

RTYDS announces new placements for theatre directors from under-represented backgrounds at twelve theatres across England.

"Directing is not easy, but harder still to come across is the opportunity to learn how to direct. Directing has been the carrot at the end of the stick, the thing that you aspire to, that pushes you forward but is ultimately out of reach. The RTYDS paid placement with a company and the opportunity to learn is a godsend to young aspiring directors like myself. To be able to do it at Contact, my local theatre, is even better."

Elmi Ali - RTYDS Three-Month Placement at Contact Theatre Manchester.

RTYDS will support seven talented directors from under-represented backgrounds to have a paid three-month placement at their local theatre, where they will develop their directing skills, gain experience working on professional productions and develop confidence and contacts. The directors and theatres are: Alix Harris at the Barbican Theatre, Plymouth, Elmi Ali at Contact Theatre, Manchester, Nikki Hammond at Core at Corby Cube, Leah Francis at Mind the Gap, Meghan Doyle at Northern Stage, Newcastle, Monique Touko, Royal Exchange Manchester and Omari Swanston-Jeffers at West Yorkshire Playhouse. Their details are below.

In addition five theatres will host *Introduction to Directing* projects, supporting up to fifty new theatre directors: ARC Stockton in association with Little Cog, Gecko Theatre, Liverpool Everyman & Playhouse Theatres, Nuffield Theatre, Southampton and Theatre Royal Wakefield.

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Sue Emmas RTYDS Artistic Director said *"From Newcastle to Plymouth, RTYDS is creating pathways for talented directors from under-represented backgrounds to build professional careers and addressing the imbalance of opportunities between London and the regions. We are working with some theatres for the first time - Barbican Theatre in Plymouth, Core at Corby Cube, Mind the Gap, Gecko, ARC and Nuffield as well as building on established working relationships – for example West Yorkshire Playhouse hosted an Introduction to Directing project last Autumn where they met Omari Swanston who they are now supporting with the Three-Month Placement."*

Regional Theatre Young Director Scheme (RTYDS), is the UK's most influential training scheme for emerging directors. It brings together up-and-coming directors with the UK's leading regional theatre companies, and is particularly focused on directors who live outside London and are from communities presently under-represented in theatre. Opportunities are provided through its three programmes: Introduction to Directing; Three-Month Placements; and 18-Month Residencies.

RTYDS originated in the 1960s, and alumni include Rupert Goold, Michael Boyd, Vicky Featherstone and Matthew Xia. Completely re-devised in 2014 by Artistic Director Sue Emmas, it is dedicated to increase diversity in the profession. The scheme is supported by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and Arts Council England to offer opportunities to directors at the early stages of their theatre careers.

Three Month Placements detail:

Barbican Theatre, Plymouth

Alix Harris has a background in acting and facilitating theatre projects. She founded her own company Beyond Face in 2015, focused on producing work by and about the BAME community. At the Barbican, she will work on professional productions of *The Jungle Book* and *Romeo & Juliet*.

Contact Theatre, Manchester

Elmi Ali is a writer, performance poet and facilitator. Coming from a Somali society deeply rooted in oral narrative, he found the spoken word scene as a teenager. During his placement he will attend and assist on rehearsals for several projects including at Journey Festival International and Black Gold Festival.

Core at Corby Cube

Nikki Hammond works as a drama teacher and developed as a theatre practitioner through attending workshops. She recently collaborated with Frantic Assembly and worked on the NT Connections show, *It Snows* – the placement will fit around her commitments as a young single mother and she will gain experience working as assistant director on projects including *A Christmas Carol*.

Mind the Gap

Leah Francis has experience as a facilitator and theatre maker. She is a co-founder and performer with Tribe Arts, a company of Black and Asian artists from Bradford creating theatre that looks into themes of identity and heritage. She wants to develop her directing career with professional performers. With Mind the Gap, she will assist on the research, development and devising for a production *Daughters of Fortune:Mia* exploring learning disability and parenthood.

Northern Stage

Meghan Doyle was part of Northern Stage's North Scheme for young theatre makers from the North East. She comes from a working class family with no tradition in theatre and runs The Letter Room, a company of young theatre makers. The placement will give her experience of working with professional actors through observing and assisting on three productions including *Frankenstein* and *Hedda Gabler*.

Royal Exchange

Monique Touko is a young director who has recently taken part in the Royal Exchange's *Come Closer-Speak What You Feel* project of spoken word by emerging BAME writers. As a black female she wants to encourage and provide a platform for a variety of voices and experiences. The placement includes assisting director Matthew Xia on *Wishlist*.

West Yorkshire Playhouse

Omari Swanston-Jeffers first engaged with West Yorkshire Playhouse on an RTYDS *Introduction to Directing* course. Subsequently Omari has been developing as an artist, writing comedy and drama. During the placement he will observe a new production of *Villette*, the programming and planning process and will receive a supported opportunity to develop his directing skills.

CONTACT

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photos are available at keanlanyon.smugmug.com password: download

RTYDS is funded by Arts Council England and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, is an Associate Company of the Young Vic and has a base at Northern Stage in Newcastle.
www.rtyds.co.uk