

Press release
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ROYAL COURT THEATRE ANNOUNCES TRAINEE DIRECTORS AND INAUGURAL COHORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTORS FOR 2026



- **MAYAAN HAPUTANTRI AND DANIELLE KASSARATÉ APPOINTED AS ROYAL COURT'S TRAINEE DIRECTORS FOR 2026**
- **THE INAUGURAL COHORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTORS ANNOUNCED TODAY ARE AALIYAH MCKAY, YANNI NG, NICO RAO PIMPARÉ, MOLLY STACEY, CHARLOTTE VICKERS, AND TIFFANY WONG.**
- **BOTH OPPORTUNITIES ARE PART OF THE ROYAL COURT'S MAJOR NEW INVESTMENT IN THEATRE DIRECTORS, DESIGNED AS A COMPREHENSIVE LADDER OF SUPPORT FROM ENTRY LEVEL TO STRUCTURED CAREER PROGRESSION**

The Royal Court Theatre today announces two new Trainee Directors for 2026. **Mayaan Haputantri** (Director, *How To Defend Yourself/ The Amazing Lemonade Girl*) and **Danielle Kassaraté** (Associate Director, *Stranger Things and the First Shadow*) will join the Court's artistic team in January and June 2026 respectively, gaining access to directing opportunities and work across departments - experiencing how the Royal Court operates at every level. For the first time as part of the Trainee Directors opportunity, Haputantri and Kassaraté will receive a dedicated artistic budget on top of their salary, to develop their own directing and creative projects. Alumni of the Royal Court's Trainee Directors Programme include Lyndsey Turner, who will be returning to direct *Archduke* as part of the Court's 70th Anniversary Season, and Rufus Norris.

For the first time the Court will also invest in a cohort of Assistant Directors. The 2026 Assistant Directors' Pool includes **Aaliyah Mckay** (Associate Director, *Ballet Shoes*), **Yanni Ng** (Assistant Director, *A Doll's House*), **Nico Rao Pimparé** (Assistant Director, *The Cherry Orchard*), **Molly Stacey** (Associate Director, *People, Places & Things*), **Charlotte Vickers** (Assistant Director, *Cymbeline*) and **Tiffany Wong** (Directing Intern, *Paddington - The Musical*).

Selected via open applications, the Assistant Directors' Pool will receive first access to apply for an increased number of paid assistant directing opportunities at the Court. Assistant Directors will also receive a one-off bursary, mentoring, and career guidance throughout the year.

The appointments follow the July 2025 announcement of an expanded support programme for Directors. As part of the programme, the Royal Court will employ an Assistant Director on all Upstairs productions and have doubled the number of Trainee Directors over the year, who will each gain access to directing opportunities and work across different departments within the theatre. These positions sit alongside a programme of Open Opportunities for Directors at any stage of their career, including bookable slots at Open Technical Rehearsals and Directors' Nights for Royal Court productions.

Aneesha Srinivasan says: *It is a pleasure and privilege to bring this talented cohort of directors and artistic leaders together at the Court to spend the year learning "in the room": whether that be through new assisting opportunities with the best directors in the business, or by being embedded in the core artistic processes that make the Royal Court what it is.*

The Royal Court Directors Programme is generously supported by The Foyle Foundation, The Katie Bradford Arts Trust, and The Fenton Arts Trust.

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[For headshots and key artwork, click here.](#)

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