

ROYAL COURT



Dugsi Dayz By Sabrina Ali Digital resource pack

Production images



About Dugsi Dayz

“Your stories are silly, no valuable lessons? What happened to the hair raising blood curdling stories!?”

Detention on a Saturday? These four girls are keeping tight-lipped on why they're there. When a power outage at the Mosque plunges them into darkness, the girls retell Somali folktales to break the ice. As they delve into their stories, they discover parallels that may just lead to friendship.

A **Side eYe** Production, written by **Sabrina Ali** (Muna Knows it All) and directed by **Poppy Clifford** (originally co-directed by **Warda Mohamed**), *Dugsi Dayz* is a riotous and authentic comedy exploring Somali, Muslim culture and female friendship, inspired by the 1985 movie *The Breakfast Club*.

Following an award-winning run at the Edinburgh Fringe and sold-out national tour, *Dugsi Dayz* opened the Royal Court's 2024 upstairs season.

The production was derived from a scratch performance at Rich Mix as part of Somali Week Festival.

Creative team

Susu Ahmed - Cast

Sabrina Ali - Cast and writer

Faduma Issa -Cast

Hadsan Mohamud -Cast

Poppy Clifford - Director

Warda Mohamed - Original Co-Director

Hannah Abdule - Lead Creative Producer

Raha Mahamoud - Creative Producer

Joshua Gadsby - Lighting Designer

Calum Perrin - Sound Designer

Shakira Taylor-Knight - Stage Manager On Book

Khadija Raza - Design Consultant

Gurkiran Kaur - Voice Coach

DK Fashola - Movement Consultant

Ilhan Adam - Assistant Director

Bilan Qorane Arre - Assistant Director



Writing tip from Sabrina Ali

If you're stuck, write about what you know. Enjoy the process of writing. Share your ideas with friends and family—they can inspire you. Don't stress about perfection; just vomit down whatever comes to mind.

If you're not enjoying what you're writing, start over!!!

You need to feel excited about your work, so focus on what makes you happy. Writing for yourself is the best because it helps you ignore outside pressures and frees you from fear of judgment, and that's when you make the best work.



Sabrina Ali on the Playwright's Podcast

Sabrina Ali is a British Somali writer and actor, who is driven by a passion for sharing authentic and representative stories.

In this episode of the Royal Court's Playwright's Podcast, Sabrina chats to podcast host Susan Wokoma about how she got into writing.

[Listen here](#)



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Write your own review!

Now that you've watched the show, you might want to try and write your own review of the show

Here are some tips from the Royal Court press team about how to write a professional review:

1. Feel free to make notes during the performance/on the script.
2. Make sure all names are spelt correctly, and all creatives where mentioned are credited clearly.
3. Try to do some background research on the show, and what it hopes to achieve. Part of the response to the production should consider if you think it has achieved its aim.
4. Avoid a simple retelling of the script, and being overly descriptive. Reviews should be filled with opinion and analysis.
5. What is noticeable about aspects of the production outside of the acting, the dialogue, staging, costume and lighting design?
6. Question prejudices and assumptions. Be aware of any internal bias you may have, and make sure you back up statements with examples from the production.
7. Remember your audience, reviews are designed for the general public and should be accessibly written.
8. Try to write with curiosity and compassion, playwrights often spend years perfecting their work, and it should be perceived with this in mind.

Stuck?

Here are some reviews of the show from when it was performed at the Royal Court Theatre



Dugsi Dayz: The joyous British-Somali show inspired by The Breakfast Club set to take the Royal Court by storm

Ayan Omar | The Standard

For British Somalis, there is something nostalgic about Dugsi Dayz, the hit play that opens at the Royal Court Theatre this week.

It stirs in us memories of childhood afternoons spent cross-legged on carpeted mosque floors, sneaking in snacks and frantically trying to remember our Quran recitation.

Sabrina Ali's show, which has already had several successful runs including in Edinburgh, looks at those times through the lens of Eighties comedy *The Breakfast Club*. It perfectly captures the amusing, and often chaotic atmosphere of a dugsi – a term British Somalis use to refer to religious schools.

