



## PRESS CONTACT

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## PRESS RELEASE

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### Winning scripts announced for the Theatre Royal Haymarket Masterclass Trust's Pitch Your Play initiative for 17 – 30 year olds

Three new plays will be performed as rehearsed readings on stage at the Theatre Royal Haymarket. Each show will feature as part of the Theatre Royal Haymarket Masterclass Trust's (Masterclass) autumn season of readings during September, October and December this year.

The winning pitches are **SHAKESPEARE'S SISTER** by Emma Whipday, **REASONABLE DOUBT** (working title) by Joel Samuels and **ARTHUR** by Ben Weatherill.

In January Masterclass invited members to 'Pitch Your Play'. Each successful pitch will have access to the Masterclass office and the Theatre Royal Haymarket stage in order to rehearse and stage the reading, culminating in a Friday afternoon showcase performance.

This year's judging panel consisted of Literary Manager at the Royal Court **Christopher Campbell**, established producer **Richard Jordan** (prolific on both the Edinburgh and Melbourne comedy scene) and Masterclass' Programmer Hazel Kerr. Speaking of the initiative Christopher Campbell said;

"Encouragement is a fine thing. Concrete support to go with it is completely invaluable. Masterclass put their money where their mouth is."

Masterclass' autumn Pitch Your Play season kicks off in September with *Shakespeare's Sister* by Emma Whipday. This will be the first reading of three to take place at the Theatre Royal Haymarket later this year. The tickets are free and open to all. *Shakespeare's Sister* will be directed by Asia Osborne and produced by James Marsden. Commenting on Pitch Your Play Emma said;

"This is a tremendously exciting opportunity - I've been working on this play for the past five years, and I can't wait to see the characters that have been living in my head for so long, appearing on a West End stage. We're so grateful to the team at Masterclass for making this possible. I heard about this opportunity through the Masterclass mailing list, which is great for learning about events, ticket giveaways, and opportunities like this."

The second reading, *Reasonable Doubt* by Joel Samuels, will take place in late October and is to be produced by Rosie Clark. On hearing the news Joel commented;

"This is an extraordinary chance for a young playwright like myself to develop and work on a play in circumstances that are virtually unparalleled. To have my work read onstage at the Haymarket is one



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thing, but to have the time, support and space afforded by Masterclass makes this opportunity something extremely exciting."

The final winning script is *Arthur* written by Ben Weatherill, directed by Jake Smith and produced by Josh Beaumont. *Arthur* will conclude the autumn Pitch Your Play season in early December. Ben added;

"Being able to stage *Arthur* at the Theatre Royal Haymarket, with the support of Masterclass, allows us to bring the play right in to the heart of the London theatre scene. This wonderful opportunity means the play can engage a greater audience and gain exposure that it would not have received without Pitch Your Play."

Pitch Your Play offers an exclusive opportunity to showcase the work of emerging talent in our West End venue whilst inviting a selected industry audience. Writers and Producers aged 17-30 applied. The script had to be a new, unpublished piece of writing. All roles necessary, including the casting for the staged reading, will be filled through the Masterclass membership of 17-30 year olds (details of this to be announced). Speaking about this year's project Blayne George, Masterclass Programme Director, said;

"Pitch Your Play is an exciting opportunity for Masterclass to open up the Haymarket stage to a new generation of writers, directors, actors and producers in order to help showcase their work. We were thrilled with the quality of submissions and are thankful to the Noel Coward Foundation for their generous support in helping us make this project a reality."

The Masterclass Pitch Your Play initiative is generously supported by the Noel Coward Foundation. Commenting on the project the Foundation said;

"The Noël Coward Foundation is pleased to support the Pitch Your Play scheme at Masterclass and the valuable experience it offers emerging playwrights. We congratulate Emma, Joel and Ben on their successful entries and look forward to the staged readings of their work this autumn."

