



PRESS RELEASE - 1 September 2026

Royal Court Theatre announce full line up for the Autumn Open Submissions Festival, in partnership with Character 7



L - R top Rebecca Banatvala, Eoghan Quinn, Selorm Adonu
L - R bottom Sam Ward, Nayantara Nayar

Today the Royal Court Theatre, in partnership with **Character 7**, announces the full line up for their third Open Submissions Festival, running from **Monday 14 September – Friday 18 September 2026**, as part of the theatre's landmark 70th anniversary season.

Selected from the nearly 4000 scripts received each year, the Festival will showcase five of the most distinctive and exciting new plays submitted to the Royal Court through its Open Submissions Portal, open year-round to all playwrights writing in English worldwide.

Presented in the Jerwood Theatre Upstairs, the line up includes: *Aunties in the USSR* by **Rebecca Banatvala**, directed by Mayaan Haputantri; *The Nine of Swords* by **Eoghan Quinn**, directed by Aaliyah McKay; *The Honour Table* by **Selorm Adonu**, directed by Aneesha Srinivasan; *My Son, the Guillotine* by **Sam Ward**, directed by Danielle Kassaraté; and *Theertham* by **Nayantara Nayar**, directed by Nico Rao Pimparé.

The Open Submissions Festival is central to the promise at the heart of the Royal Court's 70 year legacy - that anyone, anywhere in the world, can submit a play for consideration and it will be read and responded to by a member of our Artistic Team. Thanks to the generous support from award-winning independent production company **Character 7**, the producers of *The Night Manager*, the festival now features in the Royal Court programme twice annually.

As well as offering industry and audiences a first glimpse at work for the most promising playwrights, many plays featured in previous festivals have then been programmed as full productions on the Court's stages. As part of the Royal Court Theatre's 70th anniversary season this year, **Jack Nicholls'** *The Shitheads*, which received an Olivier nomination this year, and **Rhys Warrington's** *Monument*, which opens in December, both follow successful readings in the first Open Submissions festival in 2025. While other featured plays enjoy productions elsewhere - **Noga Flaishon's** *Memoriam* opens at Southwark Playhouse Borough later this year.

Gillian Greer, Associate Playwright and Senior Dramaturg said: *"I am delighted that our Open Submissions Festival continues to go from strength to strength. This is the first time we've hosted two festivals in one year, and the discovery of new voices shows no signs of slowing down. Dark, difficult, political, theatrical and funny - this Festival's programme continues to prove just how much astonishing new writing for the stage is out there, just waiting to be given a platform."*

Character 7's Executive Chairman, **Stephen Garrett** added: *"Once again the plays selected for this season's Open Submissions Festival are a potent and timely reminder about why we all need to fight to ensure that new voices can find a platform where spellbinding and transforming stories can be told. It's as much a pleasure as it is an honour for Character 7 to be able to partner the Royal Court in this oh-so noble and glorious cause."*

The festival runs from **Monday 14th September until Friday 18th September 2026**, with each performance starting at 7:45pm in the Royal Court Jerwood Theatre Upstairs. For more information or to submit a script through the Royal Court's Open Submissions programme, please visit the Royal Court Theatre's website.

Tickets will cost £8.50 and go on-sale to the public at midday today via the Royal Court website and Box Office.

Writers' Card Members will have exclusive access to 20% off tickets to this event. All tickets will

be eligible for a multibuy offer: when buying tickets for more than one performance, there will be a discount of £1.50 per ticket. (Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer).

The Open Submissions Festival is presented in partnership with Character 7, an award-winning independent production company based in London, whose work includes the multi-award-winning global TV hit The Night Manager.

SHOW BY SHOW

***Aunties in the USSR* by Rebecca Banatvala**

Directed by Mayaan Haputantri

Monday 14 September, 7:45pm

'We came here to scatter Rustam's ashes in Red Square and that is what we are going to do.'

It's 1985. Ratti and her best friend Bachi are proud members of the Zoroastrian Ladies Committee for Socialist Justice. After a bruising election defeat, Ratti drags Bachi from Leytonstone to the USSR to scatter her late husband's ashes.

