

PRESS RELEASE MONDAY 30 NOVEMBER 2020

WRITERS ANNOUNCED FOR THE FIRST EDITION OF THE ROYAL COURT THEATRE'S *LIVING NEWSPAPER: A COUNTER NARRATIVE* WHICH REOPENS THE THEATRE FROM THURSDAY 10 DECEMBER 2020

- The Living Newspaper project will employ over 200 freelancers
- The first of six weekly editions will go on sale at noon Monday 7 December 2020



From December over 60 writers will be involved in the creation of the Royal Court Theatre's upcoming project *Living Newspaper: A Counter Narrative*, a weekly live newspaper running over six weeks which will see the theatre reopen since its closure in March.

The first edition, starting on Thursday 10 December 2020, will be written by Miriam Batty, Amir Gudarzi, Nazareth Hassan, Matilda Ibini, Sonia Jalaly, Jasmine Lee-Jones, Suhaimah Manzoor-Khan, Somalia Nonyé Seaton, Katherine Soper, Chris Thorpe, Temi Wilkey and Daniel York Loh.

The designers are Shankho Chaudhuri, Debbie Duru, Cara Evans, Sandra Falase, Zoë Hurwitz and Chloe Lamford who have been working as a Design Collective since early 2020. Together they have radically imagined the Royal Court's spaces for *Living Newspaper*. Each edition will be overseen by one of the Design Collective, with Debbie Duru and Zoë Hurwitz leading on Edition 1.

Edition 1 will also include Lighting by Nao Nagai, Sound by Tony Gayle and Emma Laxton and Sound and Music by Nick Powell, Music from Eädyth and Movement direction by Delphine Gaborit.



Facilitating the first week will be Royal Court Associates Milli Bhatia, Ola Ince, Lucy Morrison and Trainee Director Izzy Rabey.

Each weekly edition of the newspaper will be created by both a collective of writers responsible for the front page and overall tone of the edition and contributing writers offering individual pieces. It will include performances relating to the moment we are in with local and global perspectives, longer form pieces, dating columns, a cartoon of the week, the world in pictures, a weather room, agony aunts, horoscopes and much more, and all inspired by world events as well as the Design Collective's spaces. It will be performed in promenade, taking audiences, in person and online, around the Royal Court building on a journey never before available to the public in this way.

More than 200 freelance artists will work on the project – as well as the writers - over 60 actors (including a commitment to cast a 2020 graduate each week as part of the company), animators, choreographers, composers, designers, illustrators, lighting designers, sound designers, stage managers and technicians.

There is an extensive participation project running alongside Living Newspaper including a series of digital resources, workshops, and a newly formed young writers' group who will be contributing to editions in the New Year.

Edition 1 will go on sale on Monday 7 December at 12 noon and be performed Thursday to Saturday that week. There will be multiple performances each day for Edition 1, each with small socially distanced audiences of 15 people, as well as a chance to watch a digital capture of *Living Newspaper* online from home.

Writers for editions two to six will be announced each week before their edition. The second edition will run 17 – 19 December with tickets going on sale at the beginning of the week. Editions 3 – 6 will be released in the New Year.

Living Newspaper
A Counter Narrative
A disruption. A manifesto. A celebration.



Back in summer 2020 the artist and illustrator Olivia Twist was commissioned to respond to the concept of *Living Newspaper* and create a visual for each of the six editions. Olivia's illustrations include responses to climate and young people, a dating column and an agony aunt.

Commenting on the reopening Royal Court Theatre Artistic Director Vicky Featherstone said;

“Living Newspaper draws on the history of the extraordinary Federal Theatre Project in the 1930’s created by Hallie Flanagan and supported by Eleanor Roosevelt which used vaudeville, music, educational work, provocative and challenging ideas and the strength of collective endeavour to create work across America.

The aims of our Living Newspaper are much more modest and quite simple, while giving as many people as possible a chance to work, to bring our theatre back to life and to create something which is urgent, dynamic, political and disruptive - acknowledging the hugely changed and changing times. It is a massive experiment and a huge challenge, but it is only something radical which has a chance. We can only conceive of something like this because of the brilliant fearlessness of those who make theatre, especially our writers.”