**- ENDS -**



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## Notes to Editors

- Interviews with any members of the winning teams and Blayne George, Masterclass' Programme Director, are available on request. Please contact Josh Brown on [josh@masterclass.org.uk](mailto:josh@masterclass.org.uk) or 020 7389 9662
- A selection of Images and artwork are available for use upon request
- Pitch Your Play is an initiative that Masterclass launched in 2013 and is designed to offer an exclusive opportunity to showcase the work of emerging talent in our West End venue in front of a selected industry audience. Last year's winning pitches were:
  - *Hatchling* by Poppy Corbett, directed by Amy Mulholland and produced by Euan Borland
  - *The Favorite* by Cathy Thomas, directed by Titas Halder and produced by Francesca Moody
  - *The Undone Years* by Simon Cotton, directed by Tom Attenborough and produced by Oliver Mackwood

## 2015 Play Information

***Shakespeare's Sister*** written by Emma Whipday, directed by Asia Osborne and produced by James Marsden.

Judith Shakespeare has one ambition: to be a playwright. When her debt-ridden father forces her into an engagement, she runs away with the help of dashing actor Ned Alleyn, hoping to join her brother in London. But when Judith arrives in the plague-stricken capital, she finds her brother gone, Ned engaged to another, and her play refused. Judith and a group of players confront poverty in an economic depression; a society where women's freedoms are curtailed and a government forced to tackle religious extremism in a climate of fear. Judith must choose between succumbing to social pressures or following her dream, no matter what the cost.

**Emma Whipday** is Associate Writer for Oxford-based theatre company Reverend Productions; her work has been performed at a range of Oxford venues, the Edinburgh Fringe and the Old Vic Tunnels. She is a Stipendiary Lecturer in English at Brasenose College, Oxford, and lectures in Shakespeare at Central School of Speech and Drama.

**Asia Osborne's** directing credits include *One By One* (Tristan Bates), *London Omnibus* (Drill Hall), *Emma* (Leicester Square Theatre), and *Romeo and Juliet* (Broadway Theatre). She trained with the Young Vic's Springboard. Asia is Artistic Director of ONEOHONE, Young Company Director for the Rose Theatre Kingston, and in 2012 was Eton College's Director-in-Residence.



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**James Marsden** first became involved with theatre in school as a stage manager, and started producing as a student in 2008, when he founded Reverend Productions with Brian McMahon. He has produced *Emma* and *In the Kingdom of the Blind* for Reverend at the Edinburgh Fringe, and *Dracula* and *Gormenghast* in Oxford, among others, alongside studying for a DPhil in History.

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***Reasonable Doubt*** (working title) written by Joel Samuels and produced by Rosie Clark

Sarah James has been murdered and two very different men, Leon Farrell and Jerry Campbell, have both confessed to killing her. Detective Sergeant Janis Lewal is tasked with figuring out which one is telling the truth. However, her home life is far from perfect right now and, with both stories utterly convincing, getting to the facts proves very difficult indeed. Told through a combination of police interviews and flashbacks, the play pieces together the roots of a tragedy as the true nature of both men comes to light.

**Joel Samuels** trained at LAMDA with a scholarship from the Leverhulme Trust. He formed Fine Mess Theatre with Kyle Ross in 2013. Joel's writing includes *The Common Land*, *God's Own Country* (with Kyle Ross, adapted from the novel by Ross Raisin) and *Divas* - premièring at the Edinburgh Fringe this summer.

**Rosie Clark** is currently Assistant Producer for *1927* and Producer for *Not Too Tame*. Rosie has recently worked at the Young Vic, Cheek by Jowl, Headlong Theatre and the Lyric Hammersmith. She completed the StageOne apprentice scheme in 2013. She has produced work at the Soho Theatre, West Yorkshire Playhouse, HighTide, Hull Truck, Finborough Theatre, Old Red Lion, Trafalgar Studios and Lyric Hammersmith Studio.

