

## PRESS RELEASE

### LOCKDOWN Theatre Festival launches as part of BBC Arts Culture in Quarantine initiative

13th & 14th June 2020

**\*\*EMBARGOED UNTIL 12:00NOON THURS 30 APRIL\*\***

The logo for the LOCKDOWN Theatre Festival is a yellow square with the text "LOCKDOWN Theatre Festival" in red, stacked vertically.

LOCKDOWN Theatre Festival was created by actor Bertie Carvel in response to the closure of theatres amid the coronavirus crisis. This “scratch festival” will bring to the airwaves of BBC Radio 3 and Radio 4 stage plays that had their scheduled runs cancelled or cut short by the pandemic.

The actors will link up via the internet to record “down the line” from isolation, drawing on the muscle memory of fully realised stage productions to reimagine their performances for the radio.

Four productions will be broadcast across the Festival’s launch weekend 13th & 14th June as part of BBC Arts’ Culture in Quarantine initiative. Carvel said: “I want to create a cultural snapshot for posterity, because who knows what the future holds? Theatres up and down the country are facing an existential crisis. If I can find a way, every single production that has been forced off the stage because of the lockdown will find a new platform at this festival!”

Jonty Claypole, Director of BBC Arts commented: “When we launched Culture in Quarantine I was determined that we would support the performance sector by creating a repertory theatre of broadcast for audiences at home. Bertie’s ambitious project to shine a light on the work of theatres that had their runs cancelled, with Radio 3 and Radio 4, will add to our growing collection some of the very best theatre talents in the UK.”

The technical team have assembled home studio kits for each actor which are sterilised before and after delivery. Contributors are in lockdown all over the UK, from Northern Ireland to Birmingham. Recording of one of the plays will pause at 1pm while the cannon fires at Edinburgh Castle, near the home of one of the performers.

Jeremy Mortimer, who is producing the recordings for Reduced Listening on behalf of BBC Radio 3 and BBC Radio 4, said: “We want listeners at home to feel they are present at the press night performance.”

BBC Arts is broadcasting four plays across the Festival’s launch weekend. They are:

- **Radio 4 - THE MIKVAH PROJECT by Josh Azouz** — Orange Tree Theatre production directed by Georgia Green with sound design by Lex Krosanke. Cast includes: Alex Waldmann, Josh Zaré
- **Radio 3 - LOVE LOVE LOVE by Mike Bartlett** — Lyric, Hammersmith Theatre production directed by Artistic Director Rachel O’Riordan with sound design by Simon Slater. Cast includes: Nicholas Burns, Patrick Knowles, Isabella Laughland, Mike Noble, Rachael Stirling
- **Radio 3 - ROCKETS AND BLUE LIGHTS by Winsome Pinnock** — Royal Exchange, Manchester production directed by Miranda Cromwell with sound design by Elena Pena & music by Femi Temowo. Cast includes Anthony Aje, Paul Bradley, Karl Collins, Kiza Deen, Natey Jones, Rochelle Rose, Matthew Seadon-Young, Kudzai Sitima, Cathy Tyson, Everal A Walsh
- **Radio 4 - SHOE LADY by E.V. Crowe** — Royal Court Theatre production directed by Artistic Director Vicky Featherstone with sound design by Tony Gayle and music by Matthew Herbert. Cast includes: Archer Brandon, Tom Kanji, Kayla Meikle, Katherine Parkinson

All four productions were forced to close early — and in some cases after just a handful of performances. “This festival allows more people to hear the work and begins to create a sense of the breadth, passion, imagination and talent of this country’s incredible range of theatre-makers,”

said Vicky Featherstone, whose production of *Shoe Lady* at the Royal Court Theatre will be revived.

Festival fringe events are also planned to focus attention on the crisis faced by theatres, with many organisations facing bankruptcy due to the prolonged closures. Carvel added: "I hope LOCKDOWN Theatre Festival will demonstrate our community's positivity and resilience — but also shine a light on the challenges we face."

