

**CAST ANNOUNCED FOR NOTES ON GRIEF AT MANCHESTER INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL**

Casting has today been announced for the stage version of *Notes on Grief*, **Chimamanda Ngozi** **Adichie’s** powerful reflection on family, love and loss. Director **Rae McKen’s** new production will premiere at Manchester International Festival starring **Michelle Asante**, **Uche Abuah** and **Itoya Osagiede**.

On Wednesday 10 June 2020, the scholar James Nwoye Adichie died in Nigeria. Three months later, **Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie**, the acclaimed author of *Half a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah*, published a beautiful tribute to the father she loved ‘so much, so fiercely, so tenderly’, a poignant meditation on the meaning, impact and nature of grief, in the *New Yorker*. Out of that essay grew a book, published in May 2021.

Director **Rae McKen** takes Adichie’s words and transfers them to the stage in this new production: a space for those who have experienced loss to gather and reflect, and a powerful and timely MIF21 world premiere.

**Michelle Asante** (playing ‘Woman A’) is an award-nominated actress who has received praise for her wide-ranging performances across film, television and theatre. She played a lead role in *Our Lady Of Kibeho* at the Theatre Royal Stratford East in late 2019. Her extensive theatre credits include the UK premieres of Danai Guriras multi award winning play *Eclipsed* (The Gate Theatre) and Tony Award Winning *Vanya Sonya Masha and Spike* (Theatre Royal Bath), as well as *Welcome Home Captain Fox* (The Donmar Warehouse) *Things Of Dry Hours* (The Young Vic) and *Wendy and Peter Pan* (RSC).

In 2020, Michelle could be seen in the role of Officer Dooshima in the BBC adaptation of Malorie Blackman's *Noughts & Crosses*. Other recent Film and TV credits include *Lucky Man* (SKY), *Monroe* Series 1 & 2 (ITV) *Father Brown*(BBC), *Some Dogs Bite* (Kindle Entertainment), *Brand New-U* (Hot property Films), *London Boulevard* (GK Films) *Moving On, Doctor Who* and *Our Girl* (BBC). Michelle has recently completed filming recurring roles in *Top Boy* (Netflix) and *Estuary* (Apple TV).

**Uche Abuah** (playing ‘Woman B’) is a Nigerian-British actor from London. She received praise for her role as Uwa in *Another Biafra* at the Rosemary Branch theatre in 2011. She followed this up by playing the lead role in the 2011, Royal Commonwealth Society's award-winning short, *The Unlucky Mother*. Uche has featured in indie films *Woodfalls* (2013) and *Mum Dad Meet Sam* (2014) before playing the title character in the Luxor Film Festival Grand Prize-winning film, *Mona* (2016). She recently concluded production in Nigeria as one of the leads in *A Romantic Comedy Featuring Lara And Toby*, due to be released in 2022.

**Itoya Osagiede’s** (playing ‘Man’) theatre Credits include: *Tears Are A Luxury* (Royal Court/Angry Bear) *The Hunt* (Almedia), *Twelfth Night* (Gods and Monsters), *Palm Wine* *and Stout* (Eastern Angles Theatre), *Blue Orange* (Contexture Theatre), *Teach Me* (Soho Theatre), *Belong* (Royal Court). TV credits include *War on Drugs* (October Films), *Beowulf* (ITV Studios), *American Odyssey* (NBC Universal), *Spotless* (Canal+). Feature film credits include *Second Coming* (Film Four/Hillbilly Films), *Farming* (Groundswell Productions). Films includes *Okora* (Lyston/Lexx).

**Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie** was born in Nigeria. She is the author of the short story collection *The Thing Around Your Neck*, and the novels *Purple Hibiscus, Half of a Yellow Sun*, which was named the ‘Winner of Winners’ over 25 years of the Women’s Prize for Fiction, and *Americanah*, winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award. She is the author of two nonfiction books, *Dear Ijeawele*, *or a Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions* and *We Should All Be Feminists*, based on the author’s TED Talk of the same name. *We Should All Be Feminists* was recently adapted into a daily diary, and *‘Zikora*,’ a new work of short fiction, was recently published by Plympton and Amazon Original Stories. A recipient of numerous awards and honors, including a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship, she divides her time between the United States and Nigeria.

