

The Bridge

An English-language Theatre for Brussels

presents



VINCENT R I V E R

A PLAY BY PHILIP RIDLEY
DIRECTED BY ROBERT CHEVARA



"In a free and democratic society, Jody's murder was an outrage. It was a political act. It was an act of terrorism. Jody was not the first man to be killed, or terrorised, or beaten or humiliated for being homosexual, or for being perceived to be homosexual.

"Tragically, he will not be the last man to suffer the consequences of homophobia which is endemic in this society. This is unacceptable. We cannot accept this. No intelligent, healthy or reasonable society could."

- Sheri Dobrowski, mother of Jody Dobrowski who was murdered in a homophobic attack in London in 2006.



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Hello!

I'm delighted that you have chosen to spend your time with us here tonight, watching the debut play of The Bridge Theatre. When I first had the crazy idea around three years ago to establish a brand new theatre, I did not imagine to be producing a play this early in the life of Brussels' newest cultural institution. But the stars aligned and theatre director Robert Chevara graciously agreed to come on this journey with me, for which I will be forever grateful.

Unlike many plays, this production is entirely funded through ticket sales. This is extremely rare in theatre. It means that every ticket counts, so if you know someone who might like this play, please do tell them to come! This is the single best way to show your support for an English-language theatre for Brussels.

We are excited to share with you tonight's performance. Please feel free to get in touch with us to let us know what your thought and how you would like to see The Bridge Theatre evolve as we breach the threshold of this new stage in our journey. We aim to be a theatre *for* Brussels and your opinion matters.

I would like to thank Full Circle for hosting us for one month. Full Circle presents debates, talks and cultural events throughout the year so be sure to check out their programme.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to the dozens of volunteers who have engaged and given their time to help The Bridge Theatre get up-and-running. For me, the most enjoyable part of the journey so far has been meeting fellow theatricals and theatre fans who have generously given their time. You guys have made all the hard work worthwhile.

Many thanks and enjoy the show,

Edward McMillan
Artistic Director
The Bridge Theatre

I use words to lick my thoughts clean.

Benji Rogers

To censor nothing is an act of love.

Don Bachardy

Grief is to want more.

