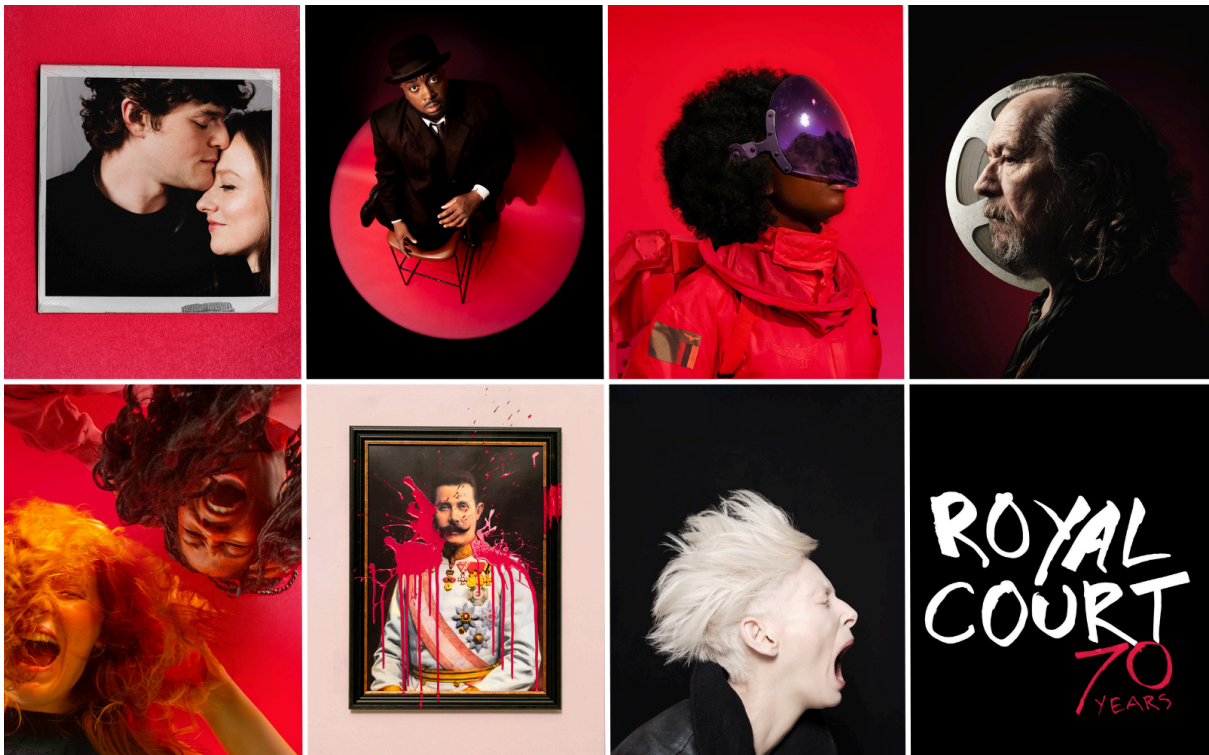


ROYAL COURT



PRESS RELEASE - 28 OCTOBER 2025

ROYAL COURT THEATRE ANNOUNCES 70TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON



Today the Royal Court announces its 70th anniversary programme: honouring the past, celebrating the present, and shaping the future of theatre.

The announcement details an entire year of programming for 2026, with 12 productions across the venue's two historic stages, alongside new national projects and partnerships to drive investment and ambition for the next decade of new writing in the UK.

