



**PRESS RELEASE WEDNESDAY 9 DECEMBER 2020**

**CAST ANNOUNCED FOR EDITION 1 OF THE ROYAL COURT THEATRE'S *LIVING NEWSPAPER: A COUNTER NARRATIVE*, RUNNING FROM THURSDAY 10 DECEMBER 2020 - SATURDAY 12 DECEMBER 2020.**



Michele Austin, Natalie Dew, Georgie Fellows, Zainab Hasan, Camille Mallet de Chauny, Rebekah Murrell, Amaka Okafor, Kimberley Okoye, Alexzandra Sarmiento, Irfan Shamji, Sophie Stone, Ragevan Vasani and Danny Lee Wynter have been cast in Edition 1 of the Royal Court Theatre's *Living Newspaper: A Counter Narrative*.

*Living Newspaper* is a weekly live newspaper running over six weeks beginning in December, which will see the theatre reopen since its closure in March.

It will be urgent, responsive and fast – with writers filing their pieces by Tuesday and actors performing from Thursday, script-in-hand, hot off the press.

Edition 1, starting on Thursday 10 December 2020, has been written by Miriam Battye, Amir Gudarzi, Nazareth Hassan, Matilda Ibini, Sonia Jalaly, Jasmine Lee-



Jones, Suhaiymah 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.

### **About the project:**

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.

Performances for Edition 1 will run Thursday – Saturday with socially distanced audiences of 15 people. There is also the chance for audiences to purchase tickets to watch a digital capture of *Living Newspaper* online which will be released every Sunday at 5pm (GMT) and will then be available to watch on-demand from Monday 10am – Sunday 4pm (GMT).

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 digital capture of the edition online.

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

Book tickets here <https://royalcourttheatre.com/whats-on/living-newspaper-edition-one-online-premiere/>

### **ENDS-**

**For more information or images please contact Anoushka Warden on [AnoushkaWarden@royalcourttheatre.com](mailto:AnoushkaWarden@royalcourttheatre.com)**

### **Notes to Editors:**



To download images [click here](#).

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

**Reviewing:** Due to limited capacity and the nature of the project reviewing in person will not be possible. However, any journalists who wish to write about the project will be given access to the digital capture of *Living Newspaper* online which will be released every Sunday at 5pm and also available to watch on-demand from Monday 10am – Sunday 4pm (GMT).

**Non Reviewing Press Coverage:** In January we hope to have more shows available and will hopefully be able to get a limited amount of journalists in who wish to feature the project.

**Upcoming Editions:** Writers for editions two to six will be announced each Friday before their edition.

Edition 2 will run 17 – 19 December with tickets going on sale Monday 14 December at noon.

Editions 3 – 6 will be released in the New Year.

### **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:**

#### **CAST**

##### **Michele**

**Austin** is an actor. For the Royal Court, she has performed in *Instructions For Correct Assembly*, *The Lost Mariner* and *Been So*

Long. She has also performed in theatres such as the Almeida, Kiln, Lyric, Hammersmith, Crucible, Sheffield, Hampstead, Regent's Park Open Air, Bush, Young Vic, Out of Joint, Theatre Royal, Stratford East and on the West End.

Michele was nominated for the 2020 Laurence Olivier Award for Best Actress in a Supporting Role for *Cyrano de Bergerac* (West End).

**Natalie Dew** is an actor. For the Royal Court, she has performed in *Human Animals* and *Teh Internet Is Serious Business*. Her other theatre credits include: *Venice Preserved*, *The Provoked Wife* (RSC); *Twelfth Night* (Young Vic); *Bend It Like Beckham* (Phoenix). Her television and film credits include: *The Great*, *Roadkill*, *Sandylands*, *Peter Rabbit*, *Bodyguard*, *Kiri*, *Gavin & Stacey*. Natalie was nominated for the Laurence Olivier Award for Best Actress in a Musical and the Evening Standard Award for Best Newcomer in a Musical.

