



Press Release  
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## LYRIC HAMMERSMITH THEATRE ANNOUNCES NEW LEADERSHIP TEAM APPOINTMENTS

- **Amy Belson** is appointed Executive Director, having been the Lyric's Director of Communications for the last three years. She will join Artistic Director and CEO Rachel O'Riordan to lead the theatre from the 02 August 2021.
- Four new trustees will be joining the Lyric's Board:
  - o **Rondette Amoy Smith**, Head of Diversity & Inclusion for financial services group Nomura.
  - o **Lameya Chaudhury** a specialist in education marketing and currently the Head of Marketing and Communications at EVERFI UK.
  - o **Professor Farah Karim-Cooper**, Professor of Shakespeare Studies, King's College London and co-Director of Education at Shakespeare's Globe.
  - o **Derek Richards**, Producer, educator, artist, consultant and currently Head of Broadcast and Digital at the Roundhouse.
- Award-winning writer for stage, radio and TV, **Tanika Gupta** is appointed Artistic Associate.

**The Lyric Hammersmith Theatre** is delighted to announce new leadership team appointments that will take the Lyric forward following the successful reopening of the theatre with current critically acclaimed production *Out West*.

**Amy Belson** is appointed Executive Director having served as Interim Executive Director since February 2021. Previously she worked at the Royal Shakespeare Company and Soho Theatre, having started her career at the Lyric before returning in 2018 as Director of Communications & Sales. Having worked together over the past two years, Amy will join Rachel O'Riordan, the Lyric's Artistic Director and Chief Executive, to lead the theatre.

Four new trustees will also be joining the Lyric's Board bringing new talent and skills to the existing Board chaired by Lisa Burger; **Rondette Amoy Smith**, **Lameya Chaudhury**, **Professor Farah Kerim-Cooper** and **Derek Richards**. They join existing trustees Cllr Jonathan Caleb-Landy, Cllr Sue Fennimore, David Greig, Cllr Bora Kwon, Kamran Mallick, Liz Elston Mayhew, Julie Molloy, Cllr Patricia Quigley and David Sharkey.

**Tanika Gupta** cements her artistic connection with the Lyric by joining current Lyric Artistic Associates Tinuke Craig, Philip McMahon and Nina Steiger. Her critically acclaimed adaptation of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* opened Rachel O'Riordan's first season as Artistic Director, which has recently been added to the Edexcel GCSE curriculum. Her new play *The Overseas Student* has reopened the theatre as part of *Out West*, which runs at the Lyric until Saturday 24 July and is co-directed by Rachel O'Riordan and Diane Page.

**Lisa Burger, Chair of the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre** said, *'I'm delighted to be announcing the appointment of Amy Belson as Executive Director joining Rachel O' Riordan, Artistic Director and Chief Executive. Amy has been an outstanding Director of Communications for the Lyric and has shown her ability, drive and commitment to the Lyric's mission and values over the last year. After the challenges of COVID I'm so pleased that we can look forward to the Lyric's exciting plans for the future knowing they are in the hands of such a strong and proven Executive team.*

*I'm also very happy today to welcome Tanika Gupta who joins Rachel's team of Artistic Associates and Rondette Amoy Smith, Lameya Chaudhury Farah Karim-Cooper and Derek Richards as Trustees to the Board. They bring a wide breadth of skills and a shared passion for the Lyric and the role it plays as a theatre in society."*

**Rachel O'Riordan, Artistic Director and CEO of the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre** said, *"I am delighted that Amy Belson is the new Executive Director of the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre. Amy's energy, commitment and talent are inspiring, and I look forward to evolving our working relationship over the next years. After a difficult period for our industry, Amy's appointment alongside new Artistic Associate Tanika Gupta, four trustees, and the recently appointed Nicholai La Barrie to the new role of Associate Director is a positive and welcome development. I look forward to leading the Lyric with Amy, and in partnership the whole team, to recovery and growth. The Lyric is a very special theatre; we now look to the future with confidence and ambition."*

