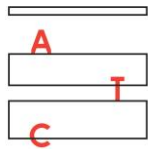


PRESS RELEASE – 19 Jan 2022



ACTORS TOURING COMPANY



## ***RICE*** NEW CAST ANNOUNCEMENT – 2022 TOUR



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

**Touring: 5 Feb – 14 April 2022**

- **A wickedly humorous observation on gender, globalisation, family and friendship.**
- **By award-winning Hmong-Australian writer Michele Lee.**
- ***Rice* is a winner of the Australian Writers' Guild Award for Best Original Stage Play.**
- **Directed by Matthew Xia (*Amsterdam, One Night in Miami, Sizwe Banzi is Dead*), Artistic Director of [Actors Touring Company](#), which produce international contemporary theatre – making the global, local and the local, global.**

**Angela Yeoh and Anya Jaya-Murphy** have been cast in the premiere of the UK Tour of ***Rice*** presented by **ACTORS TOURING COMPANY (ATC)** and directed by Artistic Director, **Matthew Xia**. The duo will be starring in the lead roles of Yvette, an older Chinese migrant cleaner and Nisha, a young hotshot Indian executive respectively, and will also be playing a multitude of characters in a brand new touring version of this powerful, multi-rolling and fast-paced drama.

Brimming with wickedly humorous observations on gender, globalisation, family and friendship, **Michele Lee's** hit drama, has won numerous awards including the Australian Writers' Guild Award for Best Original Stage Play.

*The play focuses on Nisha, a young hotshot executive working for Golden Fields, Australia's largest producer of rice. Ambitious and headstrong, she's determined to become the first female Indian CEO in Australia. She's close to sealing a contract with the Indian government, which would see her company take over India's national rice distribution system.*

*A secret deal worth billions.*

*Working late nights in the office she encounters Yvette, an older Chinese migrant, who cleans up her mess. Yvette has her own entrepreneurial ambitions, but her daughter faces court after participating in a protest against the unethical practices of a national supermarket chain.*

*The two form a powerful – if unlikely – bond as they navigate the complexities of their lives and the world at large.*

Playwright Michele Lee 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 it's universal themes around gender, ambition and friendship will resonate with audiences in 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."

Michele Lee is a Hmong-Australian writer who tells stories across forms working in theatre, live art, audio and screen. Her work explores otherness, Asian identity and found families, usually through contemporary narratives that privilege the experiences of women and people of colour.

#### **CAST**

**Angela Yeoh** plays Yvette

**Anya Jaya-Murphy** plays Nisha

#### **CREATIVE TEAM:**

Playwright: **Michele Lee**

Director: **Matthew Xia**

Designer: **Hyemi Shin**

Lighting Designer: **Bethany Gupwell**

Sound Designer: **Lex Kosanke**

Movement Director: **Asha Jennings-Grant**

Casting Consultant: **Sophie Parrott**

#### **#Rice2022Tour**

#### NATIONAL TOUR LISTINGS

-Venues and dates-

Feb 5 - 12 **Theatre Royal Plymouth**

Feb 18-19 **North Wall Oxford**

March 4 - 5 **Stephen Joseph Theatre** Scarborough  
March 8-9 **Crucible Theatre** Sheffield  
March 17-19 **Unity Theatre** Liverpool  
March 24-26 **Unistov, Theatre Royal** Bath  
March 29-30 **HOME** Manchester  
April 1 - 2 **Northern Stage** Newcastle  
April 13 - 14 **York Theatre Royal**

PREVIOUS PRAISE FOR *RICE*

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

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

\*\*\*\* *"Great characters and a compelling story."* **Spy In The Stalls**

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

*"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**

**ATC Press enquiries to Diana Whitehead:** [diana@fourthwallpr.co.uk](mailto:diana@fourthwallpr.co.uk), Tel: 07939 149887



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#### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

#### **CAST BIOGRAPHIES**

##### **ABOUT ANYA JAYA MURPHY**

Anya trained at The Guildhall School of Music and Drama, graduating in 2020. Theatre credits include *Amsterdam* (ATC - 2020), *Provok'd* (GSMD - 2019) and *The Wheel* (GSMD - 2019).

##### **ABOUT ANGELA YEOH**

Working across film, TV and theatre, Angela has always been passionate about the power of stories to shine light in dark places, surprise audiences, reveal truth, and inspire change.

Film credits include *The Batman* (DC), *All The Old Knives* (Amazon). TV credits include *The Baby* (HBO/Sky), *Buffering* (ITV), *Ghosts* (BBC). Theatre credits include *One of the Good Ones* (Hampstead Theatre), *Hazards of Love* (Cockpit Theatre).

Before becoming an actor, Angela worked as an international reporter based in Australia, Brazil, France and China - including for the *Wall Street Journal*, *BBC World Service*, and *ABC*.

She trained two years with clown teacher Philippe Gaulier in France, plus two years of Meisner technique in London.

## **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 is a former Associate Artistic Director of Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester; Director in Residence at Liverpool Everyman & Playhouse; Associate Director of Theatre Royal Stratford East. He is currently an Associate Artist at Nottingham Playhouse. Some of Matthew's acclaimed productions include: at the Royal Exchange, Manchester *Frankenstein*, *Wish List* (also Royal Court), and *Into The Woods*; for the Young Vic *Blue/Orange* and *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*; and *One Night In Miami...* and *Shebeen* at Nottingham Playhouse. Other work of note includes: *The Wiz* at Hope Mill, *Blood Knot* at The Orange Tree, *Sleeping Beauty* at Stratford East, *Scrappers* and *Migration Music* at the Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse; *Dublin Carol* at the Sherman Theatre Cardiff; and *NitroBeat's Suckerpunch Boomsuite* at the Barbican. Under the pseudonym *Excalibah*, Matthew was the first DJ to join BBC 1Xtra, where he spent 6 years. As a sound designer and composer, credits include: *The People Are Singing* (Royal Exchange); *Freerun* (Udderbelly); *That's The Way To Do It* (TimeWontWait); *Bolero Remixed* (New London Orchestra). In 2012 *Excalibah* performed as a headline DJ at the London Paralympic Opening Ceremony. Matthew is a founding member of *Act for Change*, a trustee of *Artistic Directors of the Future*, *Cardboard Citizens* and *Get Into Theatre*, and has served on the boards of *Rich Mix*, *Creative Futures* and *Theatre Royal Stratford East*. He has been a judge for the *Bruntwood Prize for Playwriting* (2017), the *Yale Drama Series* (2018), and the *Alfred Fagon Award* (2017 - 2021).

## **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.



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