Embargoed until: Thursday 15 October, 11am

**Lyric Hammersmith Theatre announces season of work**

The Lyric Hammersmith Theatre today announces a season of work including projects in the community for Autumn 2020 and two one person shows presented to a socially distanced audience from early 2021, both on sale from today with all tickets £15-£23.

* The critically acclaimed ***Iphigenia in Splott*** written by Gary Owen, directed by Artistic Director Rachel O’Riordan and starring Sophie Melville opens the Main House.
* Paterson Joseph makes his Lyric debut in ***Sancho: An Act of Remembrance***, telling the extraordinary story of Charles Ignatius Sancho, the first Black person of African origin to vote in Britain.
* Work begins on the Lyric’s first community play ***Heart of Hammersmith***, seeing the theatre work with young people from West London to create a new large-scale intergenerational production co-directed by Artistic Director Rachel O’Riordan and resident Assistant Director Alex Hurst.
* Artistic Associates **Tinuke Craig** and **Simon Stephens** lead two new digital school projects with schools across Hammersmith & Fulham. One with primary schools on the climate emergency and one for secondary schools on identity and race.
* The Lyric’s **Crowdfunder campaign** continues to support the theatre in being able to reopen, currently at 57% towards the target of £50,000.

Artistic Director, **Rachel O’Riordan** said: “I am delighted that we can today announce shows for our audiences, returning to do what we do best, producing great work with great artists, in our beautiful theatre. *Iphigenia in Splott* and *Sancho* tell the stories of two vastly different people from very different times, circumstances and places. Both protagonists make life-changing choices. They both, within the structure of the society they live in, make extraordinary decisions. Sophie Melville and Paterson Joseph are two of the UK’s most exhilarating actors, and I am thrilled they are performing at the Lyric for the first time.

I am pleased to also be announcing the start of our first large-scale community production *Heart of Hammersmith*. The Lyric belongs to the people of Hammersmith, and we are here for them - this production will be led by a group of young people from West London, making space for them to tell their story with and about their community, in their theatre.”

Executive Director, **Sian Alexander** said: “I’m thrilled that after 10 long months of closure we will be able to welcome audiences back to the Lyric in the New Year. Ensuring the safety of our artists, audience and team is our number one priority and our new socially distanced seating and industry standard ‘See It Safely’ cleaning and Covid-safety measures mean that everyone can experience the joy of live theatre again at the Lyric. We have long been committed to ensuring access to world-class theatre for everyone and I’m delighted that all seats will be priced at just £15 or £23 this season. In 2021 we will celebrate 25 years of our Free First Night scheme, through which we’ve given over 100,000 free tickets to people who live or work in Hammersmith & Fulham. The Lyric is so many people’s local theatre, just a short walk away from home or work, and it seems fitting that our local community will be the first people through our doors to celebrate our reopening.

Throughout our closure we have continued our vital work with young people in our community ensuring creative opportunities for all and we are excited to launch two new projects in local schools focused on the key issues of our times.

The pandemic has had a devastating financial impact on our theatre, and we are only able to reopen the theatre because of the phenomenal and heart-warming support of our key stakeholders, trusts and individuals - and in particular our local community who are supporting our ongoing crowdfunder campaign with such warmth and passion. We are so grateful to
them all.”

***Iphigenia in Splott***By Gary OwenDirected by Rachel O’Riordan
With Sophie Melville as Effie

Design by Hayley Grindle
Lighting Design by Rachel Mortimer
Sound Design by Sam Jones

Friday 22 January – Saturday 13 February 2021
Press Night: Tuesday 26 January, 7pm

Running time: Approx. 70 mins with no interval

“What is gonna happen, when we can’t take it anymore?”

Gary Owen’s critically acclaimed and powerful monodrama inspired by the Greek myth opens the Lyric’s Main House after 10 months of closure. Directed by Artistic Director Rachel O’Riordan and with Sophie Melville reprising her role as Effie for which she won a Stage Award for Acting Excellence and an Evening Standard Award nomination for Best Actress.

Stumbling down the street drunk at 11.30am Effie is the kind of girl you avoid making eye contact with. You think you know her, but maybe you don't know the half of it.

Effie's life is a mess of drink, drugs and drama every night, and a hangover worse than death the next day - till one night gives her the chance to be something more.