When their pilgrimage goes spectacularly off course, the two aunties find themselves tangled up with caviar smugglers, dancing bears and the KGB.

A joyful new comedy from **Rebecca Banatvala**.

***The Nine of Swords* by Eoghan Quinn**

Directed by Aaliyah McKay

Tuesday 15 September, 7:45pm

"Like not to be obvious Sean, but if you do this, you're going to have a sword on your face until you die."

A solar eclipse descends over Dublin, but it's just another day at the tattoo studio for artists Nika and Sean, and receptionist Clo.

But as the light fades, the three co-workers find themselves confronting the lives they've built and their futures. By the time darkness falls, some choices will be made that cannot be undone.

A darkly comic, unsettling new play from **Eoghan Quinn**.

***The Honour Table* by Selorm Adonu**

Directed by Aneesha Srinivasan

Wednesday 16 September, 7:45pm

'For once I just want to choose something for me'

Three years after their father's death, the Frimpong siblings gather for their annual memorial dinner.

This year, Godwin arrives with an offer that will divide the family but secure the future of The Root, the organisation their father founded. An MBE. Together, they must decide whether the price is worth paying.

The Honour Table is a new play by **Selorm Adonu**.

***My Son, the Guillotine* by Sam Ward**

Directed by Danielle Kassaraté

Thursday 17 September, 7:45pm

'We are so fucked. We are so completely, totally, utterly fucked. We are on the brink of total societal collapse. The world is really, truly, falling apart.'

Ben hasn't been home in three years.

When he arrives unannounced at his parents' door late one night, his politician mother wants to know why.

By morning, it becomes clear he's not there for a friendly visit.

-Sam Ward's *My Son, the Guillotine*, is a gripping new play about history, disillusionment and what it takes to really change the world.

***Theertham* by Nayaranta Nayar**

Directed by Nico Rao Pimparé

Friday 18 September, 7:45pm

'The water?! That sound- that- it's... marvellous. Can't you hear it?'

As drought tightens its grip on a community, a diviner discovers an extraordinary source of water beneath a widow's garden.

But as people exploit it for profit, ghosts of the past begin to rise to the surface.

Moving between two generations of women, *Theertham* is a new play by **Nayaranta Nayar**.

Writer Biographies

Selorm Adonu

Selorm Adonu is an award-winning writer, actor, poet and entrepreneur from South London, working across film, television, theatre and spoken word. His screen credits include Paramount + series "Curfew", Sky's Prisoner, and the Knives Down campaign created by and starring alongside Idris Elba, as well as appearances in Casualty and Doctor Who. He made his theatrical debut at the Royal Court Theatre in G by Tife Kusoro and has since toured the UK in the one-man show Please Do Not Touch by former Birmingham Poet Laureate Casey Bailey.

Casey Bailey. He has trained at The Brit School of Performing Arts and National Youth Theatre Rep Company.

As a writer, Selorm's BAFTA and BIFA-qualifying short film Man To Man, which he wrote and stars in alongside David Harewood MBE, has screened at BAFTA HQ, Netflix and international festivals including the Rhode Island International Film Festival, Flickerfest and the Pan African Film Festival, earning multiple awards and reaching over 50,000 viewers on Million Youth Media's YouTube channel.

Rebecca Banatvala

Rebecca Banatvala is an actor and writer. Her debut full length play 'A Piece of My Liver' was shortlisted for the Tony Craze Award with Tessa Walker attached to direct. Rebecca was part of the first trans+ onscreen BFI Darkroom cohort (24/25), is an alumni of Soho writers (2022) and was shortlisted for Nisha Parti's 2020 Asian Writer's Award in conjunction with the BBC. As an actor her credits include: Summerfolk (National Theatre), Northanger Abbey (Orange Tree), Much Ado About Nothing (RSC). Her television credits include: Vigil (BBC), The Syndicate (BBC) Love, Death & Robots (Netflix). Previous work as writer / actor includes: Rapport at the Caravan Theatre with Tatty Macleod.