Actor, Director and Royal Court Theatre Board Member Noma Dumezweni adds;

“There are markers in one’s creative life that if lucky to achieve them can may you feel very Blessed. Yes. Blessed.

I got to actually play, first upstairs, and my African actor friends and I do a modern telling of London as a young black woman has written a wonderful piece about belonging (Hello Miss. Bola) and a world opens up to more ways of life.

You meet the passion within the building that has become a ‘culture’ of sorts, because it’s ALL about the new stories being told. Being found. Around the world! I LOVE this place. The privilege of serving young South African Writers, and discovering an expansion of my personal story, was thrilling with I See You.

At the Court, I feel we really are here to serve. Serve and be part of history and the culture of discovery in new voices. And all the versions of what that word Culture means. Its history shows this. Its future is this. It reveals remarkable talent to be nurtured - praise be to ‘the seven methods of killing kylie jenner’ and all the remarkable young women involved in the making of it. We need it. I need this place to exist.

Now comes the Living Newspaper, I’m already excited about the many possibilities that this project can offer us! Please help me in supporting all the best artists and writers as the Court has always done.

And I got to be on the board. I am Grateful.”

If you are able to, you can help us ensure our work continues and that we stay true to our mission to support writers, by donating to Support the Court today. Every £1 you give will be doubled thanks to matched funding generously donated by our Board and Development Council.

This project will continue the theatre’s ambition to achieve net zero and all production choices will be towards this aim.

Watch in Person.

Prices start at £12 for live performances at the theatre (max 2 per booking).

Watch Online.

Prices start at £10 to watch the edition online.

Dates and times for accessible performances will be announced alongside the onsale.

Join the Royal Court Theatre mailing list to be kept updated.

ENDS-

For more information or images please contact Anoushka Warden on AnoushkaWarden@royalcourttheatre.com

Notes to Editors:

To download images [click here](#).

Enhanced safety measures will be in place throughout the building to support a socially distant audience. Each edition will be accessible.

Reviewing: Due to the nature of the project reviewing will not be possible but we will endeavour to allow access to all journalists who wish to write about the project.

Background:

Living Newspaper is a major writer-based project drawing on the radical history of the



Federal Theatre Project of the US - an arts programme to mobilise and employ unemployed artists and theatre workers surfacing from the Great Depression. The Federal Theatre Project was a disruptive, responsive, social justice art form for a time of civic and economic trauma and contributed to the development of some of the most extraordinary US voices. The commissioned plays were under the umbrella of *Living Newspaper* and dealt with issues of the day.

Biographies for Edition 1:

WRITERS

Miriam Battye is a writer. For the Royal Court, she recently wrote *Scenes with girls*. Her other theatre credits include: *Trip the Light Fantastic* (Bristol Old Vic); *All Your Gold* (Theatre Royal, Plymouth); *Electricity* (NYT/Arcola); *Balance* (Royal Exchange, Manchester); *Pancake Day* (Bunker/PLAY). Miriam was the first Sister Pictures Writer in Residence in 2018 and has various original ideas in development for television.

Amir Gudarzi is a writer. Born in Teheran, Iran, in 1986, he graduated from the only school for theatre the country had at the time. Due to censorship, his plays were only shown in private circles. Since 2009, Amir has lived in involuntary exile in Vienna, Austria. In 2017, he won the exil-DramatikerInnenpreis for his play *Between Us and Them Lies...* In 2018, his play *Arash, the Returnee* premiered under the title *Arash//Heimkehrer* in Vienna and his play *The Knowledge Tree* was shown in Jerusalem. In 2019, his play *The Assassin's Castle* was

invited to the Berlin Stückemarkt, and in 2020 the play *Jelly Man – The Future in between my Fingers* premiered in Vienna. Amir lives in Vienna and is working on his debut novel.

