



PRESS RELEASE

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ROYAL COURT THEATRE LAUNCHES 'THE WRITERS' CARD' MEMBERSHIP AND NEW WRITER SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

- **FREE-TO-JOIN, 'THE WRITERS' CARD' CALLS TOGETHER THE PLAYWRITING COMMUNITY**
- **THE MEMBERSHIP WILL ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES OF PLAYWRITING TODAY, BY SHARING ACCESS TO WRITER SUPPORT, MENTORING, NETWORKING, FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES AND EVENTS**
- **PLAYWRIGHTS INVITED TO MAKE THE ROYAL COURT THEIR PROFESSIONAL HOME, OPENING UP THE BUILDING'S RESOURCES FROM WORKSPACES TO A NEW LIBRARY, SUBSIDISED MENUS AND FREE SCRIPT PRINTING.**
- **THE WRITERS' CARD IS AT THE CENTRE OF A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMME OF SUPPORT, INCLUDING A NEW 'OPEN SUBMISSIONS FESTIVAL', UNPUBLISHED WRITERS' AWARD AND FUNDED WRITERS' RETREAT.**
- **UNDER ARTISTIC DIRECTOR DAVID BYRNE, THE ROYAL COURT COMMITS TO ITS MISSION FOR PLAYWRIGHTS WHO SHARE AND CHAMPION THE ARTISTIC VALUES AT THE HEART OF THE ROYAL COURT'S HISTORY.**

Today the **Royal Court Theatre** launches **The Writers' Card**, a new membership at the heart of an expanded package to support playwrights at every stage in their career.

Responding to the everyday challenges facing the playwright community, from access to a quiet space to funding opportunities, the Writers' Card is one of the most comprehensive writer development programmes in Royal Court history. It includes exclusive benefits,

funding and support – all completely free for writers who share the artistic values at the heart of the Royal Court's mission. It marks the first membership the Royal Court, previously known as the English Stage Company, has launched since censorship in 1965.

For more information on The Writers' Card, full details of the writer support offer and how writers can sign up to the free membership, please visit royalcourttheatre.com/about-us/playwriting/

David Byrne, Artistic Director, Royal Court Theatre commented:

"Today, to respond to the challenges in the playwriting community, we are opening membership of the English Stage Company for the first time since the end of censorship.

Since becoming Artistic Director I've had conversations with countless playwrights about the challenges writers currently face at every level of their career. Today the Royal Court is entering the group chat with a range of new ideas and offers all designed to bring us back together as a community.

Every generation needs to fight for the values that have defined the Royal Court over the decades – making work ahead of public taste, in a programme that celebrates dissonant voices, often pushing at the possibilities of what theatre can be. It's time for a new generation to take up that cause, and the Royal Court will be at the heart of the conversation.

This is an invitation to writers everywhere – join us, we're only just getting started and we can't do it without you."

The Writers' Card is at the heart of a renewed mission for the Royal Court to bring together the playwriting community at every level across the UK and internationally, championing the values that have always underpinned the Royal Court's work.

Year-round, this will include regular catered **Writers' Canteens** and **Writers' Nights**, open-access **Career Surgeries**, **Zoom focus writing sessions** and exclusive **live events**. These include discussions, public debates about challenging issues that matter to writers. The Royal Court will also host podcast recordings, starting with two live editions of The Playwrights' Podcast hosted by Susan Wokoma. The first free Career Surgeries and Zoom sessions, the first subsidised Writers' Canteen, and the first bookable Writers' Night followed by free discussion and drinks are all also now available to book on sign-up to the membership.

The Writers' Card also offers an invitation for playwrights to make the Royal Court their professional home, to open up institutional resources for writers. This includes use of the new **Royal Court Library**, bookable **meeting and workspaces**, access to a **free printer** to print your work, plus a subsidised all-day **Writers' Card Menu** from the Bar & Kitchen, **half price Friends** scheme membership and partner discounts including **10% off all playtexts purchased from Concord Theatricals**. To help writers struggling with distraction, members will also be able to access a **free phone-locking service** at the Royal Court Box Office while they use the building to write.

Today's announcement also includes new funding, programme plans and partnerships to increase direct investment and development channels for new writers. This includes the unique **Writers' Card Lottery for paid writing weeks**, offering 20 playwrights each year a £600 payment to support time working on a new play. Delivered over two rounds each year, the first lottery launches in January 2025, open to all signed-up Writers' Card members.

The package also today sees a new multi-year partnership for the **Unpublished Writers' Award supported by Concord Theatricals** towards debut playwrights receiving full productions; and a new funded invitational **Writers' Retreat programme** for writers new to the Royal Court. From 2025, the theatre will also launch a new **Open Submissions Festival**, opening up the talent pipeline through its year-round Open Submission process to offer a professional platform for the most exciting new plays received each year. These programmes all also sit alongside renewed commitments and transparent routes for ongoing Royal Court writer support programmes including **Jerwood New Playwrights**, the **Lynne Gagliano Writers' Award** and **Clare McIntyre Bursary**.

