



Press Release
14th April 2021

Sour Lemons embarks on anti-racism partnerships with two leading London theatres

Sade Banks, CEO and Founder of **Sour Lemons**, today announces the April 2021 ***Big Squeeze*** collaboration with the **Royal Court Theatre** and **Young Vic** and respectively. They have both signed two-year strategic partnerships to identify and dismantle systemic racism within their organisations with social enterprise Sour Lemons.

Each organisation will have a dedicated team of Associates, led by incoming Director of Programmes, **Shoomi Chowdhury**, to interrogate internal structures that uphold systemic racism and create barriers for underrepresented communities.

Sour Lemons will work alongside each theatre to build awareness of how systemic racism manifests within their organisations. Each partner will establish two internal working groups who will be central to driving this work forward and developing a culture of accountability: an Anti-Oppression Group consisting of white senior leaders and an Accountability Group consisting of colleagues with mixed racial identities from across the organisation.

Our partners will be releasing their learnings and progress at the end of each six-month cycle, to share the challenges and opportunities created when dismantling systemic racism.

The Sour Lemons approach is adaptive - each programme evolves in response to the lived experiences of racism found in the organisations they work with.

Sade Banks, CEO and Founder of Sour Lemons said: *“The commitment the Young Vic and Royal Court Theatre have made and continue to make, not just to the partnership but in creating a culture that is accountable and hostile to racism, sends a strong message to the rest of the industry. This work has been happening behind the scenes for the past year and Sour Lemons are excited now to announce it publicly.*

“Our mission is to make the truth irresistible - if it becomes impossible to not be aware of how racism manifests, it’s impossible not to do something about it.

“The Sour Lemons model is unique because it responds directly to the lived experiences of racism within the organisation. By centering the needs of Black and Global Majority colleagues, it forces us to acknowledge that racism is happening over here - not ‘over there in America’ or in another institution - here, in the UK and in our sector. This is the opportunity to do something about it.”

Vicky Featherstone, Artistic Director of the **Royal Court Theatre** and **Lucy Davies**, Executive Producer said: *"We have been looking for an exceptional external partner to collaborate with us on our Anti-Racism and Oppression work. This timely, critical and deep work will help us listen, reflect, learn, grow, be challenged, be visibly changed, and be held accountable. Our Board has been central to this process. We are all very honoured to be selected to be a strategic partner with Sour Lemons for the next two years to do this work, and to be alongside the YV to share and radiate across the sector how we change."*

Kwame Kwei-Armah, Artistic Director of the **Young Vic** and **Despina Tsatsas**, Executive Director said: *"We could not be more honoured to have Sour Lemons join the Young Vic family as an Associate Company at this precise moment, and as we participate in their 'Big Squeeze' programme. Our conversations about working together began well before the 2020 summer of social justice, when we invited Sour Lemons to become an Associate Company, and so we are delighted our ideas are now a reality. Having Sade and her team's expertise in-house to help the YV tackle the institutional problems that beset our country is an absolute asset. Conversation and learning is being fostered in all areas of our organisation, from our boardroom to our administrative, artistic and production spaces. We are proud to have Sour Lemons as part of the YV, and part of our sector."*

-ENDS-

For more information, contact **Hannah Jackson** on 07711 286101 at **Hope&Glory PR** or email sourlemons@hopeandglorypr.com

About Sour Lemons

Sour Lemons is a social enterprise and charity, established in 2017 by **Sade Banks**, to disrupt decision-making tables within the arts and culture sector. Turning a sour lemon into lemonade, one squeeze at a time.

In 2020 they launched **Enabling Environments** to address systemic racism in the cultural sector with the aim to move away from diversity schemes designed to 'slot people in' and instead, start to dismantle the systems designed to keep them out.

Their flagship leadership programme **Making LEMONADE** is a ten-month bespoke intervention for twelve Young Leaders who have experienced a sour lemon (or two) in life. The programme is bespoke to the young leaders' needs and is designed to level the playing field by providing social capital, professional development and leadership capabilities.

Every graduate has left the programme with an increased level of success within the creative and cultural industries. This includes receiving prestigious awards, commissions, speaking opportunities, jobs and trustee positions. More than half of the Alumni have been directly employed by Sour Lemons and two graduates currently sit on the board of trustees.

Founder & Chief Executive: **Sade Banks**

www.sourlemons.co.uk

Sour Lemons' supporters

Sour Lemons is a registered charity and has received grants from the **Arts Council England Transforming Leadership and Investment Grant** funds and the **National Lottery Community Fund Leaders with Lived Experience** fund.

About the Young Vic

Based on The Cut in London's Waterloo, we produce new plays, classics, musicals, adaptations of books, short films, digital projects and game-changing forms of theatre, attracting large audiences from many different backgrounds. We forge deep connections in our neighbourhood through our [Taking Part](#) programme, where we engage with over 15,000 people every year via a wide range of projects, from skills-based workshops to on-stage performances. We give 10% of our tickets free to schools and neighbours, irrespective of box office demand, and we are committed to keeping all ticket prices low.

Our [Directors Program](#), the only scheme of its kind, has been running for nearly twenty years and offers young directors a unique opportunity to develop their craft through skills workshops, peer-led projects, paid assistant directing roles through the [Genesis Fellow](#), the [Jerwood Assistant Director Program](#) and the [Boris Karloff Trainee Assistant Director Program](#), as well as access to the [Genesis Directors Network](#). Twice a year, the recipient of the [Genesis Future Directors Award](#) directs a show in The Clare theatre at the Young Vic with full support from the Young Vic's creative, administrative and production teams, enabling us to support and nurture an emerging director as a part of the Young Vic programme.

For many years, the Young Vic has been synonymous with inclusivity, accessibility and creativity. We catalyse debate and channel our work into the digital world, to reach new audiences and continue conversations outside of our four walls. We foster emerging talent and collaborate with some of the world's finest directors, performers and creatives; creating award-winning productions which engage with the world we live in.

Artistic Director: **Kwame Kwei-Armah**

Executive Director: **Despina Tsatsas**

youngvic.org

About the Royal Court

The Royal Court Theatre is the writers' theatre. It is a leading force in world theatre for cultivating and supporting writers - undiscovered, emerging and established.

Through the writers, the Royal Court is at the forefront of creating restless, alert, provocative theatre about now. We open our doors to the unheard voices and free thinkers that, through their writing, change our way of seeing.

Over 120,000 people visit the Royal Court in Sloane Square, London, each year and many thousands more see our work elsewhere through transfers to the West End and New York, UK and international tours, digital platforms, our residencies across London, and our site-specific work. Through all our

work we strive to inspire audiences and influence future writers with radical thinking and provocative discussion.

The Royal Court's extensive development activity encompasses a diverse range of writers and artists and includes an ongoing programme of writers' attachments, readings, workshops and playwriting groups. Twenty years of the International Department's pioneering work around the world means the Royal Court has relationships with writers on every continent.

Since 1956 we have commissioned and produced hundreds of writers, from John Osborne to Jasmine Lee-Jones. Royal Court plays from every decade are now performed on stage and taught in classrooms and universities across the globe.

We're now working to the future and are committed to becoming a carbon net zero arts venue throughout 2020 to ensure we can continue to work for generations of writers and audiences to come.

It is because of this commitment to the writer and our future that we believe there is no more important theatre in the world than the Royal Court.