**Amy Belson** said, *"The Lyric gave me my first permanent paid job in theatre - I am honoured that I can give back to the theatre that gave me that first opportunity and continue to build the Lyric's work in providing pathways for our future theatre makers and leaders. I look forward to continuing to work with Rachel building on the actions we've put in place through our commitment to change and ensuring a long and successful future for this vital theatre at the heart of West London."*

**Rondette Amoy Smith** said, *"It is absolutely an honour to be appointed as a Trustee of the Lyric. The organisation's mission to uplift our communities and inspire generations to come speaks volumes to its mission and values. As a leader in the diversity, equity and inclusion space, I look forward to partnering with the Lyric to advance its impact and continue to make a true difference for so many."*

**Lameya Chaudhury** said, *"I'm delighted with my appointment as Trustee at the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre. A leading creative institution that plays a vital and active role in providing pathways between young people and the creative arts sector. Their mission to tackle inequality by providing opportunities to young people and the community is aligned to where I feel I can add value and share my expertise with a charity I am passionate about."*

**Tanika Gupta** said, "*I am delighted to be an Artistic Associate at the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre. It is a beautiful stage with a trailblazing Artistic Director in Rachel O’Riordan and her excellent team. I look forward to working alongside everyone in the coming year, supporting great theatre and brilliant artists.*"

**Derek Richards** said, "*The Lyric has long been one of my absolutely favourite destinations for the kind of experience I ask for from theatre. I know that what lies behind that is its commitment to platforming new voices and placing talent and community development at the centre of its work and not as a peripheral add-on. There is great potential within the building and organisation for grabbing and running with the opportunities that digital creation presents for its mission and I feel honoured and excited about being invited to join them in their journey on this new road for the arts in general.*"

## Biographies

**Rondette Amoy Smith** is the Head of Diversity & Inclusion for EMEA (Europe, Middle East & Africa) at Nomura, an Asia-based financial services group with an integrated network spanning over 30 countries. As a subject matter expert and thought leader, she leverages a hand-on approach, keen focus on stakeholder engagement, enabling the empowerment of internal talent and effectively managing external vendor affiliations to shape and define the firm’s inclusion & equity strategy.

Upon graduating from Cornell University (*Bachelor of Arts in English Literature, summa cum laude*) and New York University (*Master of Science, Human Resource Management & Development*), Rondette began her career in journalism interning at and subsequently freelancing for Town & Country, Seventeen and Redbook Magazines before transitioning to HR consulting and then specializing in recruiting, coaching & development, business partner and D&I roles at American Express, The Wall Street Journal, J.P. Morgan and Goldman Sachs. While at Goldman Sachs, Rondette spent three years based in Hong Kong where she oversaw talent & performance management strategies for corporate divisions.

Rondette’s passion for equity and inclusion is deeply embedded in her personal aspirations. She proudly serves as an Advisory Board Member for *A Dark Mind Film*, *Petra Velzebour, Ltd.* (both organizations focus on the disproportionate impact of mental health challenges on ethnic minority communities in the UK) and the *UK Black Business Show*. She is the founder and co-host of *Race2Rise* - a podcast focused on the experiences of two Black female expatriates abroad that centres around empowering women of colour to engage in discussions on challenging topics such as navigating the workplace, speaking candidly about mental health, owning and pursuing their passion & purpose and developing strong networks and healthy relationships.

**Amy Belson** was most recently Interim Executive Director and Director of Communications at the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre. Over the last year, she has worked across the industry representing the London Theatre Consortium on industry wide SOLT/UKT audience research, marketing and press taskforces and as a member of the London Tourism Recovery Board Culture Group to support the recovery of theatre post-COVID. As Director of Communications, she launched Rachel O’Riordan’s first season as Artistic Director.

Amy started her career at the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre under David Farr and launched the first season of work under previous Artistic Director Sean Holmes including the relaunch of the Lyric Panto. She then left to work at Soho Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company, returning to Lyric in 2018 to take up the role of Director of Communications.

