

# ALMEIDA THEATRE

## PRESS RELEASE

24 October 16

**Alongside the world premiere of Ella Hickson's *Oil*, Almeida Participation present a short play in response to *Oil's* themes, working with women aged 17 to 97; and details of *The Right to Write*, a panel discussion on cultural appropriation**

### **2066**

**a short play by Sonali Bhattacharyya**

**directed by Almeida Director of Participation Dani Parr**

**Monday 14 and Tuesday 15 November, 5pm**

*2066*, a short play created by Almeida Participation working with women aged 17 to 97, will have two free performances at the Almeida on 14 and 15 November. *2066* is written by Sonali Bhattacharyya and directed by Director of Participation Dani Parr. The play has been created from a series of workshops - at the Almeida and in community centres - which asked women about their relationship with their mothers and daughters.

In workshops, the participants shared their personal stories and responded to creative tasks about what these relationships might look like in the future, focusing on political differences women have with their mothers and what ambitions their own mothers had for them when they were growing up. The resulting play looks at a mother and a daughter, played by **Sarah Goddard** and **Sophie Melville**, in an imagined future, and is set against a backdrop of changes to the welfare system and the NHS.

The Almeida has commissioned film maker Jaha Browne to document the entire project in a short film which will accompany the live event and be made available online.

This project follows the success of the Play On project, in partnership with Arsenal in the Community, which responded to themes in Leo Butler's *Boy*, and told stories about life in London for young people.

**Sarah Goddard's** theatre credits include *Hetty Feather* in the West End, on tour & in the USA; *The Clock Stopped at 8:19 (Connect)* and *Bluebeard* in Brompton Cemetery; *Cinderella* for West Yorkshire Playhouse; *Them With Frozen Tails* at Nottingham Lakehouse/Network of Stuff; *Jack* at York Theatre Royal; *The Borrowers* at Mac, Birmingham; *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Much Ado About Nothing* for the Oxford Stage Company; *The Taming of The Shrew* at the Orange Tree; and *Marat/Sade* at the Arcola. Sarah has also appeared in physical, devised and site specific theatre with various innovative companies. She also works as a drama practitioner and facilitator.

**Sophie Melville** performed Gary Owen's *Iphigenia in Splott* for Sherman Cymru, at the Edinburgh Festival and at the National Theatre. Other theatre credits include *Blackbird* at The Other Room Theatre; *Insignificance* and *Under Milk Wood* at Theatr Clwyd; *Romeo and Juliet* at The Sherman Theatre; *The Shape Of Things*; *'Tis Pity She's A Whore*; and *See How They Run* at Theatre By The Lake; *Romeo and Juliet* for the Sam Wanamaker Festival; and *The Children's Hour*, *Hamlet*, *Picnic*;

*Boston Marriage; Once A Catholic; Pericles; Anthony and Cleopatra* whilst training at Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.

## **ALMEIDA QUESTIONS: THE RIGHT TO WRITE**

**Wednesday 16 November, 5pm**

*Who owns culture? Who has the right to tell certain stories? Is imagination enough?*

A panel including *Oil* playwright **Ella Hickson**; **Vava Tampa**, writer, poet and founder of Save the Congo; theatre critic and journalist **Matt Trueman**; and British-Chinese journalist, author and speaker **Xinrán Xue**, will be chaired by *Oil*'s director **Carrie Cracknell** at the Almeida on 16 November, discussing cultural appropriation and the right to write.

**Almeida Questions** is an eclectic programme of pre-show discussions which consider some of the questions raised by the work on our stage. In each discussion, invited panellists dig into the key issues and ideas emerging from the show.

Tickets for **Almeida Questions: The Right to Write**, priced £7/£5 are now on sale and can be booked via [www.almeida.co.uk](http://www.almeida.co.uk) / 020 7359 4404. Booking details for **2066** will be announced shortly.

