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ZIA AHMED, TIFE KUSORO AND RUBY THOMAS SELECTED TO BE THE NEXT ROYAL COURT THEATRE JERWOOD NEW PLAYWRIGHTS.



Photo Helen Murray

Now in its 26th year, the Royal Court Theatre Jerwood New Playwrights Programme continues to support emerging writers to develop their practice, take risks and create extraordinary new work. Zia Ahmed, Tife Kusoro and Ruby Thomas have all been offered full commissions to support them in developing their writing practice.

Since 1994, the Jerwood New Playwrights programme at the Royal Court has supported 78 writers who have had their plays produced in the Jerwood Theatre Downstairs and the Jerwood Theatre Upstairs. In 2020, the scheme was relaunched with a new focus on writer development opportunities for emerging playwrights with writers Hester Chillingworth, Somalia Nonyé Seaton and Ross Willis receiving the commissions.

Jane Fallowfield, Literary Manager, Royal Court, said;

“It is a joy to continue working with Jerwood Arts to shape a development process that is led by our playwrights and their work, and to support commissions by three extraordinary new writers - Zia Ahmed, Tife Kusoro and Ruby Thomas. These three writers are thrillingly distinct in their processes but what they share is a purity and fearlessness in the way they make work. For us, this partnership has meant being responsive to our writers over the last year and celebrating the ideas that have emerged and will take us into the future.”

Lilli Geissendorfer, Director, Jerwood Arts, said;

“Zia Ahmed, Tife Kusoro and Ruby Thomas are all at such exciting stages in developing their writing practice: we are delighted they will have the expert support of the Royal Court Theatre’s team to develop their commissions through Jerwood New Playwrights over the coming year. Congratulations! The Royal Court Theatre has shown the depth of its commitment to nurturing new voices throughout the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic so

far. Vicky Featherstone and her team continue to inspire through their leadership on key issues facing the arts as we collectively navigate a return to live performance and cultural togetherness, from action on the climate crisis, to providing work for freelancers, and their commitment to anti-racism. We remain very proud funders.”

The Jerwood New Playwrights Programme is supported by Jerwood Arts Development Programme Fund.

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Notes to Editors:

Jerwood Arts is the leading independent funder dedicated to supporting outstanding UK artists, curators and producers to develop and thrive. They collaborate with organisations across art forms to imagine a more sustainable sector. Their programmes provide transformative opportunities for early-career individuals through awards, fellowships and commissions, and they present exhibitions in their gallery in London, on tour nationally and online.

JERWOOD ARTS

Biographies

Zia Ahmed is a poet and writer hailing from North-West London. He is part of the London Laureates, having been shortlisted for London's Young Poet Laureate 2015/16. He is a former Roundhouse Slam Champion and a Writer-in-Residence at Paines Plough as part of the Channel 4 Playwrights' Scheme 2017. In 2018 he was chosen to be a part of the Bush Theatre's Emerging Writers Group. In 2019, Zia's stage debut *I Wanna Be Yours* premiered at the Bush Theatre. Zia has also written for *My White Best Friend (and Other Letters Left Unsaid)* at the Bunker and is currently under commission to the Royal Court and Bush Theatre. In 2021, Zia was a contributor to Royal Court's Living Newspaper.

Tife Kusoro is a Nigerian-British writer and performer. She was previously on the Bush Theatre's Emerging Writers' Group and is the current recipient of the Royal Court's Lynne Gagliano Writers' Award. She recently wrote for *My White Best Friend (and Other Letters Left Unsaid)* and Living Newspaper at the Royal Court. Her first play, *We Have Sinned*, was part of the North Wall's Alchymy Festival in 2019 and her second, *Fly Home Butterfly*, was part of the 2019 Talawa Firsts Festival.

Ruby Thomas is an actor and writer. She has previously completed the Royal Court Writers' Group and the Soho Writers' Lab. Her first full length play, *Either*, premiered at the Hampstead Theatre Downstairs in September 2019. Ruby recently wrote for Living



Newspaper at the Royal Court. She is currently working on commissions for theatre and television including with Hampstead Theatre, Annapurna and Gold Circle Films, and is part of this year's Channel 4 Playwrights' Scheme.