Margaret Atwood

The Bridge Theatre
presents

VINCENT RIVER

A PLAY BY PHILIP RIDLEY
DIRECTED BY ROBERT CHEVARA

20 OCTOBER – 13 NOVEMBER 2021

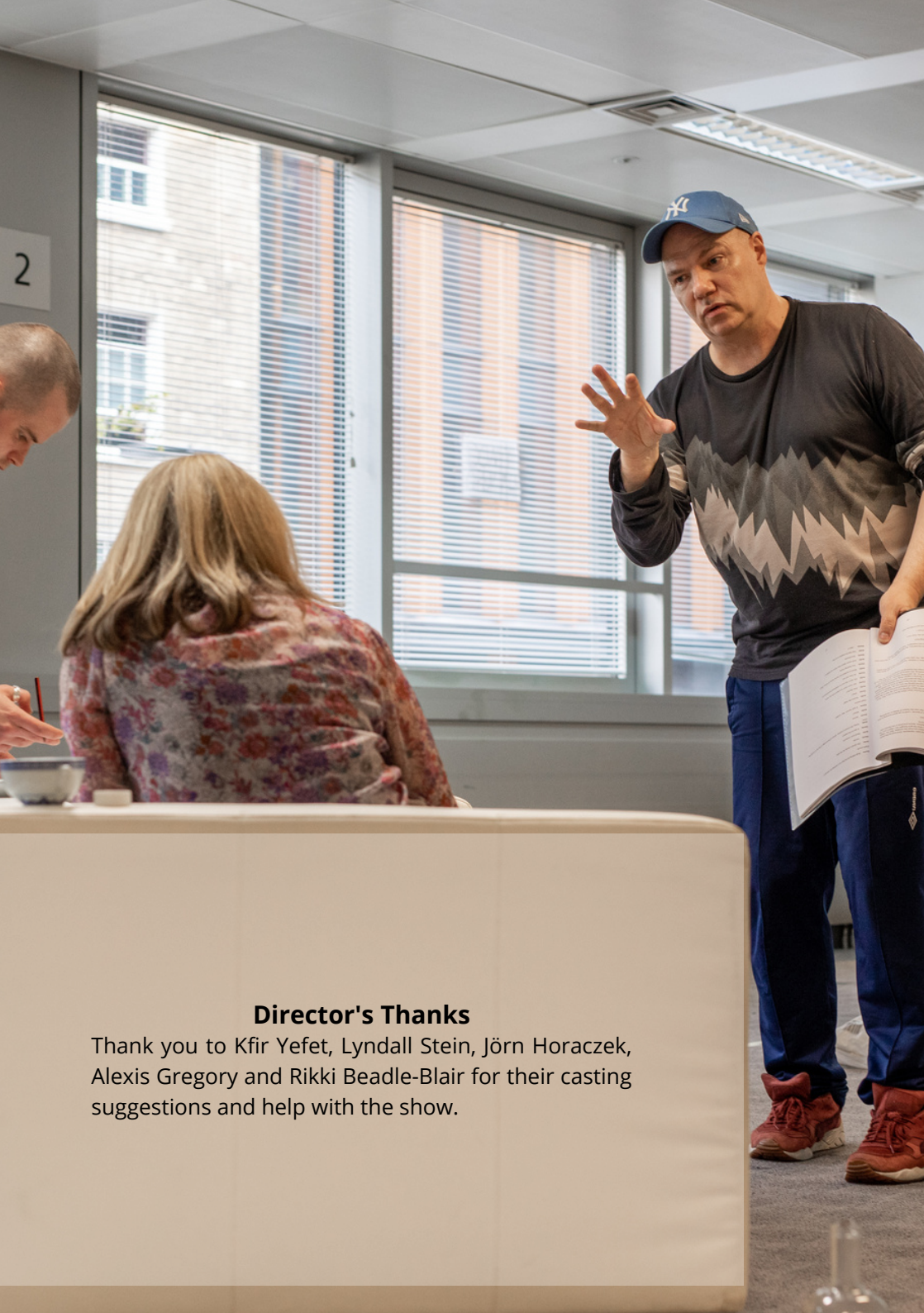
The play is 90 minutes long without an interval.

Post-show talks are approx. 30 minutes long and take place immediately after the show in the same venue.

Vincent River was first performed at Hampstead Theatre,
London on 6 September 2000.

The play was revived by Ros Povey for Old Vic Productions
at the Trafalgar Studios, London on 30 October 2007.

By arrangement with Knight Hall Agency Ltd



Director's Thanks

Thank you to Kfir Yefet, Lyndall Stein, Jörn Horaczek, Alexis Gregory and Rikki Beadle-Blair for their casting suggestions and help with the show.