Artistic Director David Byrne said: *"Everybody back to ours. The Royal Court is turning 70 with the most thrilling season we could imagine. On our stages and far beyond, we're throwing a legendary, year-long party and you're all invited."*

JERWOOD THEATRE DOWNSTAIRS: TWO WORLD PREMIERES, TWO EUROPEAN PREMIERES & TWO BLOCKBUSTER ROYAL COURT REVIVALS

- World premieres: **Luke Norris**' romantic drama *Guess How Much I Love You?* opens the year, starring **Robert Aramayo** and **Rosie Sheehy** and directed by **Jeremy Herrin**; with **Ryan Calais Cameron**'s Zambian space race epic *The Afronauts* bookending the programme in the final slot of 2026.
- European premieres: having introduced *The Crucible* to London audiences in the Court's 1956 debut season, this anniversary welcomes **Kimberly Belflower**'s *John Proctor is the Villain* directed by Tony Award-winner **Danya Taymor**, direct from its smash-hit Broadway run; while Pulitzer Prize finalist **Rajiv Joseph**'s *Archduke* brings an alternative take on the assassination of Franz Ferdinand in a new production directed by **Lyndsey Turner**, with design by **Es Devlin**.
- Royal Court revivals: **Tilda Swinton** returns to the stage after more than three decades, reprising her extraordinary 1988 performance in **Manfred Karge**'s *Man to Man*, reuniting her with director **Stephen Unwin** and designer **Bunny Christie** from the original production, and transferring to the **Berliner Ensemble** then New York in Spring 2027; while **Gary Oldman** stars in *Krapp's Last Tape* - offering London audiences four weeks to catch the celebrated **York Theatre Royal** production of this **Samuel Beckett** classic, first performed at the Royal Court in 1958.
- Plus: paired with *Krapp's Last Tape*, a nightly curtain-raiser performance of 18 year-old **Leo Simpe-Asante**'s comedy *Godot's To-Do List*, first discovered by the Royal Court's 2025 Young Playwrights Award and directed by Resident Director **Aneesha Srinivasan** - pairing the two plays as a gesture to the original premiere of *Krapp's Last Tape*, itself a curtain-raiser in 1958. Leo Simpe-Asante is also announced as the 2026 Jerwood New Playwright, supported by Jerwood Foundation.

JERWOOD THEATRE UPSTAIRS: FOUR WORLD PREMIERES FROM OPEN SCRIPT SUBMISSIONS & ONE INTERNATIONAL TRANSFER

- Since its founding in 1956, the year-round promise of the Royal Court is that anyone writing in English can send a play for equal consideration. Honouring the Royal Court's long-standing commitment to new writers, the Upstairs season features four new plays discovered entirely through the theatre's open script submissions, whereby the Royal Court reads over 3,000 new plays each year.
- The Upstairs programme presents debut plays, original voices and bold new stories received through open script submissions - from prehistoric cannibalism in **Jack Nicholls**' *The Shitheads* directed by **Aneesha Srinivasan** & Artistic Director **David Byrne**; to digital voyeurism in **Georgie Dettmer**'s *Are You Watching?*; ancestral conjure in **Joy Nesbitt**'s *Blood of my Blood* directed by **Tatenda Shamiso**; and Welsh community politics in **Rhys Warrington**'s *Monument*, directed by **Francesca Goodridge** and co-produced with **Sherman Theatre, Cardiff**.

- Palestinian-Israeli writer-performer **Yousef Sweid** and **Isabella Sedlak's** ***Between The River and The Sea***, a personal story of family, fear, and imagining a future beyond borders, comes to the Royal Court following international acclaim, originally produced by Maxim Gorki Theater, Berlin.

A NATIONAL CELEBRATION - FOR AUDIENCES & ARTISTS

- Launching for the 70th anniversary, the **Jerwood Royal Court Commissioning Scheme** will provide major new investment in UK-wide playwriting, creating six brand new play commissions every year for writers and producers beyond the Court's own stages, with annual open applications for six grants of up to £6,000 each.
- Reaching beyond London to nation-wide audiences, a collaboration with **BBC Radio 4** will include a new radio production of **Lucy Kirkwood's** *The Children*, first premiered at the Royal Court in 2016 before transferring to Broadway. Further sharing the Court's cultural legacy, playwright **Mark Ravenhill** will curate radio adaptations of Royal Court plays spanning seven decades of BBC archives, available on Radio 4Extra and BBC Sounds.
- Following the successful London pilot of the Young Playwrights Award in 2024-25, the 70th anniversary will feature the Court's first **National Young Playwrights Award Festival** in July 2026, celebrating the best work by teenagers from across the country - with submissions open from January, lead supported by the Dominic Webber Trust and with prizes and winners' publication supported by Nick Hern Books.
- Further details of all the above, including dates, application processes and broadcasts will be announced in due course.

