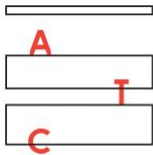


STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 8.00 AM 22 NOVEMBER 2021



ACTORS TOURING COMPANY



RICE **ATC UK TOUR 2022 ANNOUNCEMENT**

4 FEBRUARY – 14 APRIL 2022



ACTORS TOURING COMPANY and ORANGE TREE THEATRE, in association with THEATRE ROYAL PLYMOUTH

Feb 4 - 12 **Theatre Royal Plymouth** (Drum Theatre)
Feb 18-19 **North Wall** Oxford
March 4 - 5 **Stephen Joseph Theatre** Scarborough
March 7-9 **Crucible Theatre Sheffield** (Crucible Studio)
March 17-19 **Unity Theatre** Liverpool
March 29-30 **HOME** Manchester (Studio)
April 1 - 2 **Northern Stage** Newcastle (Stage 2)
April 13 - 14 **York Theatre Royal** (main house)

ACTORS TOURING COMPANY, the UK's leading producer of international plays, announces a new major 11-week national tour of *Rice*, a powerful drama written by award-winning Australian writer **Michele Lee** and directed by Actors Touring Company's Artistic Director **Matthew Xia**.

The play is a wickedly humorous observation on globalisation, politics and family - and true to ATC's mission, it amplifies global stories and female voices. ATC tours international plays to local audiences - finding common resonances and opening up conversations about our global community. This new touring version of ATC's production of *Rice* will visit venues and places from the South West to the North East, following on from a successful 5-week London run at The Orange Tree Theatre last month. It marks ATC's return to touring after almost two years due to the global pandemic.

The tour opens with new casting at **Theatre Royal Plymouth** on the 4 February until 12 February and goes on to Oxford's **North Wall** before heading up North with performances at **Stephen Joseph Theatre in Scarborough**; Sheffield's **Crucible Studio**, Liverpool's **Unity Theatre**, **HOME** in Manchester; Newcastle's **Northern Stage** and ending on the main stage at the **York Theatre Royal** on the 13 and 14 April. Additional dates are expected to be confirmed shortly.

The drama centres around a young hotshot executive working for Australia's largest producer of rice, determined to become the first female Indian CEO in Australia and an older Chinese migrant, the office cleaner, who has her own entrepreneurial ambitions. The two form an unlikely bond as they navigate the complexities of their lives and the world at large.

Playwright Michele Lee, who has won numerous awards for *Rice* including the Australian Writer's Guild Award for Best Original Stage Play says: "I've always wanted to centre a story around two strong female actors of colour and that was my starting point. In this play their characters traverse a range of identities and jump between and transform across many different roles. I feel exhilarated that this drama is being staged on opposite sides of the world and hope its universal themes around gender, ambition and friendship will resonate with audiences around the UK."

Matthew Xia, ATC's Artistic Director adds: "It feels fantastic after this pandemic-enforced hiatus to finally be back touring shows again. I'm looking forward to introducing this dynamic and expansive drama, which stays true to ATC's mission in bringing fresh dialogue and perspectives from different cultures and intersections, to audiences up and down the country."

Founded in 1980 to create, sustain and develop a dialogue between global artists and UK audiences, *Rice* further cements ATC's reputation as the leading commissioner of plays by writers from the global cultures within the UK and producer of international plays. Signature productions include *The Brothers Size* by Tarell Alvin McCraney, due to be revived on Broadway in 2022, *Amsterdam* by Maya Arad Yasur in 2019, the debut of ATC's Artistic Director Matthew Xia. *Dear Tomorrow*, by 13 playwrights from around the globe during lockdown (online with Northern Stage) and *Family Tree* by Mojisola Adebayo in association with the Young Vic, premiered as a work in progress at the Greenwich & Docklands Festival August 2021.

The 2022 European tour of RICE is produced by Actors Touring Company and the Orange Tree Theatre, in association with Theatre Royal Plymouth.

PRAISE FOR *RICE* 2021

"A heady broth of gender, generation and globalisation" **Australian Stage**

"A play that feels both ambitious and necessary" **The Stage**

"A powerful, thought-provoking and funny play about cultural identity, class, race and power" **Broadway World**

"A thoughtful take on the power of women at work." **The Guardian**

"Whip Smart" **The Arts Desk**

"A feast of diverse delight, pushing the labels of culture and ambition in a gendered workplace." **Tribe Arts/OffStage Zine**

" We must thank ATC and the Orange Tree for bringing us a new voice from down under." **The British Theatre Guide**

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Notes to Editors

ABOUT ACTORS TOURING COMPANY

Actors Touring Company (ATC) is the UK's leading theatre producer of international plays. We create dialogue between Britain and the rest of the world – and between the intersecting cultures within nations. We are one of the only UK theatre companies committed to producing plays that come from beyond our shores.

We are equally passionate about amplifying the voice of the 'outsider within', and the cross-cultural communities at the heart of our nation. We are a leading commissioner of plays by writers from the global cultures within the UK.

Founded in 1980, ATC is a company that is continually evolving and seeking to reflect the UK of the 21st century in our work and the creative practitioners and communities we collaborate with and serve.