**Lameya Chaudhury** has over 12 years of experience specialising in education marketing and understands the important role it can play as a tool for positive social change. Her professional career has provided myriad experiences within multicultural environments and various sectors, including commercial, charities and government clients. She completed a Masters in Human Rights and International Law at SOAS, where she worked on a dowry murder case in Bangladesh. On joining the British Council in 2010, she worked across large-scale global educational programmes, including The Prime Minister's Global Fellowship, Connecting Classrooms which operated in 30 different countries, and Active Citizens before moving into the organisation's creative content marketing team. In 2014, Lameya joined EdComs, one of the leading specialist educational communications agencies in Europe. She worked across a diverse client portfolio, including Disney Theatrical Education, Google, Globe Education, Sport England, British Council and British Olympic Association. She is currently the Head of Marketing and Communications at EVERFI, a global technology company committed to closing the education gaps that lead to long-term inequality. Lameya leads the strategic direction on many client accounts with the primary goal of communicating to educational communities. Lameya also has a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion. She was selected as a mentee in PR Week's BMEPRpros scheme in 2016 and plays an active role in the Diversity and Inclusion Committee at EVERFI.

**Tanika Gupta** has written over 25 stage plays that have been produced in major theatres across the UK. Her critically acclaimed adaptation of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* set in Colonial Calcutta launched Rachel O'Riordan's acclaimed first season as Artistic Director of the Lyric in 2019. Other theatre credits include: *Living Newspaper* (Royal Court Theatre); *Red Dust Road* (NT Scotland); *Lions And Tigers* (Globe - James Tait Black Prize Winner for Drama 2018); *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian* (Hull Truck), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Globe – Dramaturg), *Hobson's Choice* (Young Vic and The Royal Exchange, Manchester) *Anita and Me* (Birmingham Rep), *Love N Stuff* (Theatre Royal Stratford East), *The Empress* (RSC); *Wah! Wah!* (Sadler's Wells), *Mindwalking* (Bandbazi Theatre), *Great Expectations* (Watford Palace/ETT), *Meet The Mukherjees* (Bolton Octagon), *Sugar Mummies* (Royal Court), *Gladiator Games* (Sheffield Crucible), *Fragile Land* (Hampstead Theatre), *Sanctuary*, *The Good Woman Of Setzuan*, *The Waiting Room* (National Theatre), *Skeleton* (Soho Theatre). Television credits include: *Doctors*, *London Bridge*, *EastEnders*, *Flight*. Radio credits include: *Trumpet*, *A Passage To India*, *Emma*, *The God Of Small Things*. Tanika was awarded an MBE for Services to Drama and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

**Professor Farah Karim-Cooper** is Professor of Shakespeare Studies, King's College London and co-Director of Education at Shakespeare's Globe, where she has worked for the last 17 years. Farah is President of the Shakespeare Association of America, having served as Vice-President and a Trustee previously. She is on the Advisory Council for the Warburg Institute and is on the council for the Society of Renaissance Studies, and has held Visiting fellowships around the world. She leads the architectural enquiries into early modern theatres at Shakespeare's Globe, overseeing the research into the design and construction of the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, the Globe's indoor Jacobean theatre. She has published over 40 chapters in books, reviews and articles on Shakespeare, theatre and performance, published two books and 5 edited collections. Her newest book, an examination of race in Shakespearean drama 'The Great White Bard: Shakespeare and Race, Then and Now' will be published by Oneworld in Spring 2023. In 2018 she curated the Globe's inaugural Shakespeare and Race Festival, founded the Early Modern Scholars of Colour Network and is an executive board member for RaceB4Race, a consortium of Scholars and institutions that seek racial justice in the field of pre-modern literary studies.

**Derek Richards** Producer, educator, artist and consultant, Derek Richards is widely considered to be a true polymath. Someone who brings wide and deep experience across a range of disciplines to lead on innovation.