Nazareth Hassan is a writer, director, musician, and video artist based in Brooklyn, NY. He is currently a part of the Royal Court Writers' Programme. Nazareth was the 2017 recipient of the Dramatist Guild Young Playwright Award and the 2019 recipient of the Himan Brown Writing Award. His plays have been shown and workshopped in cities including New York, London, and Berlin, at institutions including The Bushwick Starr, Theatertreffen Stückemarkt, Horizon Theater Company, and Ars Nova. He is also a member of the Clubbed Thumb Early Career Writers' Group.

Matilda Ibini is a bionic playwright and screenwriter. For the Royal Court, she recently worked as dramaturg on *Midnight Movie*. She completed the Royal Court Writers' Programme and was a member of Soho Theatre's Writers' Alumni Group. Matilda has had residences with English Touring Theatre and Sphinx Theatre.

Sonia Jalaly is a writer and theatre maker from Manchester. She has devised and written work for Kiln Theatre, Donmar Warehouse, Company Three, Paines Plough and Hull Truck. Sonia is currently on attachment with Kiln Theatre as part of ETT's Nationwide Voices and is under commission with HighTide and the Royal Exchange. She was a member of the BBC Writersroom Comedy Room and regularly writes for CBBC and CBeebies.

Jasmine Lee-Jones is a writer and performer. For the Royal Court, her work as a writer includes: *seven methods of killing kylie jenner*, *dark matter (Beyond the Court)*, *say her name*, *drinking concrete [co-writer] (Open Court)*. Jasmine was a writer-on-attachment for the 2016 Open Court Festival. For *seven methods of killing kylie jenner*, Jasmine was the recipient of the Evening Standard Award for Most Promising Playwright, Alfred Fagon Award for Best New Play of the Year, Stage Debut Award for Best Writer, Critics' Circle Theatre Award for Most Promising Playwright and European New Talent Drama Award.

Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan is an educator, writer and poet from Leeds. Suhaiymah is the author of poetry collection *Postcolonial Banter*, co-author of the anthology, *A FLY GIRL'S GUIDE TO UNIVERSITY: Being a woman of colour at Cambridge* and other institutions of power and elitism and essayist in *I Refuse To Condemn: Resisting racism in times of national security*. She also hosts her podcast, *Breaking Binaries*. Suhaiymah's work in theatres includes: *A Coin in Somebody Else's Pocket (Theatre Uncut)*; *Whose Eyes Are These Anyway? (Albany)*; *My White Best Friend (and Other Letters Left Unsaid) (Bunker)*; *The End of Diaspora (Free Word Centre)*. She is currently an Associate Artist with Freedom Studios.

Somalia Nonyé Seaton is a British Jamaican and Nigerian writer and theatre maker. For the Royal Court, she recently has written for *The Song Project*. Her other theatre credits include: *Aesop's Fables (Unicorn)*; *Mini Me [part of My White Best Friend Festival] (Bunker)*; *Crowning Glory (Theatre Royal, Stratford East)*; *House (Clean Break/Yard)*; *Womb (Bush)*; *Fall of the Kingdom, Rise of the Footsoldier (RSC)*. Somalia was recently selected to receive a Jerwood New Playwrights commission.

Katherine Soper is a playwright. Her first play, *Wish List*, was performed at the Royal Exchange, Manchester and the Royal Court. It won the Bruntwood Prize for Playwriting and the Stage Debut Award for Best New Play. Her most recent play, *The Small Hours*, was written for National Theatre Connections.

Chris Thorpe is a writer and performer. He most recently collaborated with the Royal Court Theatre with his short film *Climate Change: what do you want me to say?* which was produced with the Financial Times. As a writer, his other work with the Royal Court includes: *Victory Condition*, *The Milk of Human Kindness (& LIFT)*. Chris was the recipient of the Oberon Books Royal Court Theatre Climate Commission. Chris is an Associate Artist at the Royal Exchange, Manchester and an Artistic Associate of live art/theatre company *Third Angel*.