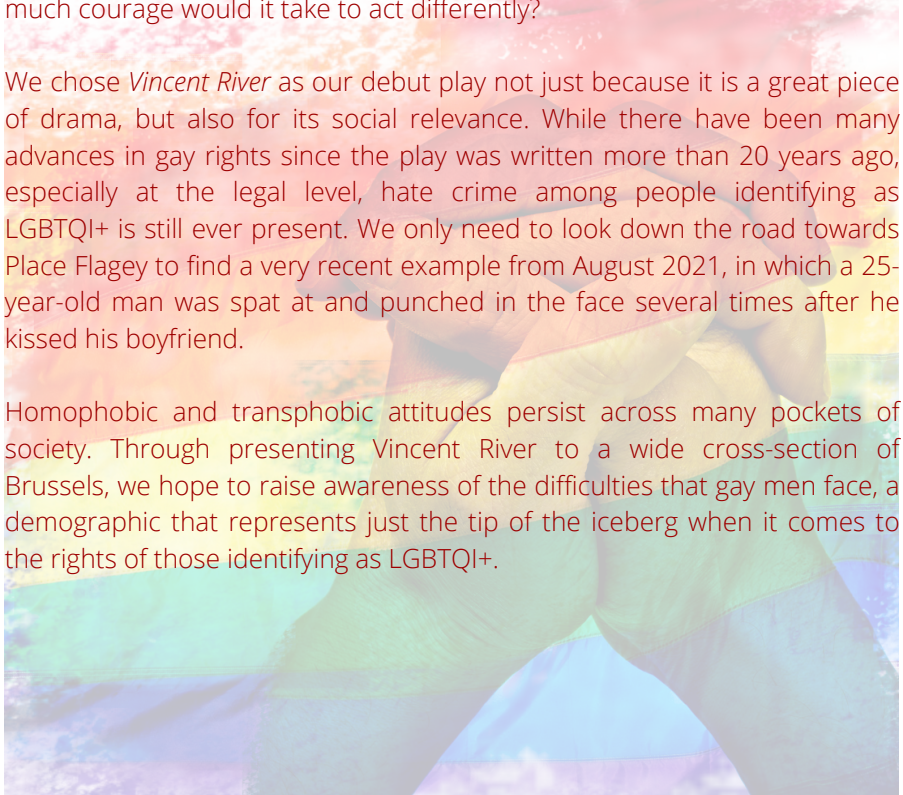
Artistic Director's Note

I first read *Vincent River* while lying in a hospital bed, recovering from an operation. It was the perfect accompaniment to forgetting about the pain of my body recovering. The fast-paced dialogue reads like a classic whodunnit, as you try to figure out what exactly is going on between Anita and Davey and what were the tragic details of Vincent's death. I was so gripped that I read the play twice in one day.

Yet, it was not just the thrill of the dialogue that drew me to *Vincent River*. Philip Ridley is able to paint such vivid pictures with the words that you feel that you yourself are present during the events that Davey describes. This forces the question: what would I have done if I were Davey? You, tonight, will ask yourself the same question and I invite you to discuss it with your fellow audience members afterwards: what would you have done? How much courage would it take to act differently?

We chose *Vincent River* as our debut play not just because it is a great piece of drama, but also for its social relevance. While there have been many advances in gay rights since the play was written more than 20 years ago, especially at the legal level, hate crime among people identifying as LGBTQI+ is still ever present. We only need to look down the road towards Place Flagey to find a very recent example from August 2021, in which a 25-year-old man was spat at and punched in the face several times after he kissed his boyfriend.

Homophobic and transphobic attitudes persist across many pockets of society. Through presenting *Vincent River* to a wide cross-section of Brussels, we hope to raise awareness of the difficulties that gay men face, a demographic that represents just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the rights of those identifying as LGBTQI+.



LGTBI Hate Crime in Europe

Violence and harassment are a daily reality for LGBTI people in the European Union, yet there is no law or regulation requiring Member States to recognise and punish the homophobia that drives this criminal offending. The Fundamental Rights Agency's most recent survey of LGBTI people found that 26 % of all respondents had been attacked or threatened with violence at home or elsewhere. According to ILGA-Europe, ten out of the 27 EU Member States still have not given their criminal courts the power to fully punish homophobic hate crimes. Even today, offenders like those in *Vincent River* would not get their just deserts.

Hate crime laws matter because they send the message that homophobia, racism, transphobia, and other forms of bigotry are not to be tolerated. They also punish the extra harm that is caused by hate crimes. The devastating impact of these acts on victims, their family, and other LGBTI people is visceral in this play. Several studies have shown that victims of hate crime and others who share the targeted identity are more likely to experience anger, anxiety, and feelings of vulnerability long after the incident.

But hate crime laws are also not enough. Social, cultural and political environments that breed and enable the prejudice and bias that fuel this offending must be dismantled. Many of us might still believe that it is only extremists or some kind of deviant 'other' that perpetrate such terrible crimes, and yet the ordinariness of those who killed Vincent is a chilling theme in *Vincent River*. Young men who wear clothes that any young man would wear – "just ordinary blokes," as Davey says during the play. Indeed, many hate crimes, especially the so-called low-level harassment and assaults that can destroy people's lives are committed by 'ordinary' people brought up in an environment that says that some people are worth less than others.