MAJOR NEW PARTNERSHIPS TO INVEST IN FUTURE TALENT

- New and returning partners mark the anniversary with support towards the Court's investment in the future of theatre, collectively offering an antidote to the climate of austerity and risk-aversion facing the current generation of new theatre-makers.
- **Genesis Foundation** return to the Royal Court with a major new multi-year partnership investing in play commissioning and development, underwriting a suite of annual Genesis Commissions and Genesis Labs for the future pipeline of new work - including Ryan Calais Cameron's *The Afronauts* in 2026 now publicly announced as the first Genesis Commission.
- **Character 7** – the award-winning drama production company enter a multi-year partnership to expand the Royal Court's **Open Submissions Festival**, doubling the initiative to run two week-long festivals each year from 2026: a gateway for the best work by new and unknown writers, and offering audiences a glimpse at the future of contemporary theatre.

- The **Concord Theatricals Unpublished Playwrights Award** will launch for 2026 with an expanded package of two plays from debut writers, Georgie Dettmer's *Are You Watching?* and Joy Nesbitt's *Blood of my Blood*, before continuing with one award per year from 2027.
- Further support for the season and expanding the Court's artistic programmes is provided by extraordinary commitments from new and returning partners including Backstage Trust, Common Humanity Arts Trust, Jerwood Foundation, Sigrid Rausing Foundation and Bloomberg Philanthropies.

Executive Director Will Young said: *"Our 70th anniversary isn't just about the past - it's a moment to direct every bit of new thinking and resource into the pipeline for the next 70 years. Collectively, these new projects and partners not only expand our ambitions on stage, but also represent **an additional quarter of a million pounds** which the Royal Court will invest every year in the future of playwriting, all dedicated to supporting new writers and developing new plays."*

Tickets for all newly announced productions will go on sale to supporters from 12pm on Tuesday 28th October, to Friends and Good Friends at 12pm on Thursday 30th October, and to the general public at 12pm on Tuesday 4th November.

SHOW BY SHOW

Royal Court Theatre in association with Brian & Dayna Lee present

Guess How Much I Love You?

By Luke Norris

Directed by Jeremy Herrin

Designed by Grace Smart

Friday 16 January - Saturday 21 February 2026

Jerwood Theatre Downstairs

Press Night: Thursday 22 January 2026

'Everything is going to be all right.'

An expectant couple wait in a hospital room as the future they had planned unravels. A story about impossible choices and enduring love.

Robert Aramayo (*I Swear*) and **Rosie Sheehy** (*Machinal*), with **Lena Kaur** (*Expendable*), star in this world premiere by **Luke Norris** (*Goodbye to All That*), directed by **Jeremy Herrin** (*People, Places and Things*).

Luke Norris says: *"It's the honour of my life to get to share this story with audiences. That it will open The Royal Court's 70th anniversary season in the Theatre Downstairs is a gift beyond my imagining. Just don't tell me if you think it's shit."*

**

Royal Court Theatre, Wagner Johnson Productions
Wessex Grove, Sonia Friedman Productions, Runyonland and John Mara Jr
present

John Proctor is the Villain

By Kimberly Belflower

Directed by Danya Taymor

Friday 20 March - Saturday 25 April 2026

Jerwood Theatre Downstairs

Press Night: Thursday 26 March 2026

'One day, maybe, the new world we were promised will actually be new...'

Five young women running on pop music, optimism, and fury are about to shed light on the darkest secrets in their small town.

A story about girlhood, power, and questioning the narratives we've been taught.