We create, sustain and develop a dialogue between global artists and UK audiences. In the last decade, we have produced plays from Australia, Norway, Germany, Israel, and the US - bringing international voices to audiences across the UK, from Glasgow to Plymouth and internationally, from Helsinki to Hong Kong.

Signature productions include:

- *The Brothers Size* by Tarell Alvin McCraney, directed by Bijan Sheibani, due to be revived on Broadway next year
- *Amsterdam* by Maya Arad Yasur, the ATC debut of Artistic Director Matthew Xia, originally made in 2019, then streamed during 2020, in coproduction with Theatre Royal Plymouth and the Orange Tree Theatre
- *Dear Tomorrow*, by 13 playwrights from around the globe, letters for performance at home during lockdown (including a digital version with Northern Stage)
- *Family Tree* by Mojisola Adebayo, in association with the Young Vic, premiered at the Greenwich & Docklands International Festival in August 2021.

ABOUT MICHELE LEE

Michele Lee is an Asian-Australian writer working across television, film, stage, books, audio and live art. She has won numerous awards for Rice, including the Australian Writer's Guild Award for Best Original Stage Play. Her other theatre credits include *Security* (finalist for 2021 Patrick White Award), *Single Ladies*, *Going Down* (shortlisted for the Victorian Premier's Literary Award, the Nick Enright Prize, an Australian Writer's Guild Award and five Green Room Awards), *An Assistant's Notes for a Pandemic*, *The Naked Self*, and *Off Centre*. For television, her credits include *Hungry Ghosts*, and *Secret Threads*.

ABOUT MATTHEW XIA

Matthew Xia, one of the busiest and most exciting directors in the UK, was appointed Artistic Director of Actors Touring Company in 2019. He is a former Associate Artistic Director of Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester; Director in Residence at Liverpool Everyman & Playhouse; and Associate Director of Theatre Royal Stratford East. He is currently an Associate Artist at Nottingham Playhouse. Matthew is a founding member of *Act for Change*, a trustee of *Artistic Directors of the Future* and *Cardboard Citizens*. His productions include *Shebeen* (Nottingham Playhouse, touring); *Blue/Orange* (Young Vic) and *Sizwe Banze is Dead* (Young Vic, touring) and *The Wiz* (Hope Mill Theatre).

ABOUT THE ORANGE TREE THEATRE

The Orange Tree (OT) is an award-winning, independent theatre. Recognised as a powerhouse that creates high-quality productions of new and rediscovered plays, it entertains 70,000 people across the UK every year. In May 2021 the OT reopened with its Recovery Season. As an independent theatre and registered charity that relies on ticket income, the Covid-19 pandemic continues to pose significant risk to the OT. To support the theatre's return to a producing powerhouse at this time, it is raising funds through its Recovery Fund.

The OT's home in Richmond, South West London, is an intimate theatre with the audience seated all around the stage: watching a performance here is truly a unique experience. We believe in the power of dramatic stories to entertain, thrill and challenge us; plays that enrich our lives by enhancing our understanding of ourselves and each other.

As a registered charity (266128) sitting at the heart of its community, we work with 10,000 people in Richmond and beyond through participatory theatre projects for people of all ages and abilities. The Orange Tree Theatre's mission is to enable audiences to experience the next generation of theatre talent, experiment with ground-breaking new drama and explore the plays from the past that inspire the theatre-makers of the present. Artistic Director Paul Miller. Executive Director Hanna Streeter

ABOUT THEATRE ROYAL PLYMOUTH

Theatre Royal Plymouth is a registered charity, inspiring a lifetime of creativity for audiences, artists and participants throughout Plymouth and the wider region. As the principal home of performing arts in the South West, they engage and inspire many communities, creating memorable experiences for people from all backgrounds. TRP do this by creating and presenting a breadth of shows on a range of scales, with their extensive creative engagement programmes, by embracing the vitality of new

talent and supporting emerging and established artists, and by collaborating with a range of partners to provide dynamic cultural leadership for the city of Plymouth.

Recent productions and co-productions include *NHS The Musical* a Theatre Royal Plymouth Production by Nick Stimson and Jimmy Jewell, *MUM* by Morgan Lloyd Malcolm (with Francesca Moody Productions and Soho Theatre, in association with Popcorn Group), *I Think We Are Alone* by Sally Abbott (with Frantic Assembly), *Amsterdam* by Maya Arad Yasur (with Actors Touring Company and Orange Tree Theatre), *The Strange Tale of Charlie Chaplin and Stan Laurel* (with Told By An Idiot), *God Of Chaos* by Phil Porter, *The Kneebone Cadillac* by Carl Grose, *You Stupid Darkness!* by Sam Steiner (with Paines Plough), *The Unreturning* by Anna Jordan (with Frantic Assembly) and *One Under* by Winsome Pinnock (with Graeae).

Theatre Royal Plymouth specialises in the production of new plays alongside the presentation of a broad range of theatre - including world class classic and contemporary drama, musicals, opera, ballet and dance in their three performance spaces – The Lyric, The Drum and The Lab. TRP has a strong track record of presenting and producing international work from companies and artists including partnering with Ontroerend Goed, Big In Belgium at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, Robert Lepage and the late Yukio Ninagawa. In March 2019 TRP unveiled *Messenger*, the UK's largest lost wax bronze sculpture created by the artist Joseph Hillier.