



PRESS RELEASE - WEDNESDAY 29 NOVEMBER 2023

THE ROYAL COURT THEATRE ANNOUNCES NEXT INSTALMENTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT'S 'NEW PLAYS:' SERIES



Image credit: Royal Court Theatre

Following the sold-out mini season *New Plays: Japan*, which ran in the Royal Court Jerwood Theatre Upstairs in January 2023, the Royal Court presents six new plays by writers from five different countries: Barbados, Jamaica, Mexico, Brazil and the Philippines. In keeping with the series thus far, these will be staged readings which run in the Jerwood Theatre Upstairs from **Wednesday 10 - Thursday 25 January 2024**, with a different play running each Wednesday and Thursday evening across the three weeks.

The three-week season will mark the culmination of multiple strands of work from the Royal Court's International Department, which happens year round at the Theatre.

The six performances come from artists making work in a rich variety of different traditions and languages. Many of them began life on writers groups and projects run by the Court in collaboration with partners from around the world.

The series will be accompanied by a series of talks and discussions that explore the political, social and cultural conversations surrounding the plays.

The series will include *Scam-Uh-Life* by Jherad Alleyne, *Cabin Fever* by Michaela Spencer, *Field Studies (Estudios en Campo)* by Sara Pinedo, *A Migrant Ball of Thread (Ovillo)* by Sonia Gregorio, *Black Horses Are Massive (Cavalos Pretos São Imensos)* by Bárbara Esmeria Rãe and *Borderlands: As Above, So Below* by Rogelio Braga.

Mariana Gándara, Executive Coordinator of the Ingmar Bergman Chair on film and theatre at UNAM, said, *“This exchange was a powerful reminder of the value of generosity, of how we can push the boundaries of each other's work while broadening the scope of our own, however different our contexts and practices, through a shared belief in the potential of theatre.*

For Mexican writers, creating new plays in the conditions we find ourselves in is a statement of principle, a stubborn way of loving life. Two examples of this are Sara Pinedo and Sonia Gregorio. Strong-willed and talented, they are a voice for the problems of our country. In Field Studies, Sara confronts the impotence and grief of the crisis of the disappeared in Guanajuato by creating an act of performative activism. In A Migrant Ball of Thread, through a nuanced use of language, rhythm and echoes, Sonia tells a story of female desire, loneliness and solidarity in rural Oaxaca.

These diverse works are a testament to the breadth of contemporary theatre in Mexico and the importance of the collaboration with the Royal Court Theatre. One that carefully and rigorously nurtures new and better opportunities.”

Phillippe Cato, Senior Literary Associate at the Royal Court said, *“It was a joy and genuine life-changing experience working with the Caribbean writers and partners on the Writing for Performance project. The passion everyone had for storytelling, cultural exchange, and learning was super inspiring and unlike anything I’ve been a part of before.*

It's not often an opportunity presents itself to be making work with creatives whose backgrounds and cultures align so closely to my own and this might be the most rewarding thing I take away from this project.

The plays explore a wide array of subject matters, often very specific to the countries, or parishes, or towns, that the writers are from. However, there were interesting, shared themes including classism and wealth divides, ancestral and religious practices, the impact of colonisation, abuse of power and the ignored violence against women.

Expect to go on a journey with each of these plays where you will belly laugh, gasp, feel moved, and ultimately be left thinking more deeply about the world we live in, having seen it through someone else's eyes.”

The International Programme at the Royal Court builds and develops the theatre's relationships with writers and artists from around the world. Forming long-term partnerships with theatre makers and organisations from different traditions and working in different languages and cultural contexts. The programme runs long term writers' groups, residencies, exchange projects and produces work by international artists as well as supporting the practice of theatre in translation, with projects and opportunities aimed at emerging translators. Other recent partnerships include writers groups run with arts partners in Chile, Iraq, Japan, Palestine and Peru.

Cabin Fever

by Michaela Spencer

directed by Rebekah Murrell

Wednesday 10th January 7.00pm

At the secluded Jamaican resort they run together, Lisa and Damian's dysfunctional relationship is holding her back from her dreams and financial aspirations. When an eccentric investor arrives in the middle of the night, it feels like salvation may be at hand.

Scam-Uh-Life

by Jherad Alleyne

directed by Emily Aboud

Thursday 11th January 7.00pm

Kenroy has big dreams to break the cycle of barely getting by - if he can get to his last day of training. Scam-Uh-Life is a comedic tragedy about not being able to catch a break, an ode to the vibrant characters of Barbados.