In the UK, children aged six right up to their late teens attend classes typically in a mosque with others from all over their community, studying Islam, Arabic and learning to recite the Quran.

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Ali, who also stars in the show, says, “Everyone has a funny dugsi story. If you speak to any millennial or Gen Z Somalis about dugsi, they’ll have a story to tell you. I wanted to write something people could come and watch and reminisce on.”

It’s a raw and wonderfully fleshed out portrayal of female friendship and the Somali, Muslim culture told through four friends: Salma, Munira, Yasmin and Hani, who find themselves trapped in a dugsi detention one afternoon. They banter, their chat layered with cultural references, and divulge heartfelt secrets.

“I like the idea of confining people in one space and exploring archetypes. I wanted to explore the main archetypes of Somali girls.” says Ali.

“You have four girls, who come from completely different worlds, and they’re forced to interact. In any other aspect of life, they wouldn’t be seen with each other, but in that one detention they find out they have a lot of shared experiences.”

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Dugsi Dayz is unapologetically Somali, the characters making references to Somali folklore and at times inserting Somali phrases. Writing for a specific audience without worrying about cultural nuances felt freeing for Ali.

“I watched so many shows that were from a completely different world from me. So, I was able to understand and pick up on those nuances. And I think I really underestimated the audience's intelligence,” Ali says.

“We’ve all been a teenage girl at some point,” she adds, recalling an endearing moment when Dugsi Dayz was played for an audience of elderly people who spoke about the play afterwards with glee.

Raised in south-west London by parents who migrated from Somalia in the Nineties, Ali has always considered acting on the stage her passion. In an industry with scarce representation of visibly black Muslim girls, finding roles that fit her was difficult.

At a young age, as her interest in theatre grew, she became apprehensive, hit with the reality that girls that looked like her rarely realised their dream of writing and performing for the stage.

When she first went to the theatre, Ali said she painfully stood out. “That was the first time I thought, ‘Is theatre somewhere that even has space for me? Because I'd love to be on the stages.’”

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The play's real success is in its careful and authentic portrayal of Muslim girls. Poor Muslim representation has long been an issue and while they make up only one per cent of speaking characters in film and TV, their characters are often entrenched in stereotypes.

They lack nuance and are reduced to the roles of either the terrorist or the hapless, oppressed hijabi girl that needs to be emancipated, not just from her culture but her religion too. When it came to writing her characters, Ali says: "It was so easy for me because I was writing the girls I've met in my life, so it felt natural.

A lot of the time, when people are writing Muslim characters, and they're not Muslim themselves or they're not from the same background, they have a lot of bigoted judgments about what they think our biggest insecurities are and what they think our biggest fears are.

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“We’re just normal girls. We’re not shackled by our religion.”

She adds, “The hijab isn’t the centre of our storyline.”

To both Abdule and Ali, it’s important that the work Side eYe spotlights show that “hijabis can exist in stories freely and beautifully.”

“None of us anticipated, the sort of catapult into success that Dugsi Dayz has had,” Abdule says. Part of its success is the plays representation both on stage and behind the curtains, with an ensemble of Somali cast, writer and producer.

“We’ve been able to show that this is commercially viable, like a show like this, can sell out and have a majority Muslim audience and still be considered successful,” Abdule says.

“When we talk about representation. I think sometimes we think it's representation for representations sake. But actually, it's because brilliant, stories are being told.”

Yet there is hesitation with those in “decision making spaces,” who see telling black stories as a risk, worrying whether it will sell out.

“A lot of the times when it comes to black stories, we hear we’ve already got this story. Let’s see next year, “ Ali says.

“There could be so many other plays of young Somali girls and it’s not going to be like Dugsi Dayz because it's so different. Just actually trust us that we'll be able to do this.”

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Yet progress is being made, although slowly. “When I was 18, theatre may not have had a space for me, but I go into shows now like For Black Boys and Red Pitch and seeing audiences that look like me, it feels surreal. It was never like that before,” Ali says.

“This is such a sick time for black theatre right now.”

end.