## **ENDS**

**For all press enquiries and images, contact Susie Newbery, Press and Media Relations Manager, on 020 7288 4911 or [snewbery@almeida.co.uk](mailto:snewbery@almeida.co.uk)**

## **Notes to Editors**

### **BIOGRAPHIES**

#### **2066 creative team:**

**Sonali Bhattacharyya** is a writer of stage, screen and radio plays. Her plays include *Twelve* for Kali Theatre; *These Four Streets* at Birmingham Rep; *A Thin Red Line* for Kali Theatre, Birmingham Rep and Black Country Touring; and the South Bank Show award nominated *White Open Spaces* for Pentabus Theatre. She was one of three writers on attachment to the Old Vic as part of the inaugural Old Vic 12, where she was commissioned to write a new play *Five Years*. She is currently developing *Deepa the Saint* with the support of Theatre503 (recently selected as one of 'London's best unproduced scripts' for the Dark Horse Writers' Festival). She is under commission to the Tricycle Theatre for their *Mapping Brent* project. Sonali is a graduate of the Royal Court writers' group, London College of the Arts MA in Screenwriting, Birmingham Rep EQUAL attachment programme and BBC Writers' Academy.

**Jaha Browne** is a Director and Filmmaker who uses the camera to enter people's worlds, giving them a platform for their voices to be heard, through intimate portraits. Jaha graduated from Middlesex University with a First Class Honours in Television Production, and in 2011 she received a scholarship to study MA Documentary Practice at Royal Holloway. Since then Jaha has been creating documentaries, music videos and online content. Collaborations include MIND, Reebok and ITSU. She was funded by the BFI and ECF to make experimental documentaries for nine months. In 2015 her short film *Unify* was featured in the hour long documentary *Life Through My Lens* which was broadcasted on BBC 3 Fresh. Jaha's films have successfully screened at

leading film festivals in Europe such as IDFA and Dok Leipzig. Currently she is co directing a feature length documentary called *Homelands* for Punch Records funded by the Arts Council.

**Dani Parr** joined the Almeida in October 2015 as Director of Participation. She was previously Associate Director at Royal and Derngate, Northampton. She specialises in directing work for children and young people and managing and running creative projects with people of all ages. Dani previously worked at Pentabus and Birmingham Rep and as a freelance director and workshop leader. Directing work includes *I Believe in Unicorns*, which has been seen by over 50,000 people at the Vaudeville Theatre, the Orange Tree Theatre, Richmond, and as part of Imagine Children's Festival 2016 at Royal Festival Hall on the Southbank; *Moominsummer Madness*, a co-production between Polka Theatre, Royal and Derngate and Little Angel Theatre; and *Flathampton* which won the Argus Angel Award at Brighton Festival 2013. She programmed the Take Off Festival 2013, an international festival of theatre work for children and young people based in Durham; and she directed *Dream Space* for Shakespeare's Globe, a family version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

### ***The Right to Write* panellists:**

**Carrie Cracknell** is a theatre director. Her work includes *Oil*, currently playing at the Almeida; *The Deep Blue Sea*, *Medea* and *Blurred Lines* at the National Theatre; *Macbeth* and *A Doll's House* at the Young Vic, which transferred to the West End and Broadway; *Birdland*, *Pigeons* and *Searched* for the Royal Court; and *Wozzeck* at ENO. Carrie was Artistic Director of the Gate Theatre, London from 2007 to 2012. She has also previously been Associate Director at both the Young Vic and the Royal Court.

**Ella Hickson** is a playwright whose most recent play is *Oil*. Previous plays include *Wendy and Peter Pan* for the RSC; *Boys* for Headlong, Nuffield Theatre, Southampton and HighTide Festival, which subsequently transferred to Soho Theatre; *The Authorised Kate Bane* at the Traverse Theatre; *Gift* as part of *Decade* for Headlong; *Hot Mess* at the Arcola; *Precious Little Talent* at Trafalgar Studios; and *Eight* which played at Bedlam Theatre, P.S. 122 New York and Trafalgar Studios, and won the 2008 Fringe First Award. In 2011 Ella was the Pearson writer in residence at the Lyric Hammersmith. She was the recipient of the 2013 Catherine Johnson Award.

**Vava Tamba**, a native of Congo, is an activist, writer and founder of Save the Congo, a London-based campaign tackling the human tragedy in the Congo. He has written for the Guardian, CNN International and other national and international papers.