Discussion

A panel with Jherad and Michaela will follow the reading of Scam-Uh-Life on the 11th January.

Cabin Fever and Scam-Uh-Life were developed as part of a writers group project in Barbados, Jamaica & Trinidad and Tobago run in partnership with the British Council, Edna Manley College, University of the West Indies Cave Hill and National Drama Association Trinidad and Tobago.

Borderlands: As Above, So Below

by Rogelio Braga

directed by Andrea Ling

Wednesday 17th January 7.00pm

Borderlands: As Above, So Below brings together extracts from Rogelio Braga's story of two powerful transpinay mambabarang (sorceresses) living in London with material charting the rise of fascism in the Philippines and the hostile environment in Britain. Deploying the Filipino concepts of paglublob at pakikisangkot (to plunge and to engage), the evening invites a discussion - between migrants, non-migrants, and activist and labour organisations - to create a counter-language to the hostile environment.

This project has been produced by Harris Albar, in association with New Earth Theatre.

Black Horses Are Massive (Cavalos Pretos São Imensos)

by Bárbara Esmenia Rãé

translated by Almiro Andrade

directed by Debbie Hannan

Thursday 18th January 7.00pm

Trapped in a Brazilian prison, Nininha and her cellmates devise personal and collective strategies for surviving incarceration. Each of them can transform into a massive black horse whenever she pleases. But in reality there are no fantasies, no romanticism, just the brutality of the system itself.

Discussion

A panel with Bárbara will follow the reading of Black Horses Are Massive on the 18th January.

Black Horses Are Massive was submitted to the Royal Court as a part of an international call out for plays from across the Lusophone-speaking world.

Field Studies (Estudios en Campo)

by Sara Pinedo

translated by Daniel Goldman

directed and performed by Sara Pinedo

Wednesday 24th January 7.00pm

This series of actions, performed by writer/maker Sara Pinedo, shed new light on the real-life cases of forced disappearances, searches, denunciations and resistance in Guanajuato, Mexico. This piece of educational archive theatre is both protest and testimony. This is a reminder that the search for the 'disappeared' must continue in multiple languages, both artistic and every day.

A Migrant Ball of Thread (Ovillo)

by Sonia Gregorio

translated by Sophie Stevens

directed by Mariana Gándara

Thursday 25th January 7.00pm

This is the story of four women, in a place very similar to an ant's nest. Every year, a man leaves and promises to return with the prospect of a better life. Every year, a woman is left waiting.

This is a community in rural Oaxaca. A place where prayers are stitched into handkerchiefs. Where daughters only know their fathers through phone calls. Where wives are married to ghosts.

Discussion

A panel with Sara and Sonia will follow the reading of Migrant Ball of Thread on the 25th January.

Field Studies and Migrant Ball of Thread were developed through a writers group for emerging writers and theatre makers from Mexico, co-produced by The Anglo Arts & Culture, member of The Anglo Foundation, and Teatro UNAM in Mexico City.

ENDS

[See here](#) for images.

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Biographies:

Jherad Alleyne

Jherad Alleyne is a Barbadian artist with a robust background in dramatic arts, comedy, social media content creation, live event production, and music. His fifteen years of training include a Bachelor of Arts in Acting from Guildhall School of Music & Drama in London, England, and the Comedy Writing & Performance program at Humber College in Toronto, Canada. Jherad currently co-hosts The Morning Bite radio show at Hitz 106.7 FM and is producing his second stage play.

Rogelio Braga

Rogelio Braga is an exiled playwright, novelist, essayist, publisher, and human rights activist from the Philippines. They had published two novels, a collection of short stories, and a book of plays before leaving the archipelago in 2018. Braga was a fellow of the Asian Cultural Council in 2016 for research on political resistance in theatre and performance across Southeast Asia. Their works were read and performed at the Cultural Center of the Philippines in Manila, Mercury Theatre in Colchester, National Theatre Studio, Soho Theatre, and St. Paul's Cathedral as part of the 50 Monuments and 50 Voices. Miss Philippines (New Earth Theatre) is their first play written entirely in the English language was recently awarded by the Writers' Guild of Great Britain in their inaugural New Play Commission Scheme. Braga currently lives and writes in London as a refugee under the Convention.