Tony Award-winner **Danya Taymor** (*The Outsiders*) directs **Kimberly Belflower's** bitingly funny, fresh take on Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*.

Danya Taymor and **Kimberly Belflower** say: *"We are thrilled and honored to bring John Proctor is the Villain to the iconic Royal Court Theatre where so many brilliant and audacious artists have created. It feels like special witchcraft that Arthur Miller's The Crucible also made its English debut at the Royal Court exactly 70 years ago, and we can't wait to present our production on the very same stage."*

**

Royal Court Theatre and York Theatre Royal present

The York Theatre Royal production of

Krapp's Last Tape

By Samuel Beckett

Directed by Gary Oldman

Friday 8 May - Sat 30 May 2026

Jerwood Theatre Downstairs

Press Night Monday 11 May 2026

'Perhaps my best years are gone. When there was a chance of happiness. But I wouldn't want them back. Not with the fire in me now.'

On his 69th birthday, a man sits alone and listens to the echoes of his younger self.

Starring and directed by **Gary Oldman** (*Slow Horses*), Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape* returns to the Royal Court, where it played in 1958, with a new production by York Theatre Royal.

Opening the performance every night is *Godot's To-Do List*, a new Beckett-inspired short play by Jerwood New Playwright **Leo Simpe-Asante**. Winner of the 2025 inaugural Royal

Court Young Playwrights Award, this curtain-raising comedy follows seven decades on from *Krapp's Last Tape's* own debut as a curtain-raiser on our stage.

Gary Oldman says: *"I'm very excited to be returning to the Royal Court with Krapp's Last Tape and to share the stage with Leo's wonderful play Godot's To Do-List. I'm very honoured and proud to be a part of it."*

**

Royal Court Theatre presents

Godot's To-Do List

By Leo Simpe-Asante

Directed by Aneesha Srinivasan

Friday 8 May - Sat 30 May 2026

Jerwood Theatre Downstairs

Press Night Monday 11 May 2026

'Could I leave? Please? It's just, I really have somewhere to be'

A bewildered person wrestles with an endless series of surreal tasks dictated by a snarky, persistent mystery voice.

A new short comedy about the absurd chaos of modern existence – marking the professional debut of **Leo Simpe-Asante**, winner of the inaugural 2025 Royal Court Young Playwrights Award and named 2026 Jerwood New Playwright, directed by **Aneesha Srinivasan**.

Leo Simpe-Asante says: *"It is incredibly exciting to see my work produced and staged at the Royal Court. To think that this play - which started as an idea in a drama school text analysis class, and then went on to win the inaugural Young Playwrights Award - is now going on to have a full run in the Jerwood Theatre Downstairs, is absolutely astounding. I wrote Godot's To-Do List as an exploration of existentialism, humanity and how we choose to interpret our time on earth, and I cannot wait to see it come to life."*

Aneesha Srinivasan says *"It's a pleasure to be directing Leo's brilliant play again, after having worked with them on the Young Playwrights Award. While Krapp's Last Tape reminds us of the Royal Court's storied artistic history, Godot's To-Do List signals towards our bright young future. In Godot's To-Do List, Leo cracks open the existential core of Beckett's writing with characteristic humour and chaos. I am very honoured to bring the play to life in the Theatre Downstairs, and to raise the curtain for the very talented team on Krapp's Last Tape."*

**

Royal Court Theatre in association with Brian & Dayna Lee present

Archduke

By Rajiv Joseph

Directed by Lyndsey Turner

Designed by Es Devlin

Saturday 20 June - Saturday 25 July 2026

Jerwood Theatre Downstairs
Press Night: Friday 26 June 2026

'Maybe the world don't have to end at all. We can just get off the train... go get a sandwich'

Belgrade, 1914. Three hungry young men are offered something to eat (and the chance to change the course of history).

Their mission: kill Archduke Franz Ferdinand and set the century alight.