Sadly, NGOs monitoring the human rights of LGBTI communities across Europe are telling us that even as more inclusive laws are passed, hate crimes and state-sponsored discrimination are on the rise. In just one example, the BBC reported that around 100 municipalities across Poland have adopted resolutions against 'LGBT ideology', acts which Commissioner von der Leyen – and several Polish politicians – have unequivocally rejected as discriminatory and harmful. In March this year, Belgium was shocked by the murder of 'David P', a 42 year old gay man, reported to be the first murder of its kind in the country since 2012.

Speaking out against hate, recognising the unique pain and impact of hate crime through hate crime laws, and investing in safe spaces, police training and specialist support for victims and their families are all ways to show that neither shame nor blame belongs with the victim or their communities, but with the perpetrators and those who support their bigotry. Plans are afoot for a more comprehensive EU hate crime law that should get all governments in Europe to do the right thing. Let's hope the political will is found to make it happen.

Joanna Perry is a freelance researcher and adviser on hate crime and discrimination. She kindly wrote this article especially for this production of Vincent River.



**EU Member States that
do not include
SEXUAL ORIENTATION
in their hate crime laws**

Bulgaria
Czechia
Germany
Estonia
Ireland
Italy
Latvia
Netherlands
Poland
Slovenia

**EU Member States that
do not include
GENDER IDENTITY
in their hate crime laws**

Bulgaria
Czechia
Denmark
Germany
Estonia
Ireland
Italy
Latvia
Lithuania
Netherlands
Austria
Poland
Romania
Slovenia
Slovakia



Philip Ridley and Memory

Philip Ridley's plays are united by a concern with memory to an extent that places the function of remembering at the centre of his output. From *The Pitchfork Disney* (1991) to *Shivered* (2012), all of his nine plays written for an adult audience deal in various ways with the role of memory in achieving or losing an adult identity. [...]

The play in which memory is perhaps most wholeheartedly celebrated is *Vincent River* (2000), in which uncensored and unsentimentalized remembering provides a cathartic salvation for the characters. [...]



[In *Vincent River*,] Davey's narrative is one of recuperation of an authentic past. This recuperative act serves to offer the possibility of redemption for himself and, for Anita, a parallel possibility of a therapeutic mourning. The role of (authentic) memory in this play is thus very different from the ways in which (false) memory is critiqued in the three plays from the 1990s. Indeed, Davey has had to seek Anita out in order to have the opportunity of remembering, while Anita has had to almost compel Davey to enter her flat so as to make possible the necessary act of story-telling. Each of them then struggles to overcome their need to hide behind comfortable but untrue stories. [...]

Because of the presence of each other they are both able to use stories first to conceal and then to disclose the truth. False memories are replaced by authentic ones, and so a potentially healthful truth is achieved. The process is of course far from straightforward, and even involves a quasi-sexual episode between Davey and Anita. [...]

Ultimately, in *Vincent River* the act of remembering – apparently accurately and in detail – is purely redemptive. Davey's memories of Vincent serve to recuperate Vincent as a gay man living a life which – whatever its limitations – is given a vividness and substance. The act of being remembered gives meaning to Vincent's life itself, while the process of remembering enables Davey and Anita to come to terms both with the fact of Vincent's death and arguably with the fact of each other's existence. [...]

Andrew Wyllie is Senior Lecturer in Drama at the University of the West of England. He has a number of publications to his name, including Sex on Stage: Gender and Sexuality in Post- War British Theatre (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2009) and is currently working on A Guide to the Essential Criticism of the Plays of Harold Pinter for Palgrave MacMillan. He is co-editor of Studies in Theatre and Performance.