Bárbara Esmeria Rãé

Bárbara Esmeria Rãé (São Paulo/Brazil, 1984) is a playwright and poet. She published the poetry books {Penetra-Fresta} (2016) and Tribadismo : mas não só – 13 poemas a la fancha + 17 gritos de Abya Yala (2018), both by padê editorial and { knife is root } (2021), by Editora Primata. She participates as a poet and short story writer in some collections, including: Non-monogamy LGBTQ+ (Apeku, 2020), The resistance of fireflies – a Brazilian anthology written by LGBTQ's (Nós, 2019) and Antes que eu me forget - 50 lesbian and bisexual authors today (Quintal Editions, 2021). Black horses are massive, her first dramaturgy, was selected for the Dramaturgy Award in Small Scenic Formats at CCSP - Centro Cultural São Paulo (2021). She's a joker of Theater of the Oppressed since 2012, integrating the Magdalenas International Network, RELATO – Latin American Theater of the Oppressed Network and the Rede Sem Fronteiras de TO.

Sonia Gregorio

Sonia Gregorio is a playwright, theatre researcher, archivist, philosopher and performance artist. Her work combines biodrama, documentary theatre, activism, political philosophy and working directly with marginalised urban communities and vulnerable people. She is the founder of the Teatro en llamas (Theatre in Flames) theatre research laboratory. She holds a BA in Humanities with a major in Philosophy and the Intensive Acting Diploma from CEDRAM (Centro dramático de Michoacán, the Mechoacán Theatre Centre) and Casa del teatro A.C. (House of Theatre). For seven years she was the coordinator of El Balcón (The Balcony), a community theatre project based in the Central de Abastos de Oaxaca (Oaxaca Market), one of the largest markets in the city, a place where she grew and learned about theatre.

She has been the recipient of a number of national and international grants and awards, including the Fundación para Letras Mexicanas (Mexican Foundation for the Arts) young writers training programme; the FONCA (National Endowment for Culture and Arts) young creators programme 2022-23; the Royal Court + Anglo Arts International Playwright Programme at the UNAM, and the Oaxaca PECDA (Programme for the Stimulus of Creation and Artistic Development) 2021-2022. She is currently taking part in a theatre-making residency at the ConArte La Nana Laboratorio Urbano de Arte Comprometido (Urban Laboratory for Engaged Art), and exploring new ways of guiding a process from the point of view of directing with the play Reverdecer: Ensayo escénico a dos voces (Re-Greening: A Theatre Essay in Two Voices), recipient of the Circuito Nacional de Artes Escénicas (National Performing Arts Circuit) grant for independent spaces in 2023.

Sara Pinedo

Sara Pinedo trained in Theatre and Performing Arts at the Universidad Nacional de las Artes (National University of the Arts), Argentina. She is a communicologist, playwright, theatre-maker, manager, feminist, activist and scavenger, who practices community, collectivism, drifting and critical art. Her plays and prose have been published by Paso de Gato, Teatro Sin Paredes, Tramoya, El Punto Teatro, the Universidad Iberoamericana de León (Ibero-American University of León) and the Instituto Cultural de León (León Cultural Institute). She has worked as a playwright, director and researcher throughout Mexico and overseas, in countries including Spain, the UK, Colombia and Germany, and has facilitated workshops and laboratories in devising, playwriting and community theatre. She is a member of Un Collectivo (One Collective) and of the Colectivo de Arte Comunitario Lxs de Abajo (The Ones from Below Community Art Collective). She is a participant in the Royal Court + Anglo Arts International Playwright Programme at the UNAM, and in the Mexico SNCA (National System for Creative Artists) with the project Trilogía del simulacro (Simulation Trilogy).

Michaela Spencer

Michaela Spencer is a Jamaican writer who explores various forms of creative writing, including screenplays and poetry. With a background in filmmaking, she was a member of the inaugural youth jury at the Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival (TTFF). Michaela has also demonstrated her ability in production with the short documentary "Down and Out," an official selection at TTFF 2015. Currently, she is immersed in her latest project, a full-length horror film still in production with a scheduled release in 2024. Notably, "Cabin Fever" represents Michaela's inaugural venture into playwriting, showcasing her versatility in storytelling.

Listings Information:

Wednesday 10th January

7pm *Cabin Fever* by Michaela Spencer

Thursday 11th January

7pm *Scam-Uh-Life* by Jherad Alleyne

Wednesday 17th January

7pm *Borderlands: As Above, So Below* by Rogelio Braga

Thursday 18th January

7pm *Black Horses Are Massive* by Bárbara Esmenia Răé

Wednesday 24th January

7pm *Field Studies* by Sara Pinedo

Thursday 25th January

7pm *A Migrant Ball of Thread* by Sonia Gregorio

All performances will be relaxed.