Gary’s most recent plays include a radical reworking of *The Cherry Orchard* for the Sherman Theatre, which translated the action of the play to 1980s Pembrokeshire and *Killology*, a co-production between the Sherman Theatre and the Royal Court, which won Outstanding Achievement in an Affiliate Theatre at the 2018 Olivier Awards. Gary's newest play *Romeo and Julie* is due to be performed at the National Theatre, directed by Rachel O’Riordan.

*Iphigenia in Splott* was originally commissioned and produced by Sherman Theatre.

***Sancho: An Act of Remembrance***Written, directed and performed by Paterson Joseph

Co-directed by Simon GodwinDesign by Michael Vale
Music and sound design by Ben Park
Lighting design by Lucrecia Briceño

Thursday 25 February – Saturday 20 March 2021
Press Night: Tuesday 02 March, 7pm
Supporters’ Night: Wednesday 03 March, 7.30pm

Running time: Approx. 70 mins with no interval

“And like my hero, I struggle against who people **think** I amwhen they see the colour of my skin, and whoI **really** am.”

Paterson Joseph, one of the UK’s finest actors, brings his revealing, funny, one-man show to the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre, telling the remarkable story of the curious and daringly determined life of Charles Ignatius Sancho.

Charles Ignatius Sancho is having his portrait painted by Thomas Gainsborough. Born on a slave ship in 1729, educated in secret, he may not be the man that you would expect to be painted by Gainsborough, but maybe his story is much more than you could imagine.

Sancho’s life was one of surprising, moving and funny twists. A friend of David Garrick, he became a composer, actor, anti-slavery campaigner and the first Black person of African origin to vote in Britain. This is the story of a man who lived a remarkable and ground-breaking life.

Paterson Joseph is a writer and actor on stage and screen, with TV roles including *Noughts & Crosses, Peep Show* and *Doctor Who*. On stage he has worked extensively with the Royal Shakespeare Company and National Theatre.

*Sancho: An Act of Remembrance* was originally commissioned and produced by Pemberley Productions, in association with Oxford Playhouse.

***Heart of Hammersmith***Co-directed by Rachel O’Riordan and Alex Hurst

Summer 2021

*Heart of Hammersmith* is the Lyric’s first large-scale community production, which will open in Summer 2021. The production will celebrate and tell the stories of the people and community of Hammersmith. Working directly with the people of West London who will create the production from their stories, will be a team of professional creatives including co-directors Lyric Artistic Director Rachel O’Riordan and the Lyric’s resident Assistant Director Alex Hurst.

The production will be led by a group of 15 young people recruited from West London and aged 18-25. They will shape and develop the direction of the production, and they will recruit other members of their community to be involved with the show, to create a truly intergenerational production.

Applications open today for young people interested in being part of *Heart of Hammersmith*. To apply you must be aged 18-25 and currently live in West London (Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Kensington and Chelsea, Richmond Upon Thames and Wandsworth). [The application form is available here](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/17sJXWY3zqeyFlLZ7c7USNnsQ8UX920pjcvVWnPmgUD0/viewform?edit_requested=true)

**In schools this Autumn: Stories from the Future**

Following the success of the Lyric’s primary school keyworkers’ children project from Summer 2020, the Lyric continues its support and engagement with local schools working in collaboration with Hammersmith & Fulham Council with *Stories from the Future.* These two free online projects starting in November 2020 will focus on the issues impacting young people in the theatre’s home borough.

All schools involved will be provided with lesson plans and digital resources to stimulate young people’s creative writing and imagination. The project will culminate with professional actors performing the students monologues, which will be recorded and shared digitally alongside live performances in schools in January 2021

Stories from the Future – Imagine 2030 with Simon Stephens

Led creatively by Artistic Associate and award winning playwright Simon Stephens and working with Hammersmith & Fulham primary schools, this project will focus on the impact of the local closure of Hammersmith Bridge and the global climate emergency. The project will encourage schools and students in years 5 and 6 to engage actively with the Hammersmith and Fulham Imagine 2030 campaign to create a borough that is safe, clean and green.