**Georgie Fellows** is an actor. She has just graduated from the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama with a



BA Honours First Class Degree. Whilst training, her credits included: Cherie in 'Bus Stop', Ashlee in 'Dance Nation', and Hamlet at the Sam Wanamaker Festival in 2019.

**Zainab Hasan** is an actor and writer. Theatre includes: The Welkin (National); [BLANK], The Shakespeare Trilogy, Henry IV (Donmar Warehouse), The Tempest, Henry IV (St Ann's Warehouse, NY); Tamburlaine, Tartuffe, Timon of Athens (RSC); My White Best Friend (Bunker); Hijabi Monologues (Bush); Boy (Almeida); Tory Boyz, Romeo and Juliet, Prince of Denmark (West End). She wrote and performed a short film called Equal Measure for the Donmar Warehouse's project Writing Wrongs.

**Camille Mallet de Chauny** is an actor. His theatre credits include: Miss Julie/The Suicide (Chester Storyhouse); Forgotten 遗忘 (Moongate/New Earth/Arcola/Theatre Royal, Plymouth); Before the Wall (Edinburgh Festival Fringe). His television and film credits include: Bulletproof, Maleficent II.

**Rebekah Murrell** is a performer and director. For the Royal Court, she has performed in Glass. Kill. Bluebeard. Imp. and Scenes with girls. She also performed in Whitewash (Soho), Nine Night (National/West End) and The Host (Yard). Rebekah directed J'Ouvert at Theatre503.

**Amaka Okafor** is an actor. For the Royal Court, she has performed in Grimly Handsome and I See You. Her other theatre includes: Nora: A Doll's House (Young Vic); The Son (Kiln/West End); I'm Not Running, Macbeth, Saint George & the Dragon, Peter Pan (National); Hamlet (Almeida); Hamlet (Barbican); Glasgow Girls (Citizens Theatre); Dr Korczak's Example (Royal Exchange, Manchester/Arcola); The Bacchae (National Theatre of Scotland). Her television credits include: Grace, Des, The Split, Vera.

**Kimberley Okoye** is an actor. She graduated with a First Class Honours from ArtsEd this year. She will next be seen in the cast of The Half You Hate, a short film due to be released next year. Her theatre credits include: Start Swimming, directed by Olaf Ince (Young Vic); The Accordion Shop, by Cush Jumbo (National).

**Alexzandra Sarmiento** is an actor, dancer and choreographer. She performed in the original casts of Hamilton (West End), Strictly Ballroom (West Yorkshire Playhouse/Toronto), Jekyll & Hyde (Old Vic), In The Heights (King's Cross Theatre) and A Chorus Line (London Palladium). Her film credits include upcoming features Everybody's Talking About Jamie, and Cinderella.

**Irfan Shamji** is an actor. For the Royal Court, he performed in One For Sorrow. He has also performed in The Arrival (Bush); Hedda Tesman (CFT); Dance Nation (Almeida); Mayfly (Orange Tree). His film credits include Kenneth Branagh's Murder on the Orient Express and Trevor Nunn's Red Joan.

**Sophie Stone** is an actor. Her theatre credits include: Emilia (Globe/West End); Jubilee (Royal Exchange, Manchester/Lyric, Hammersmith). Her television credits include: Shetland, Doctor Who. Sophie is one of the lead artists of the DH Ensemble and has been a member since its inception.

**Ragevan Vasan** is an actor. His theatre credits include I Wanna Be Yours (Bush); The Village (Stratford East); Love for Love, Queen Anne (RSC); Hurling Rubble at the Sun (Park). His television and film credits include: Dumbo, Walk Like a Panther, Daphne, Save Me, Fortitude, The State.

**Danny Lee Wynter** is an actor. For the Royal Court, he performed in The Changing Room. He has also performed in theatres and with production companies such as Headlong, Lyric,



Hammersmith, HOME, Hampstead, Chichester Festival Theatre, Shakespeare's Globe, The Print Room, Nuffield, Southampton, Old Vic, Jermyn Street Theatre, Royal Exchange, Manchester and Trafalgar Studios. Danny is a founder of the campaigning group The Act For Change Project.

## WRITERS

**Miriam Batty** 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.

**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.