



**PRESS RELEASE**  
**Friday 8 November 2019**

**THE ROYAL COURT THEATRE ANNOUNCES THE ELYSE DODGSON COMMISSION  
FOR THE MIDDLE EAST**

The Royal Court Theatre announces Dalia Taha as the recipient of the Elyse Dodgson Commission for the Middle East.

This Commission has been set up in memory of the extraordinary and pioneering work Dodgson undertook in her 22 years as International Director at the Royal Court, from founding the International Writers Programme to putting international writers at the heart of the Royal Court's work.

This commission is a new award, to be given biennially to support an international playwright to write a new play. The recipient of the commission will always be based outside the UK, and each award will be given to a playwright from a different region around the world.

This first iteration of the commission focuses on the Royal Court's longstanding work in the Middle East and supports one of its leading playwrights in producing a new play for the Royal Court.

Palestinian playwright Dalia Taha had her first play *Fireworks (Al'ab Nariya)* produced at the Royal Court in 2015. Prior to that she had worked with Dodgson and the Royal Court through writers workshops in Palestine and at the theatre's International Residency in 2013.

Commenting on receiving the inaugural commission playwright Dalia Taha said;

*"I'm honoured and humbled to receive this commission. Elyse's support and commitment to international playwrights was unwavering and receiving this commission named after her I feel great pride in continuing to celebrate her legacy. Elyse loved theatre and believed in its power and this is something that I will always carry with me."*

As with all of the Royal Court's international work, the commission will also provide support for the translation, development and workshopping of the play. Allowing Taha to spend time in residence at the Royal Court to further develop the play that results from this commission.

Vicky Featherstone, Artistic Director at the Royal Court Theatre said;

*"The Royal Court is deeply committed to continuing Elyse's work and to celebrating her legacy. There was no region in the world more significant to Elyse than the Middle East, where she had been supporting writers and artists tirelessly for over twenty years. So it feels absolutely fitting to be able to award the first incarnation of this commission to an artist from that region, thanks to the extraordinary generosity of two of our supporters and their friends. We chose Dalia as the first recipient because she's simply one of the most exciting playwrights whose work we've programmed here over the last few years. And I can't wait to see what she will write next."*

The Elyse Dodgson Commission for the Middle East has been made possible through the generosity of an anonymous couple and the philanthropic support of their friends.





Ends:-

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Notes to Editors:

### Dalia Taha Biography

For the Royal Court: **Fireworks (Al'ab Nariya).**

Other theatre includes: **Hunger (Ramallah Municipality); Keffiyeh (Made in China/Flemish Royal/A.M. Qattan Foundation).**

**Dalia is a Palestinian poet and playwright. She participated in the Royal Court International Residency in 2013 where she began to work on Fireworks. She has a MFA in Playwriting from Brown University and has published two collections of poetry and one novel.**

### The Royal Court International Programme

For more than 20 years, the Royal Court's International Playwrights' Programme has encouraged emerging writers in all parts of the world to address subjects that they felt were urgent in their societies. In more than 70 countries and over 40 languages writers have felt inspired to write provocative new plays that are responding to our changing world and creating unique works for our times. Some of these writers have worked under incredible hardships in fractured societies. Through long term collaborations, a distinctive body of work exists that has enriched our own theatre culture and the new writing culture in the many countries where the work has taken place. Many international writers have also been brought to London to develop and produce their work.

The Royal Court's International Playwrights' Programme was founded and then delivered for more than 20 years by Elyse Dodgson MBE. As the theatre's International Director, Elyse worked tirelessly and peerlessly to develop long term relationships with writers from countries including Argentina, Brazil, China, Chile, Cuba, France, Germany, India, Iran, Lebanon, Mexico, Nigeria, Palestine, Romania, Russia, Spain, South Africa, Syria, Turkey, Uruguay and Zimbabwe.

### The Royal Court in the Middle East

Elyse Dodgson and the Royal Court began working in the Middle East in 1998 with a workshop programme in Palestine. Since then, dozens of new plays have been presented both locally and in London, and more than 15 writers have attended the Royal Court's International Residency.

Work in Palestine led to extensive work in other countries and in 2007 the first regional new writing project began with 21 writers from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia. After attending the International Residency, Dalia Taha's play *Fireworks* was presented to great acclaim at the Royal Court in 2015. From 2013-15, the next phase took place with 15 writers from Syria and Lebanon. As a result, work was presented in Beirut and London and a full production of Syrian writer Liwaa Yazji's play *Goats* was presented at the Royal Court in 2017. Work developed on these projects has explored in detail the way lives have been affected by conflict and political upheaval across the region over the last twenty





years. In 2018, Elyse began a new programme with 10 young writers in the West Bank and that project continued in February 2019