Stories from the Future – Race, Identity & Hidden Histories with Tinuke Craig

Working with Hammersmith & Fulham secondary schools, director and Artistic Associate Tinuke Craig will lead a series of workshops inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement. The project will encourage schools and students in years 7, 8 and 9 to engage actively with the discussions of race and identity through the students’ own ‘hidden histories’. The subjects will be explored creatively and sensitively, in order to challenge and create awareness of the unconscious perceptions society holds in regards to race and identity regarding ourselves or one another.

**Crowdfunder Campaign**

In 2020 the Lyric celebrated its 125th birthday at the same time as having to close due to Covid. Having now been closed for over six months, the impact of losing 75% of income has put incredible financial pressure on the theatre.

This is one of the biggest challenges in the theatre’s history and the theatre calls on its community to help ensure that the Lyric remains at the heart of Hammersmith for another 125 years through supporting its Crowdfunder Campaign to raise £50,000 before the 03 November 2020.

In the last 10 years alone the Lyric has:

* Given **28,000 free tickets** to community groups and those who live and work in Hammersmith and Fulham through its Free First Night scheme
* Given **22,000 free tickets** to local schoolchildren to the annual Panto
* Welcomed nearly **2 million people** through the doors to experience world-class theatre from the heart of Hammersmith

And since the Reuben Foundation Wing opened 5 years ago **180,000 young people** have taken part in creative opportunities and activities through Young Lyric classes and projects.

Help ensure the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre can continue to play a vital role at the cultural heart of West London. Donation pledges start from £10 with unique Lyric gifts offered at every level and need to be made before the 03 November 2020.

To donate to the campaign visit: <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/lyrichammersmiththeatre>

**Notes to Editors**

For press enquiries please contact: amy.belson@lyric.co.uk / 07843483146

**Booking Information for Iphigenia in Splott and Sancho: An Act of Remembrance**

Tickets 020 8741 6850 | [www.lyric.co.uk](http://www.lyric.co.uk) |tickets@lyric.co.uk

Lyric Square, King Street, London, W6 0QL

All tickets £15 or £23

***Iphigenia in Splott***

Friday 22 January – Saturday 13 February 2021
Mon-Sat 7.30pm
Also Sat at 2.30pm and Wed 10 February at 2.30pm.
Free First Night: Friday 22 January, 7.30pm
Press Performance: Tuesday 26 January, 7pm
Open Captioned Performance: Saturday 30 January, 2.30pm
Audio Described Performance: Saturday 30 January, 7.30pm
Tickets: All tickets £15 and £23

***Sancho: An Act of Remembrance***

Thursday 25 February – Saturday 20 March 2021
Mon-Sat 7.30pm
Also Sat at 2.30pm and Wed 17 March at 2.30pm.
Free First Night: Thursday 25 February, 7.30pm
Press Performance: Tuesday 02 March, 7pm
Supporters’ Night: Wednesday 03 March, 7.30pm
Open Captioned Performance: Saturday 06 March, 2.30pm
Audio Described Performance: Saturday 06 March, 7.30pm
Tickets: All tickets £15 and £23

**Free First Night:** People who live or work in Hammersmith & Fulham can get Two Free tickets to the first night of all main house Lyric productions. The scheme offers a two-week window to register for free tickets one month before each main house production. Successful applicants will be randomly selected and notified at least one week before the first night.

**Supporters’ Night:** This exclusive evening performance offers Love the Lyric members the chance to book up to 4 tickets (subject to the Covid guidelines) at £23 a ticket. The evening is for members only and their guests and includes a free drink on arrival and a post-show discussion with a member of the cast or creative team and our Artistic Director Rachel O’Riordan in the theatre. The Lyric is a charity and relies on the support of theatre lovers to keep our world-class theatre in the heart of Hammersmith. To book a ticket, members should email development@lyric.co.uk

Season Biographies

**Paterson Joseph**

Theatre includes: *A Christmas Carol*(Old Vic),*Troilus and Cressida, The Last Days of Don Juan, King Lear* (RSC); *Elmina’s Kitchen, St Joan, Emperor Jones, The Royal Hunt of the Sun* (National Theatre). He has been touring his play *Sancho: An Act of Remembrance* since 2016.

Television includes: *Vigil, Avenue 5, Noughts & Crosses, The End of the F'ing world, Timeless, Babylon Peep Show.*Film includes: *The Beach, In the Name of the Father.*

Paterson is the author of memoir *Julius Caesar and Me: Exploring Shakespeare's African Play*published by Methuen and *Sancho: An Act of Remembrance*is also published by Methuen.