Temi Wilkey is a writer and performer from North London. She completed the Royal Court's Introduction to Playwriting programme in 2017 and wrote her debut play, *The High Table*, at the course's culmination. It was produced by the Bush Theatre, for which Temi was awarded the Stage Debut Award for Best Writer in 2020. Temi is the co-founder of the drag king company *Pecs*.

Daniel York Loh is an actor, writer, filmmaker and musician. For the Royal Court, his work as an actor includes: *Pah-La*, *New & Now: Plays from China*, *Porcelain*. His recent work, as a writer, includes: *The Fu Manchu Complex (Ovalhouse/Moongate)*; *Forgotten 遗忘 (Moongate/New Earth/Arcola/Theatre Royal, Plymouth)*. Daniel is featured in the best-selling essay collection *The Good Immigrant*.

DESIGN COLLECTIVE

Shankho Chaudhuri is a designer whose recent work includes: *Art Heist (Edinburgh Festival Fringe/New Diorama)*; *Wood, White Noise (VAULT Festival)*. As assistant designer: *Death of England, Death of England: Delroy (National)*. As VR designer: *All Kinds of Limbo (Sundance Festival/Tate Modern)*. Shankho is the Associate Designer at *New Diorama Theatre* and *Poltergeist Theatre*.

Debbie Duru is a designer for performance spaces. Her recent work includes: Associate Set Designer - *Dick Whittington (National)*, Set & Costume Designer - *Hamlet (Bute, Cardiff)*, Set Designer - *Company (Sherman, Cardiff)*. Debbie has worked as Wardrobe Assistant and Costume Assistant to Costume Designer *Ellen Claridge*.

Cara Evans is a London-based designer. She is a former Royal Court Young Agitator and is an Associate Artist at *OPIA Collective*. Cara's recent work includes: *This Queer House (Vaults)*, *The Girl With Glitter in Her Eye (Bunker)*, *MUSE (Camden People's/Tristan Bates)* and *Superstar (Underbelly/Edinburgh Festival Fringe/Southwark Playhouse)*.

Sandra Falase is an interdisciplinary artist. As the 2018 recipient of the first design bursary awarded by *MGCfutures*, in conjunction with the Gate, they worked as the Assistant Designer on *A Small Place*. Other recent stage design work includes: *J'Ouvert (Theatre503)*, *This is Black (Bunker)*, *Romeo & Juliet (Orange Tree)*.



Zoë Hurwitz is a London-based designer. For the Royal Court, she worked on Peckham: The Soap Opera. Her other credits include: Fen, Punk Rock (LAMDA); We Anchor in Hope (Bunker); Five Plays [Directors Programme] (Young Vic); The Hope Hypothesis (Sheen Centre, New York); Sing Goddess (Here Arts, New York); Lovesong of the Electric Bear (Hope/Arts Theatre). Zoë was a recipient of the 2019 Linbury Prize for Stage Design for Nuffield, Southampton.

Chloe Lamford is a stage designer working in theatre, opera, music and installation. She is the Associate Designer at the Royal Court, where her most recent work includes: Shoe Lady, Superhoe [as design consultant], The Song Project [& co-creator]. Her other recent theatre credits include: The Antipodes [& co-director], Amadeus (National); Teenage Dick (Donmar). Chloe was the recipient of the Arts Foundation Fellowship Award for Design for Performance in Set & Costume and the Theatrical Management Association Award for Best Theatre Design.

ILLUSTRATOR

Olivia Twist is an Illustrator, Arts Facilitator and Lecturer from east London. She has had residencies at the Island Social Club, Royal College of Art, Lime Wharf and British Council. Olivia was included in the 2019 TASCHEN The Illustrator 100 Best from Around the World list and was the recipient of the 2017 Quentin Blake Narrative Drawing Prize.

Biographies for all other creatives will be on the website for each edition.

We have been 'See It Safely' approved

We have been granted the use of Society of London Theatre & UK Theatre's [See It Safely](#) mark. The mark certifies that we are complying with the latest Government and industry COVID-19 guidelines, to ensure the safety of our staff and audiences.