Open Submissions Festival

The Open Submissions Festival is a week-long annual festival curated by the Royal Court's Artistic team. Through the Open Submissions portal, the Royal Court Theatre receives roughly 3000 scripts per year, therefore the festival will offer playwrights a space for a professional reading. The full details and line-up for the debut 2025 festival will be announced soon.

The Writers' Retreat

To support the development of early-career writers, the Royal Court will host an annual Writers' Retreat. This is designed for writers who have never had a play performed at the Royal Court, but hold promise and potential.

These writers will be paid for their time, and they will have dramaturgical support on site.

Unpublished Writer's Award

The Unpublished Writer's Award is a new, annual, programme launching in 2025. The award provides funding and support towards the first production of a new play each year written by a previously unpublished playwright.

The supported plays will be chosen for production by the Artistic team in consultation with Concord Theatricals.

The Unpublished Writers Award is supported by Concord Theatricals.

These opportunities are complimented by the longstanding commitment the Royal Court has kept with writers, including the Introduction to Playwriting course, Jerwood New Playwrights scheme, the Lynne Gagliano Writers' Award and the Clare McIntyre Bursary.

Intro To Playwriting

The Royal Court's Introduction to Playwriting continues. This is a series of six weekly sessions where emerging playwrights work to develop their craft alongside their peers,

facilitated by a leading professional playwright. At the end of the sessions, there is an opportunity to submit a first draft for feedback from the Royal Court's Artistic team. The next groups are running in early 2025.

Jerwood New Playwrights

Jerwood New Playwrights Programme supports playwrights in the early stages of their careers to bring their plays to life, at the Royal Court Theatre. Since 1994, this initiative has supported over 70 writers to premiere and produce their plays in the Jerwood Theatre Upstairs and Jerwood Theatre Downstairs at the Royal Court.

Throughout its history, the programme has produced a collection of challenging and outspoken works which explore a variety of new forms and voices. It has been instrumental in discovering and supporting some of the most important playwrights of our time, from Sarah Kane to David Greig and Mark Ravenhill to Ayub Khan Din.

Recent Jerwood New Playwrights include Zia Ahmed, Ruby Thomas and Oli Forsyth, whose play *BRACE BRACE* begins performances in Jerwood Theatre Upstairs on 3 October. Jerwood New Playwrights Programme is part of a long-standing partnership between Jerwood and the Royal Court which spans 30 years.

Lynne Gagliano Writers' Award

The Lynne Gagliano Writers' Award is a biannual opportunity dedicated to nurturing early-career playwrights. Designed to support and elevate emerging talent, it provides a bursary and tailored experience to an outstanding writer as part of their journey with the Royal Court.

This award is rooted in the Royal Court's commitment to deepening the support and investment provided to promising playwrights identified through its broader programmes. Every two years, applications will be invited from writers who've previously been selected for support on one of our open-access programmes, but who haven't yet had a full production at the Royal Court.

The award is tailored around the playwright's individual needs, interests and aspirations. It can be used to provide the time and space needed to focus on writing, or to offer specialised training, mentorship and experiences essential for advancing their career.

This award honours the legacy of Lynne Gagliano, the former Head of the Royal Court's Young Court, who dedicated her life to supporting young people in the arts before her passing in 2016. Lynne's unwavering commitment to the future of playwriting continues through this award, and we are grateful to Lynne's family for their ongoing support.

Recent recipients of the Lynne Gagliano Writers' Award include Tife Kusoro, whose play *G* recently concluded its run in the Jerwood Theatre Upstairs, and Hannah Shury-Smith.

Clare McIntyre Bursary

The Clare McIntyre Bursary exists to support one early-career writer programmed in our seasons each year. Awarded by the Royal Court's artistic team, it can be used to offer

additional support for artists facing hardship or to fund additional time developing their work towards production on our stages, and the critical opportunities we know this can unlock.

The Bursary is named in honour of playwright Clare McIntyre. Clare's plays at the Royal Court included *Low Level Panic* (1988) winning the Samuel Beckett Theatre Award, *My Heart's a Suitcase* (1990) winning the Evening Standard and London Drama Critics awards for Most Promising Playwright, and *The Thickness of Skin* (1996). We are grateful to Clare's family and other donors for their support in maintaining this bursary for the next generation of writers.

Previous recipients include Iman Qureshi, Joel Tan and Emteaz Hussain, whose production of *Expendable* plays in the Jerwood Theatre Upstairs from 21 November.

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