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***Arthur*** written by Ben Weatherill, directed by Jake Smith and produced by Josh Beaumont

"There'll be a time when you won't wanna come and see me. Gotta make the most of ya, aint I?"

Arthur lives alone in a third floor council flat overlooking Leeds, a city that has been home to him and his family for fifty years. The time has come however for Arthur's middle-aged children to move their father out of the family home, but for his needs or theirs?

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**Ben Weatherill** is currently playwright in residence with Curve, Leicester. His debut play *Chicken Dust* debuted at the Finborough Theatre earlier this year. He is currently represented by Curtis Brown.

**Jake Smith** studied Drama and Theatre Practice at the University of Hull graduating with first-class honours. He is currently the Trainee Director at Chichester Festival Theatre. Jake began his career at Hull Truck and was a founding member of Assemble Fest, promoting, mentoring and supporting emerging theatre companies.

**Joshua Beaumont** is currently the Associate Producer at Seabright Productions. Joshua is a graduate of the Stage One Apprenticeships for New Producers and the National Theatre Course for Young Producers. Joshua has previously worked at Hull Truck Theatre, Slung Low Theatre Company and Festival Highlights.

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## 2015 Pitch Your Play Panel

### Christopher Campbell

Chris was Deputy Literary Manager of the National Theatre for six years and is currently Literary Manager of the Royal Court. In 2014 Chris was appointed Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French government.

As an actor Chris has worked at theatres including The National, The Royal Court, The Traverse, The West Yorkshire Playhouse, The Birmingham Rep, The Gate and English Touring Theatre. Directors have included Howard Davies, Sir Richard Eyre, Sir Peter Hall, Richard Wilson, William Gaskill, Erica Whyman, Stephen Daldry, Ian Brown and Annie Castledine. He most recently appeared alongside Meryl Streep in *The Iron Lady*.

He has translated plays by Philippe Minyana, David Lescot, Rémi de Vos, Adeline Picault, Magali Mougel, Launcelot Hamelin, Frédéric Blanchette, Catherine-Anne Toupin and Fabrice Roger-Lacan for The National, The Almeida, The Donmar, The Traverse, The Birmingham Rep and The Young Vic among others.

### Richard Jordan

Richard Jordan Productions is a London-based Tony Award and Olivier Award-winning international production company under the leadership of the British producer Richard Jordan, enjoying relationships with many of the world's leading artists, writers, theatres and producing organisations. Since 1998, his company has produced and presented over 180 productions in 21 countries including 54 world premieres and 59 European, Australian or US premieres, winning 30 major international theatre awards.

Described by The Stage newspaper as "one of the UK's most prolific theatre producers" Richard has

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been at the forefront of developing and producing a diverse range of established and emerging artists from around the world. Richard was the first recipient of the TIF/Society of London Theatre New Producers Award. He has also been nominated for the TMA Award for Outstanding Achievement in UK Regional Theatre, the Stage International Award and for the first British Council UK Creative Entrepreneur Award. Richard was an Associate Artist for seven years at London's new writing theatre, The Bush, and is the Patron of the Brighton Fringe, the world's third-largest annual fringe festival

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### **The Theatre Royal Haymarket Masterclass Trust**

Masterclass is a small charity that has a big impact on young people's lives with a unique offering of free masterclasses by leading theatre professionals, careers advice sessions, apprenticeships and performance experiences. Masterclass is committed to using theatre and the beautiful Theatre Royal Haymarket to inspire and empower young people, the talent of the future. To date over 70,000 16 – 30 year olds have benefited from our programme. [www.masterclass.org.uk](http://www.masterclass.org.uk)

### **Pitch Your Play is generously supported by the Noël Coward Foundation**

**The Noël Coward Foundation** was set up as a charitable trust in 2000 by Graham Payn and Dany Dasto. The Trust Deed aims to support the advancement of education and Drama by the promotion, whether in England or elsewhere, of the education of students and other persons in the arts of drama and the theatre. [www.noelcoward.org](http://www.noelcoward.org)



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