

PRESS RELEASE

Full company announced for:

THE LONG SONG

A new adaptation by **Suhayla El-Bushra**

Based on the novel by **Andrea Levy**

Directed by **Charlotte Gwinner**

1 – 23 October, Festival Theatre

Press night: Thursday 7 October

The world premiere of **Suhayla El-Bushra**'s adaptation of *THE LONG SONG* by **Andrea Levy** will run at Chichester Festival Theatre from 1 – 23 October, directed by **Charlotte Gwinner**.

Tara Tijani makes her professional debut as July; **Llewella Gideon** plays Old July, and **Olivia Poulet** plays Caroline Mortimer. The company also includes **Ben Adams** (as Tam Dewar/Charles Wyndham), **Cecilia Appiah** (Miss Clara), **Andrew Bridgmont** (John Howarth/Baptist Minister), **Leonard Buckley** (Robert Goodwin), **Pérola Congo** (Miss Bessie/Molly), **Miranda Foster** (Elizabeth Wyndham), **Trevor Laird** (Dublin/Godfrey), **Syrus Lowe** (Thomas/Nimrod), **Chris Machari** (Cornet/Musician), **Mohammed Mansaray** (Boy/Ezra), **Rebecca Omogbehin** (Kitty) and **Carol Walton** (Miss Rose).

'You do not know me yet but I am the heroine of this drama. I am told that here I must give a taste of what is to unfold. I am to convey that this tale is set in Jamaica during the last turbulent days of slavery and the early years of freedom.

'I was born a slave upon a sugar plantation named Amity. I was there when the Baptist War raged in 1831, and when slavery was declared no more. It tells of my mama Kitty, of the negroes enslaved, of Caroline Mortimer the woman who owned me. I am to say that it is a true and thrilling journey through that unsettled time.

'Cha, I say, what fuss-fuss. Come, let them just see it for themselves.'

July is born into slavery in Jamaica and is brutally parted from both her mother, and her name. But what she retains is resilience, charisma and a subversive, spirited wit. This ebullient and life-affirming play finds humanity, resistance and hope in the darkest of times.

THE LONG SONG is adapted from **Andrea Levy**'s award-winning novel by **Suhayla El-Bushra**, formerly writer in residence at the National Theatre Studio and whose work includes the forthcoming *Waking/Walking*, part of the *NW Trilogy* (Kiln Theatre), *The Suicide* (NT), *Arabian Nights* (Lyceum, Edinburgh), and Channel 4's *Hollyoaks* and *Ackley Bridge*.

Tara Tijani makes her professional debut as July, having graduated from Guildhall School of Music & Drama this year.

Llewella Gideon plays Old July; her many TV credits include *Small Axe – Mangrove*, *The Real McCoy* and *Absolutely Fabulous*.

Olivia Poulet (Caroline Mortimer) previously appeared at Chichester in *Fred's Diner* and *Top Girls*; her TV credits include *The Thick of It*.

Director **Charlotte Gwinner** was Associate Director at the Bush Theatre, Liverpool Everyman & Playhouse and Sheffield Theatres 2014-16, where her productions included *Waiting for Godot*, the Sarah Kane season and *The Distance*.

The production's creative team is: Designer – **Frankie Bradshaw**; Lighting Designer – **Mark Doubleday**; Composer, Arranger and Musical Director – **Michael Henry**; Sound Designer – **Helen Skiera**; Video Designer – **Dick Straker**; Movement Director and Co-Intimacy Director – **Angela Gasparetto**; Fight Director and Co-Intimacy Director – **Kevin McCurdy**; Wigs, Hair and Make-Up Designer – **Susanna Peretz**; Casting Director – **Charlotte Sutton**.

The Long Song is sponsored by Seaward and by Wiley.

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Tickets from £10

cft.org.uk

Box Office **01243 781312**

Prologue: £5 tickets for 16 – 30s

£5 tickets are available for 16 to 30 year-olds; sign up for free at **cft.org.uk/prologue**.

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