A wild, heartfelt and occasionally accurate tale of history's most reluctant radicals, from Pulitzer Prize finalist **Rajiv Joseph** (*Guards at the Taj, Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*). **Lyndsey Turner** (*The Crucible, 1536*) directs this European premiere, designed by **Es Devlin** (*The Lehman Trilogy*).

Rajiv Joseph says: *"It is such an honor to be part of the Royal Court's 70th season, and to bring this world to life with the visions of Lyndsey Turner, Es Devlin and the rest of this wonderful artistic team."*

This production has been supported by a lead gift from Charles Holloway OBE.

**

Royal Court Theatre, Berliner Ensemble and Brian & Dayna Lee present

Man to Man

By Manfred Karge, translated by Anthony Vivis

Directed by Stephen Unwin

Designed by Bunny Christie

Saturday 5 September - Saturday 24 October 2026

Jerwood Theatre Downstairs

Press Night: Friday 11 September 2026

In 1930s Germany, a woman puts on her dead husband's trousers and never takes them off.

As the world around her changes, she endures war and dictatorship, hunger and humiliation – always fighting to stay alive.

More than 30 years after she first brought the role to life, **Tilda Swinton** (*We Need to Talk About Kevin, Orlando*) makes a long-awaited return to stage as Ella/Max in **Manfred Karge's** *Man to Man* - the role she originated in the acclaimed 1988 UK premiere at the Traverse Theatre and Royal Court.

This landmark revival reunites the multi-award-winning creative team, including director **Stephen Unwin** (*The Conquest of the South Pole*) and designer **Bunny Christie** (*People, Places and Things*) ahead of transferring to **the Berliner Ensemble** and a run in New York City in Spring 2027.

Stephen Unwin says: *"Never go back!", it's often said, but revisiting Manfred Karge's Man to Man with Tilda Swinton once again wearing the Y-fronts, Bunny Christie designing and Ben Ormerod lighting, is a rare creative opportunity. I've developed and changed in countless*

ways since we first staged the play in the 1980s, but it has shaped many of my creative choices ever since. It will be thrilling to return to the Royal Court and see this remarkable play bloom again, and then take it to Karge's home, the Berliner Ensemble, where he began his career under the leadership of Helene Weigel."

**

Royal Court Theatre and Nica Burns present

The Afronauts

By Ryan Calais Cameron

Saturday 14 November - Saturday 19 December 2026

Jerwood Theatre Downstairs

Press Night: Monday 23 November

'As long as a man can dream, he can push the limits of what's possible'

Zambia, 1964: the space race has a new contender.

As the world's great powers set their sights on the moon, a schoolteacher gathers a group of misfit dreamers and trains them for lift-off.

The true(ish) story of the Zambian Space Program, and a nation's defiant dream to reach for the stars. A World Premiere from Sky Arts Award-winning playwright **Ryan Calais Cameron** (*For Black Boys...*, *Retrograde*).

Ryan Calais Cameron says: *"The Afronauts is a love letter to the dreamers history forgot. It's about what happens when imagination becomes a form of resistance, and how the fight for freedom isn't just political, it's cosmic. At its heart, this play asks: what does liberation look like when the whole universe is watching? For me, it's not just a story about reaching the moon, it's about the courage to believe we belonged there all along."*

The Afronauts is the first Genesis Commission, generously supported by the Genesis Foundation.

**

Royal Court Theatre in association with Brian & Dayna Lee present

The Shitheads

By Jack Nicholls

Directed David Byrne and Aneesha Srinivasan

Friday 6 February - Saturday 14 March 2026

Jerwood Theatre Upstairs

Press Night: Thursday 12 February 2026

'We're all trapped in a cave, Clare. Each of us, all on our own. Staring out of our own little skull-shaped caves.'

Tens of thousands of years ago, Britain's earliest inhabitants learn that love and violence feed the same fire.

When strangers arrive at a secluded cave, domestic harmony shatters – and survival turns savage.

Jack Nicholls' debut play drags us back to the beginnings of who we are, in a world premiere co-directed by Royal Court Resident Director, **Aneesha Srinivasan** and Artistic Director **David Byrne**.