**Rae McKen** studied for her BA in English at Goldsmiths College and her MA in Text and Performance at Kings College London and RADA, was a recipient of the Channel 4 Director’s Bursary and took part in the Directors' Course at the National Theatre Studio.

In 2010 she set up her own theatre company dedicated to increasing diversity within the classical repertoire. As Artistic Director for Custom/Practice she has directed: *Macbeth, The Malcontent, As You Like It, Romeo and Juliet, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Twelfth Night, Richard III* and *The Taming of The Shrew*.

Other Directing includes: *Twelfth Night & The Sea Queen* (Scoop More London); *Redefining Juliet* (Barbican Development Programme); *Making It* (Edinburgh Fringe); *A Local Boy* (Above the Arts); *Gravity* and *Respect* (Birmingham Rep); *Origin Unknown* (Theatre Royal Stratford East); *Airswimming* (Salisbury Playhouse); *Jamie the Saxt* (Finborough Theatre); *Stamping, Shouting and Singing Home* (***mac*** & tour).

Rae has always striven to support the next generation of artists coming through, especially in the promotion of diversity and access. She frequently works with drama schools including LAMDA and currently also teaches theatre at The BRIT School.

*Commissioned and produced by Manchester International Festival.*

**ENDS**

Images can be downloaded [here](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Ghq8TXZ-WVcr5wdbPgCNikrRoRhR9rzU?usp=sharing).

**Listings information**

5 July-17 July

Exchange Auditorium, Manchester Central

£12.50 Preview, £15 Run
Press Night: 6 July, 8pm

Tickets can be purchased from [mif.co.uk](http://www.mif.co.uk)

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**ENDS**

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Download high resolution images [here](https://press.mif.co.uk/)

**NOTES TO EDITORS**

**About Manchester International Festival**

Manchester International Festival (MIF) is an artist-led festival of original, new work and special events reflecting the spectrum of performing arts, visual arts and popular culture. MIF21 takes place from 1 - 18 July 2021.

Staged every two years in Manchester, MIF has commissioned, produced and presented world premieres by artists including Marina Abramović, Damon Albarn, Laurie Anderson, Björk, Boris Charmatz, Jeremy Deller, Idris Elba and Kwame Kwei-Armah, Elbow, Philip Glass and Phelim McDermott, David Lynch, Wayne McGregor, Steve McQueen, Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, Yoko Ono, Thomas Ostermeier, Maxine Peake, Punchdrunk, Skepta, The xx, Robert Wilson and Zaha Hadid Architects.

These and other world-renowned artists from different art forms and backgrounds create dynamic, innovative and forward-thinking new work, staged in venues across Greater Manchester – from theatres, galleries and concert halls to railway depots, churches and car parks. MIF works closely with venues, festivals and other cultural organisations globally, whose financial and creative input helps to make many of these projects possible and ensures that work made at MIF goes on to be seen around the world.

MIF supports a year-round Creative Engagement programme, bringing opportunities for people from all backgrounds, ages and from all corners of the city to get involved during the Festival and year-round, as volunteers, as participants in shows, through skills development and a host of creative activities, such as Festival in My House.

MIF will also run The Factory, the new landmark cultural space currently being built in the heart of Manchester and designed by the internationally-renowned architect Ellen van Loon of Rem Koolhaas’ OMA. The Factory will commission, present and produce one of Europe’s most ambitious and adventurous year-round creative programmes, featuring bold new work from the world’s greatest artists and offering a space to create, invent and play.

Attracting up to 850,000 visitors annually, The Factory will add up to £1.1 billion to the economy over a decade and create up to 1,500 direct and indirect jobs. Its pioneering programme of skills, training and engagement will benefit local people and the next generation of creative talent from across the city, whilst apprenticeships and trainee schemes are already underway during the construction phase.

MIF’s Artistic Director and Chief Executive is John McGrath.

[mif.co.uk](https://mif.co.uk)