

CASTING ANNOUNCED
ENGLISH LANGUAGE PREMIERE OF 2,500 YEAR OLD DRAMA FROM THE TEAM BEHIND 'THE EVENTS'

ACTORS TOURING COMPANY
THE ROYAL LYCEUM THEATRE

WORLD PREMIERE

THE SUPPLIANT WOMEN

By Aeschylus

In a new version by David Greig

Directed by Ramin Gray

Composed by John Browne

Choreographer Sasha Milavic Davies

Designer: Lizzie Clachan

Lighting Designer: Charles Balfour

Fifty women will leave everything behind. They board a boat in North Africa and flee across the Mediterranean. They are escaping forced marriage in their homeland, hoping for protection and assistance, seeking asylum in Greece.

Actors Touring Company, together with the Royal Lyceum Theatre Edinburgh, is delighted to present the British premiere of Aeschylus' *The Suppliant Women* in a new version by internationally renowned playwright David Greig. As the Artistic Director of The Lyceum, Greig is collaborating with ATC to reunite the world-class creative team behind The Guardian's number one best theatre production of 2013, the hugely acclaimed, *The Events* - director Ramin Gray and composer John Browne.

The Suppliant Women will be the first ever English-language productions of one of the World's oldest plays, *The Suppliants*, first performed around 470 BC.

With local participation at its heart, the production revives the tradition of Ancient Greek theatre by recruiting performers from each local community where the production tours, to form a chorus of 30 to 40 who drive the narrative forward and create an extraordinary theatrical event. Recruited from the community of each of the towns where the production plays, the chorus is rehearsed for six weeks prior to it arriving and forms the backbone of the production. With choral odes composed by John Browne and accompanied on the *aulos* (the rarely heard original Greek double pipe), the local participants represent 50 young women who flee forced marriage in Egypt to seek asylum in Greece. This is a story about the plight of refugees, moral and human rights, civil war, democracy and ultimately the triumph of love - a tale that echoes down the ages to find striking and poignant resonance today.

The Suppliant Women stars celebrated opera performer **Omar Ebrahim** as Danaos, father of the displaced women. Omar is best known for his roles contemporary operas by composers such as Nigel Osborne, Michael Tippett, Harrison Birtwistle, Luciano Berio, Philip Glass, Peter Lieberson, Frank Zappa, Gyorgy Ligeti, Peter Eotvos, and Michael Nyman. In 1992 he sang the title role in the BBC miniseries *The Vampyr: A Soap Opera*, an updated version of Heinrich Marschner's opera *Der Vampyr*. In 2008, he created the role of "The Fool" in Liza Lim's opera *The Navigator* at the Brisbane Festival. He has also performed in operas by Giacomo Puccini, Giuseppe Verdi, Kurt Weill, Georges Bizet, and Gilbert and Sullivan.

Accompanying him on stage in the roles of the King is 2015 Spotlight Prize nominee **Edward Sayer**, whose previous roles include Polixenes in Cheek By Jowl's *The Winter's Tale*; *First Light*, Chichester Festival Theatre; Edmund in *King Lear*, Theatre Royal, Bath and Harald Kreutzberg in *An Evening with Max Reinhardt*, Schloss Leopoldskron, Austria.

The professional cast will be completed by the Chorus Lead, played by **Gemma May**, whose previous work includes *Attempts On Her Life*, Greenwich Theatre; *Emperor and Galilean*, National Theatre and *The Exclusion Zone*, Southwark Playhouse.

The production also features a painstakingly researched and reconstructed perfect working replica of the AULOS, an Ancient Greek wind instrument depicted in art and attested by archaeology but not heard for over 2,000 years. Requiring a circular breathing technique much like the bagpipes, this unique instrument will be played by the experts behind the contemporary recreation, Barnaby Brown and Callum Armstrong and supported by percussionist Ben Burton. This is part of a massive undertaking that links to the Ancient Greek model of community participation and provides tangible relevance to today's audiences of the collective ethos of their style of theatre. Around 50 locals will be engaged at each touring venue to form the chorus of suppliant women. They will rehearse for six weeks prior to the arrival of the production in which they will perform John Browne's score and move to Sasha Milavic Davies' choreography, accompanied by the live percussion & aulos.

Director **Ramin Gray** says:

"As a director who has spent a lifetime on contemporary plays, it's a palpable thrill to reach 2479 years back to the origin of theatre. Aeschylus surprises, stretches and moves me. It feels wonderful to have discovered a new colleague in such an old place and I can't wait to share the piece with audiences."

Writer **David Greig** says:

'The Suppliant Women contains the birth of drama, and the birth the democracy. Its central questions - about refugees, women's rights, war and sex - feel so extraordinarily pertinent today. Working on the text has been one of the biggest challenges of my writing life but the biggest thrill for me has been witnessing the passion, bravery and commitment of our chorus, the thirty young women who have given their time to learn and sing the extraordinary role of the Suppliants. This autumn, as Europe and the Middle East are tossed on a sea of troubles, The Suppliant Women feels like some ancient, burnished bronze mirror, freshly dug out of the ground, in which we shudder to see ourselves reflected.'