Jack Nicholls says: *"I spent about five years working on this play, feeling that it wasn't particularly likely that it would be performed, or even if parts of it physically could be. I am therefore astonished and delighted that it is lurching into existence at the Royal Court."*

Supported by Cockayne Grants for the Arts, a donor advised fund held at Prism the Gift Fund.

**

Royal Court Theatre presents
Between The River And The Sea
By Yousef Sweid and Isabella Sedlak
Directed by Isabella Sedlak
Wednesday 15 April - Saturday 9 May 2026
Jerwood Theatre Upstairs
Press Night: Monday 20 April

'Yes, I am an Arab... from Israel... a Palestinian Israeli'

Yousef was raised as a Christian-Arab-Palestinian-Israeli kid in Haifa, and is now raising two Jewish-Arab-Austrian kids in Berlin. Only he's facing a custody battle, so things are getting complicated...

A story about family, fear, and imagining a future beyond borders.

Written by **Yousef Sweid** and **Isabella Sedlak**, *Between The River And The Sea* comes to the Royal Court following international acclaim, originally produced by Maxim Gorki Theater, Berlin.

Isabella Sedlak and **Yousef Sweid** say: *"It is still hard to believe that our last-minute-decision to join the Edinburgh Fringe Festival with *Between the River And The Sea* resulted in an invitation to join the 70th anniversary program at the Royal Court. We couldn't have dreamt of a better place to present this piece. We are absolutely thrilled to bring this story about a unique life experience to a London audience, and hope to make a small contribution to amplify unheard perspectives."*

**

Royal Court Theatre presents
Are You Watching?
By Georgie Dettmer
Friday 29 May - Saturday 4 July 2026

Jerwood Theatre Upstairs
Press Night: Thursday 4 June

'He undresses. He stands behind the camera and presses record. He approaches'

Porn. Deepfakes. Disappearing girls. A journalist wired to a machine. A mother's grief sold for clicks.

As the lines blur between entertainment and abuse, technology and sex, violence and voyeurism - who's complicit and who is in control? And are *you* watching?

Georgie Dettmer makes her professional playwriting debut with this world premiere.

Georgie Dettmer says: *"Are You Watching? began as a spontaneous expulsion of anger and resistance. After submitting to the Royal Court, they took a chance on me and my work, and supported the development of this play into something which I hope offers fresh provocations to the nature of watching and being watched in the information age. Thank you to the Court for their support and for their vital commitment to open submissions."*

Supported by the Concord Theatricals Unpublished Playwrights Award.

**

Royal Court Theatre presents

Blood of my Blood

By Joy Nesbitt

Directed by Tatenda Shamiso

Thursday 1 October - Saturday 7 November 2026

Jerwood Theatre Upstairs

Press Night: Wednesday 7 October 2026

'This belongs to me as much as it belongs to you.'

Bullock Creek, South Carolina, 1862: Ginnie Good raises 5 children in a cabin as a war rages outside.

Today: A woman rents the cabin on AirBnB to conjure her ancestors.

Playwright **Joy Nesbitt** makes her Royal Court debut with this new play about inheritance, complicated histories - and what we hear when we listen to the voices of the past, directed by **Tatenda Shamiso**.

Joy Nesbitt says: *"I'm endlessly moved and thrilled that my play, Blood of my Blood, has been chosen from the Open Submissions to debut in the Royal Court's 70th Anniversary Season! This is truly a dream come true! The Royal Court has played a huge role in the way I think about and make theatre, and I'm deeply grateful to the team for embracing my work. This play would not exist without the integral mentorship and support of the Baptiste Programme in Dublin, Ireland. I wrote this play to honor the story of my ancestors and the*

many Black women whose stories have yet to be written, so it is especially poignant to have their essences with me on this exciting journey!"

Supported by the Concord Theatricals Unpublished Playwrights Award.