**Matt Trueman** is a freelance theatre critic and journalist. He is lead critic at Whatsonstage.com and Variety's London critic, and writes for the Guardian, the Financial Times and the New York Times amongst other publications.

**Xīnrán Xue** is a British-Chinese journalist, author, speaker and advocate for women's rights who often advises western media on western relations with China. From 1989 – 1997 she was presenter of the nightly Chinese radio programme, *Words on the Night Breeze*, before moving to the UK. Her books include *The Good Women of China*, which has been translated into over thirty languages, *Sky Burial*, a collection of her Guardian columns on Chinese society and culture, *What the Chinese Don't Eat*, *Miss Chopsticks*, *China Witness: Voices from a Silent Generation*, *Message from an Unknown Chinese Mother* and *Buy Me the Sky*. In 2004 Xīnrán set up The Mothers' Bridge of Love (MBL) which reaches out to Chinese children in all corners of the world to foster understanding between China and the West, between adoptive culture and birth culture, and to help bridge the poverty gap which still exists in many parts of China. The MBL book for adoptive families, *Mother's Bridge of Love*, came third in TIME magazine's list of the top ten children's books of 2007. In 2011

Xīnrán was nominated by the Guardian as one of the top 100 most inspirational women in the world and in 2013 was awarded The Honorary Doctorate in Anthropology by Hamilton College, USA.

## **ALMEIDA PARTICIPATION**

The Almeida aims to give people of all ages opportunities to participate in creative projects and to have their voices heard. Projects respond to the plays on the stage, enabling communities to contribute to the debate and the issues raised, and to tell their own stories in response.

The Young Artists programme gives young people the opportunity to create theatre with some of the most exciting artists working in the industry, whether through the Young Actors Company, Young Producers group, extensive schools programme or one of our many holiday projects.

The Young Audiences programme allows young people to access tickets for £5 or less, to be part of a Young Critics group or to take part in an Answers Back panel event, which are led by young people for young people.

We aim to work with over 3,000 people a year in structured programmes to inspire, challenge and engage them as audience members, participants and theatre makers; creating opportunities that work to increase confidence, communication and team-work. The Almeida aims to ensure that we are reaching everyone – not just those who are already keen and committed, and that our work is accessible for a diverse range of young people.

## **ABOUT THE ALMEIDA THEATRE**

The Almeida Theatre exists to launch the next generation of British artists onto the world stage. A small room with an international reputation, the Almeida began life as a literary and scientific society – complete with library, lecture theatre and laboratory. From the beginning, the building existed to investigate the world. Today, the Almeida makes brave new work that asks big questions: of plays, of theatre and of the world around us.

The Almeida brings together the most exciting artists to take risks; to provoke, inspire and surprise audiences; to interrogate the present, dig up the past and imagine the future. Whether new work or reinvigorated classic, whether in the theatre, on the road or online, the Almeida makes live art to excite, enliven and entertain. The Almeida makes argument for theatre as an essential force in an increasingly fragmented society.

Founded by Pierre Audi in 1980, his successors were Jonathan Kent and Ian McDiarmid in 1990, and Michael Attenborough in 2002. Productions including *Hamlet* with Ralph Fiennes in 2005, Rufus Norris' *Festen*, *Ruined* by Lynn Nottage and most recently *Chimerica*, *Ghosts* and *King Charles III* have given the theatre international renown.

In summer 2013, Rupert Goold joined the Almeida as Artistic Director. His first production was *American Psycho: a new musical thriller*, which transferred to Broadway in 2016. In 2014 the Almeida productions of *Ghosts* and *Chimerica* won eight Olivier Awards including Best Actress, Best Actor in a Supporting Role, Best New Play, Best Director and Best Revival and enjoyed transfers to the West End and Broadway respectively. This was followed by *King Charles III*, which transferred to the West End at the Wyndham's Theatre and won the Olivier Award for Best New Play in 2015, transferred to Broadway, and toured the UK and Sydney. Other notable productions as Artistic Director include *The Merchant of Venice*, *Medea* and *Richard III*, which in July 2016 was broadcast to cinemas around the world via Almeida Theatre Live.