Pricing:

Standard tickets £10

Concessions £8

Royal Court International Department

The International Programme at the Royal Court builds and develops the theatre's relationships with writers and artists from around the world. We form long-term partnerships with theatre makers and organisations from different traditions, working in different languages and cultural contexts. Our aim is always to support writers to bring their practice, dramaturgy and perspective to the work they make with the Royal Court. We run long term writers' groups, residencies, exchange projects and produce work by international artists. The Programme also seeks to support the practice of theatre in translation, with projects and opportunities aimed at emerging translators. Recent partnerships include writers groups run with arts partners in Barbados, Chile, Iraq, Jamaica, Japan, Mexico, Palestine, Peru and Trinidad & Tobago.

Partners

The British Council



The British Council builds connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries through arts and culture, education and the English language. Our work in arts and culture stimulates creative expression and exchange and nurtures creative enterprise.

We have been working in Jamaica and Trinidad & Tobago since 1989 and in Cuba since 1998. Every year we connect with thousands of English language teachers, students, academics, artists and creators from all over the Caribbean.

The University of West Indies Cave Hill, Barbados



Ranked among the top universities in the world, UWI is recognized as the premier higher education institution in the Caribbean. It has achieved accreditation at local, regional and international levels and earned a reputation for excellence in teaching, research and international outlook.

The Department of Creative and Performing Arts (DCPA) provides academic training in the arts at the graduate and undergraduate levels, primarily in the areas of dance, film, theatre and music. As a specialist academic entity, the DCPA provides an exploration into practical and theoretical concepts in the arts utilising both Caribbean and international perspectives.

The National Drama Association of Trinidad & Tobago



The National Drama Association of Trinidad & Tobago (NDATT) is a collective of professional and amateur theatre practitioners who are committed to the development of the theatre industry in Trinidad and Tobago.

Theatre in T&T is composed of diverse disciplines including acting, dancing, singing, all of which are incorporated into our indigenous art form, the Best Village style of theatre. Theatre also cannot exist without writers, visual artists, technical theatre practitioners, designers and producers.

NDATT aims to foster an interest in, develop and help facilitate all aspects of theatre in Trinidad and Tobago; protect and ensure the freedom of expression for dramatic artists and promote all aspects of drama.

Edna Manley College in Kingston, Jamaica



The Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts (EMC) is known for a rich tradition of excellence in the arts. The College is invested in promoting the cultural diversity of the Caribbean and enriching the aesthetics sensibilities of its students through quality education and training in the visual and performing arts.

Steeped in the rich cultural tradition of the Caribbean, the EMC has been developing and preserving arts and culture for over six decades, beginning with the establishment of the School of Visual Arts in 1950. Its mission is to enrich the aesthetic sensibilities and promote the cultural diversity of the Caribbean through the highest quality education and training in the Visual and Performing Arts.

New Earth Theatre

NEW EARTH

New Earth Theatre is the foremost British East and South East Asian (BESEA) theatre company in the UK. Founded in 1995 by five BESEA actors frustrated by the lack of work on offer, we set out to create theatre that reflected ourselves and others like us. Over the years the company has been an award-winning game changer in the development and presentation of work for, by and with BESEA artists and communities. We produce touring plays, innovative projects and community events across the year, deliver a unique artist development programme that nurtures BESEA talent on and off stage, and engage with audiences from all backgrounds through our work in schools, museums and universities.

Anglo Arts



We strive to enrich lives through art and culture by facilitating cross-cultural exchanges between Mexico and the United Kingdom across diverse artistic disciplines. Our initiatives include scholarships and programs fostering artistic growth while leveraging our community's cultural vitality. The Anglo Library, housing an exclusive English-language collection, and The Anglo Arts Centre serve as hubs for our extensive cultural activities.

UNAM

CÁTEDRA
BERGMAN
EN CINE Y TEATRO



The National Autonomous University of Mexico was founded in 1551. It is the largest and most important university in Mexico and Latin America. Its primary purpose is to be at the service of the country and humanity, to train professionals useful to society, to organize and carry out research, mainly about national conditions and problems, and to extend the benefits of culture as widely as

possible. The University Theater Center at UNAM has over the past fifty years established a reputation as a leading cultural and academic institution in Mexico.

Catedra Bergman is an initiative of the UNAM focused on cinema and theater. The purpose of the Chair lies in the creation of a space for academic reflection and training that strengthens and expands the cinematographic and theatrical culture among university students and society in general. Since its creation in 2010, the Bergman Chair has completed half a thousand projects with hundreds of activities such as lectures, master classes, workshops, seminars, experimental practices, round tables, film cycles, theatrical seasons, exhibitions, publications and tributes.