

PRESS RELEASE

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ROYAL COURT THEATRE ANNOUNCES RECIPIENTS OF INAUGURAL JERWOOD ROYAL COURT COMMISSIONING SCHEME



L- R Top - Shahid Iqbal Khan, Simon Longman, Christine Entwisle
L- R Bottom - Anjeli Chapman, Harry Mould, Tonderai Munyevu

The Royal Court, in partnership with Jerwood Foundation, today announces the recipients of the inaugural Jerwood Royal Court Commissioning Scheme - igniting and underwriting brand new commissions for original plays with venues and producers across the UK.

In its first-ever funding round, six grants of up to £6,000 each have been awarded jointly to playwrights and producers who applied through the open-access national Scheme. Designed to invest in a pipeline of ambitious and risk-taking new theatre and encourage producers backing original work, grants will underwrite the signature fee for a new play commission belonging to the producer and writer.

Reaching a diverse cohort of exceptional writers, and with producers across the country from major national playhouses to independent touring companies, the 2026 recipients are: **Tonderai Munyevu with York Theatre Royal, Simon Longman with Kestrel Theatre, Harry Mould with Traverse Theatre, Christine Entwisle with Shared Experience, Anjeli Chapman with Tamasha and Shahid Iqbal Khan with Liverpool Everyman & Playhouse.**

Launched this year for the Royal Court's **70th anniversary**, for its inaugural round the Scheme received 136 applications, each in partnership between a playwright and producer - with 12 shortlisted for interview by a panel including representatives from Jerwood Foundation and the Royal Court's artistic leadership. The second round of applications, for grants in 2027, will also be announced later this year.

Royal Court Executive Director, Will Young said: *'We're delighted to announce the first recipients for our game-changing new Jerwood Royal Court Commissioning Scheme. The quality and breadth of applications was exceptional, reflecting the huge amounts of new writing talent and creative energy across British theatre - and generating heated debate for the shortlisting and selection panels. We know the decisions will only get tougher each year as we grow this programme annually - providing a long-term engine for investment in bold, original new theatre. Now we just can't wait to see the plays come to life and meet audiences across the country.'*

Lara Wardle, Executive Director and Trustee, Jerwood Foundation said: *"Jerwood support of the Jerwood Royal Court Commissioning Scheme builds on a long-standing relationship with the Royal Court Theatre and underlines our ongoing commitment to excellence and emerging talent in the arts. I am delighted that, in its inaugural year, this new national programme will enable six new commissions across the UK and provide opportunities for risk-taking and ambition to flourish."*

A new, annual open-access national fund designed to unlock risk and investment in commissioning new plays, the Jerwood Royal Court Commissioning Scheme marks a new era for the two organisations' long-standing partnership, and a major expansion in the Court's approach to playwright support – looking beyond its own stages to share resources nationwide.

The Scheme is also supported by the Writers' Guild of Great Britain (WGGB) to ensure fair terms for commissioned writers on agreements. Grants from the Jerwood Royal Court Commissioning Scheme cover the non-recoupable first payments for six new play commissions per year, on at least WGGB minimum rates. By awarding funds at this point, the Scheme will unlock the first step in commissioning and underwrite financial risk, while encouraging theatres and producers to commit future investment towards completing commissions and undertaking full production.

ENDS

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About the Recipients - Playwrights and Producers

Tonderai Munyevu is an award-winning queer writer, director and performer whose work explores history and its afterlives in the present. His theatre is bold and urgent, shaped by

drama and infused with music and comedy. Writing credits include *Mugabe, My Dad and Me* (York Theatre Royal/ETT, UK Theatre Award for Best New Play, 2022), *Mansfield Park* (co-writer, Watermill Theatre), *Mama Goose* (with Vikki Stone, Theatre Royal Stratford East), *The Moors* (Tara Arts Theatre), and *The Last Chihoro* (BBC Radio 4).

York Theatre Royal has welcomed and entertained the people of York for more than 280 years, offering a diverse programme for audiences of all ages to enjoy.

With the support of Arts Council England, and working alongside creative partners, York Theatre Royal is continually building on its reputation for producing high quality ambitious theatre. As well as creating exciting new work, with and for the community in York, the aspiration is also to build national and international relationships to take work to other parts of the UK, and across the globe.

York Theatre Royal has one of the best auditoriums for dance and is proud to welcome national and internationally renowned dance companies giving audiences the chance to see innovative world-class dance in York. The theatre's curated programme of presented work also offers audiences opportunities to see Olivier-award winning shows, West End productions and new work from innovative touring companies and local artists. Stand-up, drama, comedy, music, family shows and more are on offer in the theatre's diverse programme of presented work. Community is at the heart of York Theatre Royal, with a proactive creative engagement programme which reaches people from a wide variety of different backgrounds and ages.