In summer 2015, the Almeida presented *Almeida Greeks*, which included three major new productions of *Oresteia*, *Bakkhai* and *Medea*, the latter of which was directed by Goold, with a festival of events, performances, talks and readings running alongside.

He co-directed *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* with Almeida Associate Director Robert Icke. Involving more than 60 readers, *The Iliad* reached an audience of over 50,000 people across the world, watching online, or in person at the British Museum and the Almeida Theatre. *The Odyssey* followed the huge success of *The Iliad*, and involved an army of artists in various locations around London. As with *The Iliad*, both theatrical events were live streamed throughout and achieved ground-breaking levels of online engagement.

The Almeida is grateful to its Principal Partner Aspen, in its second term as the Almeida's most significant corporate supporter. Aspen was established in 2002 and is a leading global insurance and reinsurance company.

[www.aspen.co](http://www.aspen.co)

The Almeida is supported using public funding by Arts Council England.

## **ALMEIDA LISTINGS INFORMATION**

*World Premiere*

### ***OIL***

a new play by Ella Hickson  
directed by Carrie Cracknell  
until Saturday 26 November

### ***MARY STUART***

by Friedrich Schiller  
adapted and directed by Robert Icke  
Friday 2 December – Saturday 21 January 2017  
**Press Night: Friday 9 December at 7pm**

### ***HAMLET***

by William Shakespeare  
directed by Robert Icke  
Friday 17 February – Saturday 8 April 2017  
**Press night: Tuesday 28 February 2017 at 7pm**

#### **Address**

Almeida Theatre, Almeida Street, London, N1 1TA

#### **Café Bar**

The Almeida Café Bar is open from 11.30am -11.00pm, Monday to Saturday

#### **Box Office**

**Online** [almeida.co.uk](http://almeida.co.uk)  
**Phone** 020 7359 4404 (10am – 7pm Monday – Saturday)  
**In person** 10am – 7pm, Monday – Saturday  
**Nearest Tube:** Angel / Highbury & Islington

#### ***Oil* performances**

Until Saturday 26 November

Performances at 7pm

Midweek matinees on Wednesdays at 1.30pm

Saturday matinees at 1.30pm

**Mary Stuart** performances

Friday 2 December – Saturday 21 January 2017

Performances at 7pm

Midweek matinees on Wednesday at 1.30pm on 14, 21 and 28 December and 4, 11 and 25 January

Saturday matinees at 1.30pm from 17 December

**Christmas performance times**

There will be no performances on 24, 25 and 26 December

Evening performances take place at the earlier time of 5pm on

31 December and 2 January

**Hamlet**

Friday 17 February – Saturday 8 April 2017

Performances at 7pm

Midweek matinees on Wednesdays at 1.30pm from 11 March

Saturday matinees at 1.30pm from 11 March

**Website**

almeida.co.uk

**Twitter**

@AlmeidaTheatre

**Facebook**

facebook.com/almeidatheatre

**Instagram**

@almeida\_theatre

**Access**

**Oil** Audio Described Performances:

Saturday 12 November at 1.30pm (Touch Tour at 11.15am)

Friday 18 November at 7pm (Touch Tour at 5.30pm)

**Oil** Captioned Performance: Friday 11 November at 7pm

**Mary Stuart** Audio Described performances:

Saturday 7 January at 1.30pm (Touch Tour at 11.45am)

Friday 13 January at 7pm (Touch Tour at 5.30pm)

**Mary Stuart** Captioned Performance: Thursday 19 January at 7pm

**Hamlet** Audio Described performances:

Saturday 1 April at 1.30pm (Touch Tour at 11.45am)

**Hamlet** Captioned performances: Friday 7 April at 7pm

**Talkback**

Post-show discussion with members of the company

Free to same day ticket holders

**Mary Stuart** Thursday 5 January 2017

**Hamlet** Thursday 23 March 2017 with live speech-to-text transcription

**Almeida Questions**

An eclectic programme of pre-show discussions which consider some of the questions raised by the work on our stage.

**The Write to Right** Wednesday 16 November, 5pm

**Mary Stuart: Women in Power** Wednesday 11 January 2017, 5pm