**Sophie Melville**Sophie trained at Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.

Theatre credits include: *Pops* (Roxy Assembly – The Stage Award for Outstanding Performance), *Wolfie* (Theatre503), *Blue* (Chapter Theatre); *Close Quarters* (Sheffield Crucible); *Pops* (Young Vic); *No One Will Tell Me How to Start a Revolution* (Hampstead Theatre); *The Divide* (Old Vic); *Pagans* (Old Vic*); Low Level Panic* (Orange Tree Theatre); *2066* (Almeida Theatre); *Blackbird* (The Other Room Theatre, Wales Theatre Awards Best Female Performance); *Insignificance* (Theatr Clwyd*); Iphigenia in Splott* (National Theatre/Theater 59E59 NYC/Sherman Theatre/Edinburgh Fringe Festival and International Tour, The Stage Award for Acting Excellence, Wales Theatre Award for Best Female Performance, Evening Standard Award nomination for Best Actress, Drama Desk Award nomination for Outstanding Solo Performance); *Romeo and Juliet* (Sherman Theatre); *Under Milk Wood* (Theatr Clwyd); *The Shape of Things;* *Tis a Pity She’s a Whore*; *See How They Run* (Theatre by the Lake); *Romeo and Juliet* (The Sam Wanamaker Festival).

**Television** credits include*: The Pact, Bang series 2, Call the Midwife*, *The Left Behind*, *The Missing 2* (all BBC).

**Gary Owen**Gary’s most recent plays include a radical reworking of *The Cherry Orchard* for the Sherman Theatre, which translated the action of the play to 1980s Pembrokeshire, at the beginning of the Thatcher era, and *Killology*, a co-production between the Sherman Theatre and the Royal Court, which won Outstanding Achievement in an Affiliate Theatre at the 2018 Olivier Awards. Gary's newest play *Romeo and Julie* is due to be performed at the National Theatre.

Previously he’s written *Violence and Son* for the Royal Court. *Violence and Son* was nominated for an Olivier in 2016, and its star David Moorst won Best Emerging Talent at the Evening Standard Awards and Most Promising Newcomer at the Critics’ Circle Awards for his performance as Liam. In 2015, he wrote *Iphigenia in Splott* for the Sherman Theatre. After two sell-out runs at the Sherman, *Iphigenia in Splott* played the Edinburgh Festival as a British Council showcase pick, ran for a month at the National Theatre in London, toured the UK, played at the FIND festival at Thomas Ostermeier’s Schaubuhn Theatre in Berlin and at the 59E59 Theater in Manhattan, where it was a New York Times pick of the week. *Iphigenia in Splott* won the UK Theatre Best New Play award and the James Tait Black Prize for Drama, and earned its lead, Sophie Melville, a Stage Award for Acting Excellence and an Evening Standard Award nomination for Best Actress.

Gary’s earlier work includes *Crazy Gary’s Mobile Disco*, *The Shadow of a Boy* (winner George Devine and Meyer Whitworth awards), *The Drowned World* (winner Fringe First and Pearson Best Play awards), *Ghost City*, *Mrs Reynolds and the Ruffian* and *Love steals us from Loneliness*. He is a creative associate at Watford Palace Theatre, and an associate artist at the Sherman. His plays have been translated into more than a dozen languages and produced all over the world, and are published by Oberon.

**About the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre**

The Lyric has created some of the UK’s most adventurous and acclaimed theatrical work for over 125 years. Working with some of the world’s finest writers, directors, actors and theatre companies; from Harold Pinter to Tanika Gupta; Sir John Gielgud to Sheila Hancock; Complicite to Frantic Assembly.

Under the joint leadership of Artistic Director Rachel O’Riordan and Executive Director Sian Alexander, the Lyric’s 2019/2020 programme of reimagined classics, contemporary plays and bold new works celebrated its unique Matcham theatre.

At the heart of the Lyric is a commitment to young people’s creativity. The theatre has a national reputation for its groundbreaking work to forge pathways into the arts for young talent from all backgrounds. The theatre is West London’s largest creative hub and home to an innovative partnership of arts organisations who work together to deliver life-changing creative opportunities for thousands of young West Londoners.

For more information visit [www.lyric.co.uk](http://www.lyric.co.uk).

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