Composer **John Browne** says:

"It's such a rich mix - ancient minds communing with contemporary minds, seasoned pros with young amateurs, percussion with 2000 year old double-pipes, and music that's both sacred and primitive all in a fog of meaning. It feels totally alive and I just love it."



ATC &
THE ROYAL LYCEUM THEATRE
EDINBURGH
present

THE SUPPLIANT WOMEN

By Aeschylus

In a new version by David Greig

Directed by Ramin Gray

Composed by John Browne

Press night October 4

30 Sept – 15 Oct
Edinburgh

The Royal Lyceum Theatre

<http://lyceum.org.uk>

0131 248 4848

21 – 22 Oct
Belfast

Belfast International Festival (Grand Opera House)

<http://belfastinternationalartsfestival.com>

3 – 5 November
Newcastle Upon Tyne
Northern Stage

<http://www.northernstage.co.uk>

0191 230 5151

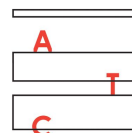
PRESS CONTACTS

DAVID BURNS PR

David Burns

07789 754089

david@davidburnspr.com



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ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

As Artistic Director of ATC **Ramin Gray's** productions comprise, *The Events* by David Greig (Traverse and Young Vic and UK and international tours 2013-6); *The Golden Dragon* by Roland Schimmelfennig (Traverse & UK tour); *Martyr* by Marius Von Mayerburg (co-production with Unicorn Theatre and UK touring); *Blind Hamlet* by Nassim Soleimanpour (UK tour); *Illusions* by Ivan Viripaev and the first major revival of Sarah Kane's *Crave* (UK tour). Before taking up the post at ATC, he was Associate Director at the Royal Court Theatre where he directed Vassily Sigarev's *Ladybird*, the Presnyakov Brothers' *Terrorism*, Marius von Mayenburg's *The Ugly One* and *The Stone*, Simon Stephens' *Motortown*, and Mark Ravenhill's *Over There*. For the RSC he directed David Greig's *The American Pilot*. Ramin's extensive work abroad includes the Salzburg Festival, Schaubuehne Berlin, Praktika Moscow, Husets Copenhagen and many more. Opera credits include Brett Dean's *Bliss*, Beat Furrer's *La Bianca Notte* and Benjamin Britten's *Death in Venice* at Hamburg Staatsoper and Theater an der Wien. Ramin recently directed Gerald Barry's much acclaimed opera of *The Importance of Being Earnest* for the Royal Opera at the Barbican/Lincoln Center.

Multi award-winning Scottish playwright **David Greig** recently became The Lyceum's 8th Artistic Director. He is internationally celebrated for productions including *The Strange Undoing of Prudencia Hart* (Tron, National Theatre of Scotland); *Midsummer* (Traverse, Soho, and Tricycle); *Dunsinane* (RSC at Hampstead and National Theatre of Scotland) and *The Events* (ATC) which was directed by **Ramin Gray**, with musical composition by **John Browne**. In addition to writing numerous critically acclaimed plays, David has worked extensively as a workshop leader with playwrights in Palestine, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Tunisia, and Morocco. *The Suppliant Women* will be David's first main stage production as Artistic Director of The Lyceum.

John Browne, whose work includes *Demon Juice*, a hip-hop opera in 2007; *Babette's Feast*, and *Bullman and the Moonsisters* at the Royal Opera House, and *Midnight's Children* and *The Early Earth Operas* trilogy for English National Opera, provides composition for the production, working closely with Barnaby Brown and Callum Armstrong – two of the only existing aulos players alive today.

Actors Touring Company (ATC) makes international, contemporary theatre that travels. We create shows with a global perspective: activating and entertaining the audience whilst asking questions of the world around us. Placing the actor at the heart of our work, and employing a lean aesthetic which promotes environmental sustainability, we have toured the UK and internationally since we were founded in 1980, reaching audiences far and wide.

Recent productions include: *The Events* by David Greig, with music by John Browne, which has toured extensively in the UK, the US and internationally, and has enjoyed revivals in Denmark, France and Australia; *The Golden Dragon* by Roland Schimmelfennig (Traverse & UK tour); *Martyr* by Marius Von Mayerburg (coproduction with Unicorn Theatre and UK touring) – all directed by Ramin Gray

Future productions include: *Living with the Lights On* in coproduction with the Young Vic; *Winter Solstice* by Roland Schimmelfennig in coproduction with the Orange Tree Theatre.

Having recently celebrated its 50th anniversary, the **Royal Lyceum Theatre Company** is a crucible of Scottish talent and the best of world theatre with a strong reputation for developing Scotland's considerable indigenous artists while presenting the best of international drama. With a strong reputation for excellence in both classical and contemporary work, The Lyceum is committed to developing Scotland's indigenous theatre talents and presenting the best of international drama from its home in a magnificent, intimate Victorian building in Edinburgh's West End.

In recent years, The Lyceum has staged co-productions with Theatre Royal, Bath; The Bush Theatre, London; Nottingham Playhouse Theatre Company; National Theatre of Scotland; Citizens Theatre; Dundee Rep; Liverpool Everyman & Playhouse; Chichester Festival Theatre and the Lyric Hammersmith.