Nayantara Nayar

Nayantara Nayar is a playwright and researcher based out of the UK and India, and an Associate Artist at HighTide theatre. She has a decade's worth of experience making and facilitating theatre. Her creative practice combines her interest in storytelling and playwriting with her research skills (qualitative and archival) to explore various themes and ideas including ecological crisis, South Asian geopolitics during the early Cold War, urban development in India and its impact of performance cultures, and memory, forgetting and non-dramatic theatre.

She is a Chevening and CHASE awarded scholar with a background in performance practices, media and cultural studies, and sociology. She completed her PhD in Creative Writing from the University of East Anglia, where she studied water crisis and theatre, looking at how theatrical interventions help communities re-imagine their relationship to water. You can find out more about her writing, dramaturgical services and research on nayantaranayar.com.

Eoghan Quinn

Eoghan Quinn is a playwright from Dublin. His play visions will premiere at the Abbey Theatre in October 2026. His play special occasion is in development at the Almeida Theatre, and recent

work includes two premieres at Dublin Theatre Festival with Hatch Theatre (The Jesus Trilogy, 2024; colic, 2022). Before that, he was a cofounder of Collapsing Horse theatre (Bears in Space, 2016 - 59e59 NYC/Soho Theatre/Underbelly). He holds a PhD in English Literature from NYU (MacCracken Fellow).

Sam Ward

Sam's play 'Everything I'm Thinking, All of the Time' was shortlisted for the George Devine Award 2023 and the Verity Bargate Award 2022. He has been commissioned by the Soho Theatre, and is currently on attachment to the Royal Court.

Working under his company YESYESNONO, his play 'we were promised honey!' (performed by the author) received five stars from the Scotsman and the Financial Times in 2022 when it opened at Paines Plough's Roundabout, Summerhall. It then transferred to Soho Theatre in November 2022 before undertaking a national & international tour across 2023, having its US debut at 59E59 Theaters in New York. His play 'the accident did not take place' ('mesmerising' The Stage) was shortlisted for the Total Theatre Award in 2019 and his first play 'Five Encounters on a Site Called Craigslist' ('moving and bittersweet' The Guardian) won the Total Theatre Award for Best Emerging Artist in 2017. His plays 'Nation' & 'The Glorious French Revolution' opened at Paines Plough's Roundabout in August 2024 & New Diorama Theatre in November 2024 respectively. 'As Far As We Know' opened at Summerhall as part of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2026.

ENDS.

For the Royal Court press team, please contact:

Maisie Lawrence on maisie@breadandbutterpr.uk

Su-Ann Chow-Seegoolam su-ann@breadandbutterpr.uk

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

[Images here.](#)

NOTES TO THE EDITORS

Code of Conduct

The Royal Court has devised a Code of Conduct intended for staff, freelancers, audiences, participants, supporters, independent companies and wider stakeholders. It sets out the fundamental principles for how we work together: guidelines and expectations which reflect our legal duties, as well as our values and ethics – including anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice. [Please read more here.](#)

About Character 7

Character 7 is an award-winning independent production company based in London. Founded by Stephen Garrett, the company is driven by a deep belief in the power of great writing and the importance

of nurturing talent. Character 7 champions both established and emerging voices; collaborating with leading screenwriters, directors, and the next generation of storytellers shaping the future of screen drama. Reflecting its long-term commitment to discovering and supporting new writers, Character 7 is the headline sponsor of the Royal Court's Open Submission Festival and Soho Theatre's Verity Bargate Award. Renowned for producing intelligent, stylish, and emotionally charged drama, Character 7 has worked with the BBC, AMC, HBO, Lionsgate, Starz, Amazon Prime, and Disney+ to deliver globally acclaimed series including *The Night Manager*, *Culprits*, *The Undoing*, and *The Rook*. Season 1 of *The Night Manager* was nominated for twelve Emmys and won three Golden Globes. Season 2 – once again led by Garrett as Executive Producer – arrived on screens around the world in January 2026.