* (Mark Thomas), *Arabian Nights* (Lyceum), *Our Teacher's a Troll*, *Dear Scotland*, *The Last Polar Bears* (National Theatre of Scotland), *Letters Home* (Grid Iron), *Dr Stirlingshire's Discovery* (Lung Ha/Grid Iron) and many productions for *A Play*, *A Pie & A Pint*. Joe's productions have won four Fringe First Awards at the Edinburgh Festival and *Death of a Salesman* won three awards at the Critics Awards for Theatre in Scotland, including Best Production.

### **Aisha Khan** (The Abyss)

Aisha Khan is Co-Artistic Director at Freedom Studios. Directing work includes *Spirits* by Gemma Bedeau and *Lump* by Kieran Launder (Freedom Studios), *When We Were Brothers* by Ben Tagoe (Freedom Studios), *When I Say I Love You* by Pete Bowker (SL Shorts), *Beep* (writer and dir, Northern Bullits).

As a writer work includes *No Man's Land*, (Theater An Der Parkau, Berlin/Leeds Playhouse), *The Market* (Leeds Playhouse), *The Johnny Eck and Dave Toole Show* (co writer with Mark Catley, *Slung Low*, dir Alan Lane), *The Bee Mask* (dir Sam Wood, Northern Bullits) and *Moonshed* (dir, Sarah Frankcom, Royal Exchange Theatre). For BBC Radio 4 work includes *Road Trip*, *Driftwood Heart* and *Paper Flowers and Durkopp Diana* (dir, Alan Lane, 15 Minute Live, *Slung Low*).

### **Sam Pritchard** (Climate Crisis Killjoy Quiz)

For the Royal Court: *Pity*, *Grimly Handsome* [co-creator], *B*.

Other theatre includes: *The Mysteries*, *Galka Motalka* (Royal Exchange, Manchester); *Pygmalion* (Headlong/Leeds Playhouse/Nuffield/UK tour); *There Has Possibly Been an Incident* (Royal Exchange, Manchester/Soho/Edinburgh Festival Fringe/Theatertreffen, Berlin); *Fireface* (Young Vic).

Sam was the winner of the JMK Award for Directors in 2012. He is the Associate Director (International) at the Royal Court.

### **Bryony Shanahan** (Akhrot)

Bryony Shanahan is current Associate Artistic Director at the Royal Exchange. In November 2019, she will take up the post of Joint Artistic Director of the Royal Exchange with Roy Alexander Weise. Her production of *ENOUGH* by Stef Smith is currently at the Traverse Theatre for the Edinburgh Festival. In 2016 she won the Genesis Future Directors award and directed her sell out production of *trade* by debbie tucker green at the Young Vic. Current and forthcoming productions include *WUTHERING HEIGHTS* (Royal Exchange). Directing includes *QUEENS OF THE COAL AGE* (Royal Exchange/New Vic Theatre), *CHICKEN SOUP* (Sheffield Crucible); *OPERATION CRUCIBLE* (Finborough Theatre, Sheffield Crucible/UK tour/59e59 New York); *WEALD* (Finborough Theatre); *NOTHING* (Royal





Exchange, winner of Manchester Theatre Award); BITCH BOXER (Soho Theatre/national tour/Adelaide Fringe Festival); BOYS WILL BE BOYS (Women Centre Stage, National Theatre); CHAPEL STREET (National Tour) and YOU AND ME (Greenwich Theatre/National Tour).

Bryony trained at East 15 Acting School and on The National Theatre Directors' course. She has been Staff Director for The National Theatre and was a 2014 BBC Theatre Fellow.

**Ends:-**

**For more information or images please contact Kate Hassell at [kateh@thecornershoppr.com](mailto:kateh@thecornershoppr.com)**

**Notes to Editors:**

**Images:** For artwork [click here.](#)

**Listings Information:**

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**The Studio, 22 Potterrow, Edinburgh, EH8 9BL.**

**Tickets are free to book.**



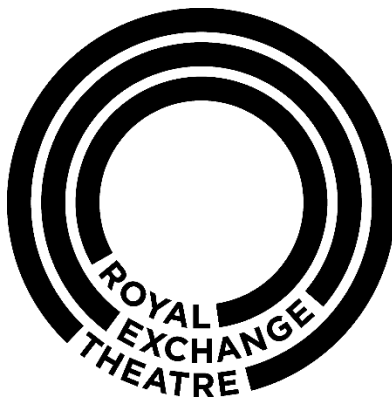
# ROYAL EXCHANGE THEATRE

## About Edinburgh International Festival

Edinburgh International Festival is an unparalleled, city-wide, celebration of performing arts for three weeks each August in Scotland's capital. Created in 1947 to celebrate the human spirit and bring people together through art, the International Festival remains dedicated to creative excellence and as a point of annual cultural exchange for a global audience exceeding 400,000 per year.

Committed to virtuosity and innovation, the International Festival presents some of the finest performers and ensembles from the worlds of dance, opera, music and theatre. It also connects with local artists and communities through a range of programmes year-round. The current Festival is curated by Festival Director Fergus Linehan and takes place from 2-26 August 2019.

More information at [www.eif.co.uk](http://www.eif.co.uk)



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