**ENDS:-**

For press enquiries, contact [festival@LockdownTheatre.org](mailto:festival@LockdownTheatre.org)

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## **[QUOTES FROM ARTISTIC DIRECTORS of participating theatres]**

**Paul Miller (Artistic Director — Orange Tree):**

*"Closing the Orange Tree Theatre when we had one of our best ever shows in performance was heartbreaking. Bertie Carvel's inspired Lockdown Theatre Festival offers a golden chance for everyone to experience the magic of The Mikvah Project, as Josh Zaré and Alex Waldmann recreate their stage performances for your mind's eye on Radio 4."*

**Rachel O'Riordan (Artistic Director — Lyric, Hammersmith):**

*"I am delighted to be part of Lockdown Theatre Festival. Our production of Love, Love, Love by Mike Bartlett had opened at the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre on Wednesday, and ran till the Saturday night. On the following Monday the 16<sup>th</sup> March, the cast arrived for work, and I told them we had to stop. The production never got to find its full expression; because that only happens as the company builds their relationship with an audience, over time, in performance. This chance to share our production is really special. Theatre is a live art form; the Lockdown Festival is an attempt to express the energy of a stage performance. We make theatre for audiences, for a shared space: we can't right now, but this feels like a great reminder of how much fun we have together, and will again."*

**Roy Alexander Weise & Bryony Shanahan (Joint Artistic Directors — Royal Exchange, Manchester):**

*"ROCKETS AND BLUE LIGHTS is beautiful, poetic and important. It is a play that opens up our history and gives voice to those people who have so often felt silenced. So it was heart-breaking to have to close the show before its press night, for it to be denied an audience and for the audience to be denied this incredible play. So to have our production included as part of the LOCKDOWN festival is just fantastic. It is time for it to be heard."*

**Vicky Featherstone (Artistic Director — Royal Court):**

*"It is an honour to be part of the Lockdown Theatre Festival which has been so brilliantly created and developed in record time by Bertie Carvel, the BBC and Reduced Listening. Shoe Lady had a week to go when we decided to close the theatre. One of thousands of shows across the country that were never able to reach their full audience. This festival allows more people to hear the work and begins to create a sense of the breadth, passion, imagination and talent of this country's incredible range of theatre-makers. While our industry is on hold, this festival reminds us of why we love telling stories and sharing them with audiences."*

**Reduced Listening** is an independent audio production company focusing on creative story telling, documentaries and podcasts for radio, online and installation.

**About BBC Arts**

We believe arts and music make the world a better place by bringing people together through shared experience and understanding, providing a place of inspiration, a means to navigate a complex world and significant health benefits. The BBC is the biggest creator of Arts content and is Britain's creative partner – allowing the UK to experience the very best arts - when they want, how they want: [www.bbc.co.uk/arts](http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts)

- The nation's stage: access to arts and culture programming for all through the licence fee – we create and showcase more arts and culture than any other broadcaster
- An Innovator: constantly finding new ways to bring the best quality culture to audiences - working with the Arts sector as partner and acting as a hot-house for new talent
- Britain's creative partner: a bold force in the UK creative sector as creator and commissioner, also a platform for new talent
- An investor in quality : we only present the highest quality Arts and culture programming, crafted by skilled production teams and shared with all audiences
- Bringing the nation together : like no other we create and amplify moments in Arts and culture, cutting through with a broad audience

### **Culture in Quarantine**

BBC Arts' Culture in Quarantine initiative is an essential arts and culture service across BBC platforms that will keep the arts alive in people's homes, focused most intensely across BBC Radio 3, BBC Radio 4, BBC Two, BBC Four, BBC Sounds, BBC iPlayer and [www.bbc.co.uk/bbcarts](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbcarts) . We are doing this in close consultation and collaboration with organisations like Arts Council England and other national funding and producing bodies.

This arts and culture service includes:

- Guides and access to shuttered exhibitions or permanent collections from museums and galleries
- Ways to experience books with privileged access to authors including a collaboration with the Big Book Weekend amongst other initiatives.
- Jewels from the archive as well as brand new content ensuring that brand new theatre and dance performances will join with modern classics to create a repertory theatre of broadcast.
- Participatory offers including masterclasses and ways to enable audiences to start or continuing being creative whilst at home through Get Creative
- Topical arts through Front Row, Front Row Late, Free Thinking and more
- A fund with Arts Council England to support around 25 artists to create new work
- A place for arts organisations to share innovations from quarantine and for audiences to discover new things through [www.bbc.co.uk/arts](http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts)