Simon Longman is a playwright originally from the West Midlands, UK. His work has been produced, performed and translated around the world. His plays include: *Falling Falling Falling* (RWCMD/Young Vic); *(Circle Dreams Around) The Terrible, Terrible Past* (National Theatre, Connections); *Patient Light* (Eastern Angles); *Island Town* (Paines Plough); *Gundog* (Royal Court); *Rails* (TBTL); *White Sky* (RWCMD/Royal Court); *Sparks* (Old Red Lion); *Milked* (Pentabus Theatre Company).

He was awarded the 49th George Devine Award for Most Promising Playwright and was also a recipient of the Channel 4 Playwright's Scheme. He is an Associate Artist at Kestrel Theatre Company, which works within prisons around the UK, teaching and exploring playwriting. His plays are published by Bloomsbury.

Kestrel Theatre is a transformative force within the UK criminal justice system, creating original pieces of theatre, film and live performance with people with lived experience of the prison system.

Founded in 1999, Kestrel work both within and beyond prison settings, working with participants to co-create original, professional-quality artistic work. Projects include annual winter family shows within prisons, original documentary films, and productions for public-facing audiences. A significant part of Kestrel's work is supporting alumni to build creative careers on the outside, with alumni gaining professional roles across film, theatre and television.

Kestrel's notable public productions include *Magnify* (New Diorama, 2024), *Youngers* (New Diorama, 2022), *Broken Dreams* (Royal Court, 2017 & 2018), *Blood and Water* (Royal Court, 2016). Films include *Saving Face* (starring Sharon Duncan Brewster) and *After Time*.

Harry Mould (they/she) is a writer and wellbeing facilitator from Wales. Their first play, *The Brenda Line*, was commissioned by Pitlochry Festival Theatre for their 2024/25 season before transferring to the Traverse theatre in Edinburgh. It won the Alfred Fagon Award in 2025. Their first script for television, *The Houdini Detectives*, was a finalist in the Studio 21 Drama Series Prize, and their forthcoming debut novel was a finalist in both the Merky New Writers Book Prize and the Peters Fraser Dunlop Queer Literary Prize. They are currently under commission with Theatr Clwyd Cymru.

Harry lives in Edinburgh and is Associate Artist with Sanctuary Queer Arts in Glasgow.

Traverse Theatre, Scotland's National New Writing Company, champions the creation, development and production of bold new work. From its home in Edinburgh, the Traverse supports artists to tell urgent contemporary stories and connects audiences with theatre that reflects the world we live in today.

For more than sixty years the Traverse has been a launchpad for new voices and a home for creative risk. Many of the plays that begin life on its stages go on to national and international touring, further productions and translations, helping to shape the future of theatre in Scotland and beyond. Through year-round artistic activity, artist development and the internationally recognised Traverse Festival, the organisation brings writers, theatre-makers and audiences together to share ideas, explore different perspectives and experience the power of live storytelling.

As the organisation enters its next chapter, the Traverse is focused on strengthening its role as Scotland's national centre for new writing - supporting artists, widening access to theatre and ensuring that new stories continue to be discovered, developed and shared with audiences at home and around the world.

Christine Entwisle is a writer, performer and director whose work spans theatre, film and radio. Beginning in experimental and visual theatre, she started writing to create her own material, developing a voice that blends dark humour, lyricism and emotional truth.

Rooted in her native West Cumbria, her stories often give voice to older women who are navigating the chaos of their lives — finding comedy in despair and solace in the fells.

A multi-award-winning radio writer, Christine won the BBC Writers Award and Funny Women Award for *Do You Wish to Continue*, and later the BBC Audio Drama Award for *Secret Kebabs*. She has been shortlisted for both the Writers' Guild Awards and this year's BBC Audio Awards, with recent credits including *All the Names You Ever Called Me*, *Talking to Chickens* and *Christmas Past* for BBC Radio 4.

She has also written and directed several award-winning short films screened at festivals in the UK and abroad. Christine returned to theatre last year with her one-woman show *Breakages*, which tours this autumn.

Shared Experience produces work on tour around the world that is characterised by thrillingly distinctive performance styles with a focus on female-led work which celebrates both physical and text-based theatre. Shared Experience has continually worked to excite and inspire people with the unique delights of live performance and unpredictability of the stage be that in a village hall or in the West End. 2026 marks the company's 50th birthday and this autumn they will be announcing a new programme of work for 2027 & 2028.