**

Royal Court Theatre and Sherman Theatre present

Monument

By Rhys Warrington

Directed by Francesca Goodridge

Thursday 3 December 2026 - Saturday 23 January 2027

Jerwood Theatre Upstairs

Press Night: Wednesday 9 December

"...But it's us that have to live with it."

With the eyes of the world watching, a Welsh farming community, torn apart by tragedy, gathers to debate a planned memorial. Tonight, you're in the village hall with them – and every vote counts.

With two possible endings determined by the decision you, the audience, make. How, when the time comes, will you vote?

A portrait of a close-knit community wrestling with its past, its future and the politics of remembrance.

Playwright **Rhys Warrington** makes his Royal Court debut with this world premiere, directed by **Francesca Goodridge** and co-produced with Sherman Theatre, Cardiff.

Rhys Warrington says: *"I am beyond thrilled that Monument will have its world premiere at the Royal Court as part of its 70th Anniversary Season with the added bonus of getting to do it alongside the wonderful Sherman Theatre where it'll be part of Francesca Goodridge's inaugural season as Artist Director. Monument's about so many things but for me it will always be about a community of people who, although often overlooked and underestimated, deserve the opportunity to be heard. I can't wait for them to step out onto that iconic stage. I can't wait for you to meet them."*

Francesca Goodridge says: *"I'm so proud that my first production as Artistic Director of Sherman Theatre is in partnership with the legendary Royal Court, as it celebrates its 70th anniversary. The Royal Court has always been a beacon for bold, original voices, and to collaborate with them on Monument feels both thrilling and deeply meaningful. This partnership connects Cardiff and London through a shared passion for new writing and the discovery of exceptional talent. Working alongside the Royal Court to bring Rhys's extraordinary play to life is an honour—and a powerful statement about the strength, collaboration and ambition of Welsh theatre on a national stage."*

Rhys is the recipient of the second Davidson PlayGC Bursary, supported by PlayGC Theatre Company and the Alan Davidson Foundation.

ENDS.

Press contacts:

Maisie Lawrence on maisie@breadandbutterpr.uk

Chloe Heard on chloe@breadandbutterpr.uk

Natasha Ryszka-Onions on NatashaRyszka-Onions@royalcourttheatre.com

Assets can be downloaded [here](#).

Biographies for writers and creatives in the season can be found [here](#).

Full listings information can be found [here](#).

Boilerplate information for companies listed in the press release can be found [here](#).

If you would like the press release in a different format for access reasons please let us know.

Press Performances:

Thursday 22 January 2026	<i>Guess How Much I Love You?</i> by Luke Norris	Jerwood Theatre Downstairs
Thursday 12 February 2026	<i>The Shitheads</i> by Jack Nicholls	Jerwood Theatre Upstairs
Thursday 26 March 2026	<i>John Proctor is the Villain</i> By Kimberly Belflower	Jerwood Theatre Downstairs
Monday 20 April 2026	<i>Between The River And The Sea</i> by Yousef Sweid and Isabella Sedlak	Jerwood Theatre Upstairs
Monday 11 May 2026	<i>Krapp's Last Tape</i> by Samuel Beckett and <i>Godot's To-Do List</i> by Leo Simpe-Asante	Jerwood Theatre Downstairs
Thursday 4 June 2026	<i>Are You Watching?</i> by Georgie Dettmer	Jerwood Theatre Upstairs
Friday 26 June 2026	<i>Archduke</i> by Rajiv Joseph	Jerwood Theatre Downstairs
Friday 11 September 2026	<i>Man to Man</i> by Manfred Karge, translated by Anthony Vivis	Jerwood Theatre Downstairs
Wednesday 7 October 2026	<i>Blood of my Blood</i> by Joy Nesbitt	Jerwood Theatre Upstairs
Monday 23 November 2026	<i>The Afronauts</i> by Ryan Calais Cameron	Jerwood Theatre Downstairs
Wednesday 9 December	<i>Monument</i> by Rhys Warrington	Jerwood Theatre Upstairs