As an artist he has exhibited installation work around the world. He has worked as a musician with the likes of Courtney Pine, Odyssey, Cleveland Watkiss, Tunde Jegede and Orphy Robinson among others; has scored for film & TV and radio and has composed music for and directed theatre.

In the 90s Derek Richards co-founded Artec, the UK's first centre for learning digital media production skills. He pioneered teleconferencing for trans-Atlantic live collaborative performance and has since won 11 awards for his digital and interactive media work including installations for London's Science Museum and for gallery exhibition as well as online work.

Leading his own company HyperJAM (1997 – 2006) and as an independent producer, Derek's clients and partners have included the BBC, the National Theatre, Arts Council England, Channel 4, the Science Museum, the Virgin Group, the British Council, NESTA, the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, Lucent Technologies and Motorola.

HyperJAM led the way in applications of interactive digital media and communications to live events – connecting venues and audiences around the world for real time collaborative performances and producing interactive projections and soundscapes for theatre, music, dance and for corporate events. Between 2009 and 2014 Derek ran the multi-BAFTA award winning film & media youth training and production company Hi8us South.

Derek is currently the Head of Broadcast and Digital at Roundhouse in Camden, London. There he produces and programmes live artistic work that embraces digital innovation as well leading on Roundhouse's pioneering digital talent and content development programmes, developing emerging young talent, while platforming award winning content produced by young people.

Derek performs his role at the Roundhouse on part-time basis, affording him the opportunity to continue to engage in his practice and to continue to innovate. Most recently he has been producing a series of award-winning live streamed performances with the UK's leading international contemporary dance company, Rambert. For this work he has developed an approach to creation and delivery that results in work that combines the immediacy of theatre with the intimacy of film to produce genre defying work. He also lectures on the Guildhall School of Music and Drama's Video Production for Live Performance and Production Arts degree programmes.

- ENDS -

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## On now at the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre

### ***Out West***

by **Tanika Gupta, Simon Stephens and Roy Williams**

Co-Directed by **Rachel O’Riordan & Diane Page**

Designed by **Soutra Gilmour**

Lighting Design by **Jessica Hung Han Yun**

Composition and Sound Design by **Simon Slater**

Collaborator for *Blue Water and Cold and Fresh* **Emmanuella Cole**

**On now until Saturday 24 July 2021**

Lyric Hammersmith Theatre

Lyric Square, King Street, London, W6 0QL

Box office: 020 8741 6850 | [www.lyric.co.uk](http://www.lyric.co.uk)

Tickets from £10

## Upcoming at Lyric Hammersmith Theatre

### ***Heart of Hammersmith: 12 – 14 August 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. The production will be led by a group of 15 young people, aged 18-25, from West London working alongside a team of professional creatives. The young people 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 inter-generational production.

### ***The Beauty Queen of Leenane: 09 October – 06 November 2021***

In the mountains of Connemara, County Galway, Maureen Folan – a plain, lonely woman, tied to her manipulative and ageing mother, Mag – comes alive at her first and possibly last prospect of a loving relationship. But Mag has other ideas; and her interference sets in motion a train of events that leads inexorably towards the play’s breath-taking conclusion.

### ***Aladdin: Christmas 2021***

Expect the usual Lyric twist on all of your favourite characters as well as live music, magic lamps, plenty of laughs and a journey to a faraway land as *Aladdin* arrives at the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre this Christmas.

A new adaptation by award-winning comedian, actress and composer Vikki Stone who returns to write her debut pantomime for the Lyric following critically acclaimed appearances as Abanazar in the 2016 production of *Aladdin* and Fleshcreep in *Jack and the Beanstalk* in 2017. Vikki is well known for her original comedy songs. Credits include: *The Now Show* (BBC Radio 4), *Essential Classics* (BBC Radio 3) and presenting two series of the official *BBC Proms* podcast. TV appearances include *The John Bishop Show* (BBC1), *Partners in Rhyme* (BBC1) and the BAFTA award-winning *Ten Pieces*.

Further details to be announced.