Anjeli Chapman was born in New York City. She came to England in 2020 to study English at the University of Cambridge. She developed her debut play *Flinch* in the Royal Court's playwriting group. In 2024, she became the writing assistant for Lucy Prebble and Ed Solomon. In 2025, she won the Edward F. Albee Fellowship for *Flinch* and in 2026, it was performed as a staged reading in the main space at Soho Theatre. Chapman is represented by Josh Varney at 42.

Tamasha is an artist-centred engine room for bold, globally resonant storytelling. Rooted in the lived experiences of Global Majority artists, the company champions trailblazers - placing craft, collaboration and cultural authorship at the heart of everything it produces.

For 35 years, Tamasha has invested in Global Majority artists at every stage of their development, building a distinctive pathway from early-career development through to mid-scale production. The company is committed to long-term creative relationships - nurturing writers and artists to make work of ambition and quality, on their own terms and at the scale their talent deserves.

Across its history, Tamasha has produced an extraordinary body of work that foregrounds complex, unapologetic perspectives - from *East is East* by Ayub Khan Din and *Blood* by Emteaz Hussain, to *Approaching Empty* by Ishy Din and *Does My Bomb Look Big In This?* by Nyla Levy. The company has championed contemporary voices like Zia Ahmed (*I Wanna Be Yours*), Shahid Iqbal Khan (*10 Nights*), Shaan Sahota (*Under the Mask*) and Satinder Chohan (*Made in India*, *Lotus Beauty*), alongside expansive reimagining and ensemble storytelling in *Hakawatis: Women of the Arabian Nights* by Hannah Khalil, *STARS* by Mojisola Adebayo, *Great Expectations* by Tanika Gupta and *Wolves on Road* by Beru Tessema.

Shahid Iqbal Khan writes for stage and radio. His Olivier-Award nominated play *10 Nights* debuted at Bush Theatre in 2021, in a co-production by Graeae and Tamasha. Phizzical Productions revived the play in 2024 and 2025, touring it to places like Omnibus Theatre, Riverside Studios and across the UK to venues such as Curve Theatre, the Lowry and Birmingham Hippodrome. His play *Jinnity* was shortlisted for the George Devine Award. In 2025, *Jinnity* had a public rehearsed reading at the Rich Mix as part of the Graeae New Writing Festival. Shahid is based in Bury (in Greater Manchester).

Liverpool Everyman & Playhouse, rooted in Liverpool's spirit, are a creative powerhouse with national and international impact, driven by a passion for theatre, the city, and the belief that theatre can entertain, inspire and fuel positive social change.

A registered charity (1081229), the theatres acknowledge the continued support of Arts Council England and Liverpool City Council, and their audiences, donors, patrons and

partners. For audiences, artists, and communities alike, Liverpool Everyman & Playhouse are places of wonder, magic, and extraordinary moments waiting for you to enjoy.

About Jerwood Foundation

Established in 1977 for John Jerwood MC (1918-1991) by Alan Grieve CBE (1928-2025). **Jerwood Foundation** is a UK charity committed to supporting excellence and emerging talent in the arts in the UK. Alan Grieve served as Chairman for over 30 years and was appointed Chairman Emeritus in 2023, when Rupert Tyler was appointed Chairman. The organisation is led by Lara Wardle, Executive Director and Trustee and to date Jerwood Foundation has committed over £113.5 million to support the arts in the UK.

Jerwood Foundation owns the **Jerwood Collection** of modern and contemporary art, and an important part of Jerwood's philanthropic mission is delivered by the Collection through its loaning programme and promotion of a broader understanding, interpretation and enjoyment of art. Also included in the Jerwood group of organisations is **Jerwood Space**, which was Jerwood's first major capital project when established by Jerwood Foundation in Southwark in 1998. Jerwood Space is a dedicated rehearsal space providing theatre, musical theatre, opera and dance companies with an outstanding environment within which to create their work.

www.jerwood.org

About The Writers' Guild of Great Britain

The Writers' Guild of Great Britain (WGGB) is a trade union representing writers for TV, film, theatre, audio, books, comedy, poetry, animation and videogames. It negotiates national agreements on pay and conditions with key industry bodies, including BBC, ITV, Netflix and Pact; the Royal Court, National Theatre and Royal Shakespeare Company. It campaigns and lobbies on behalf of writers and offers a range of benefits to its members, including free contract vetting, support and advice; events and discounts; free training; a weekly ebulletin; a pension scheme and welfare fund. Find out more at www.writersguild.org.uk