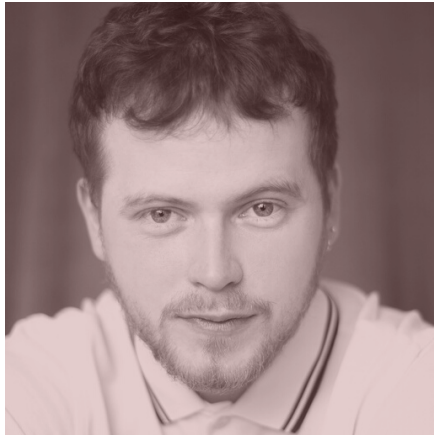
CAST
&
CREATIVES



JO CASTLETON ANITA

Jo Castleton trained in Performance Art at Middlesex University. Her work in theatre includes Rose Narracott in the National Theatre's *War Horse* on the national and international tours; *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (West End) for the National Theatre; *Dangerous Corner* at Nottingham Playhouse; *Round and Round the Garden*, *Table Manners* and *A Murder is Announced* (tours) for *Talking Scarlet*; *Death Trap*, *Murder Weapon* and *Suddenly at Home* at Eastbourne and on tour; the 'Thriller' seasons at Nottingham Theatre Royal; *Twist of Gold* at Polka; *Lilies on the Land* (tour), *Oh, What a Lovely War*, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, *The Wind in the Willows*, *The Wizard of Oz* and *A Christmas Carol* for Basingstoke Haymarket; *Elephant 21* for the Royal Court; *Family Man* at Theatre Royal Stratford East; *Taken In* at Drill Hall; tours of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Ghost Train*, *Sailor Beware* and *Daisy Pulls It Off*; *The Magic Flute*, *The Mystery Plays*, *Oliver Twist* and *Shakers* at Liverpool Playhouse. Films include *Fit*, *The Seventeenth Kind*, *The Milky Way*, *Auton 2* and *Auton 3*. Audio work includes *Dark Eyes 2*, *Dalek Empire*, *The Marian Conspiracy*, *Sapphire and Steel – Dead Man Walking* and *Cyberman 2*.

Jo is thrilled to be performing in Brussels for the first time, especially to be bringing a slice of East London, where she lives, to the stage here.



JAKE MCDAID DAVEY

Jake McDaid is a London-based actor represented by Trulowe Management. He began his training with the National Youth Theatre, moving on to study a BA in Acting at the Arts University Bournemouth. Since graduating, Jake has worked extensively in theatre and film, including devising and performing in two separate tours of 'Bleak House' with the David Glass Ensemble, of which he is proudly an associate of the Company. Working alongside Rikki Beadle-Blair as a producer and actor on Rikki's play Guttled, with a focus on giving opportunities to young, diverse and working-class actors from London. Short film credits include 'Boys Don't Cry' (Charles Copley), 'The Forgotten Children' (Jo Morris) and 'SKIN' (Illuminate Films).

Jake is truly excited to be performing in his debut as a lead in such a relevant and thought-provoking play. Jake cannot wait to bring this work to new audiences in the beautiful city of Brussels.

PHILIP RIDLEY

PLAYWRIGHT

Philip was born and grew up in the East End of London. His most recent plays are *POLTERGEIST* and *TARANTULA*, both premiering at the Southwark Playhouse in 2021. His other plays include: *The Pitchfork Disney*, *The Fastest Clock in the Universe*, *Ghost from a Perfect Place*, *Vincent River*, *Mercury Fur*, *Leaves of Glass*, *Piranha Heights*, *Tender Napalm*, *Shivered*, *Dark Vanilla Jungle*, *Radiant Vermin*, *Tonight With Donny Stixx*, *Karagula*, *Karamazoo*, *Fairytalesheart*, *Moonfleece*, *Sparkleshark*, *Brokenville*, *Feathers in the Snow*, *Daffodil Scissors*.

As well as three books for adults (*Crocodilia*, *In The Eyes of Mr Fury* and *Flamingos in Orbit*) and the highly acclaimed screenplay for the 'The Krays' feature film, he has also written novels for children, including *Scribbleboy*, *Kasper in the Glitter*, *Mighty Fizz Chilla*, *ZinderZunder*, *Vinegar Street*, *Zip's Apollo* and the bestseller *Krindlekrax*, the stage play of which – adapted by Philip himself – was premiered at the Birmingham Rep Theatre in 2002.

He has also directed three feature films from his own screenplays: *The Reflecting Skin*, *The Passion of Darkly Noon* and *Heartless*. For the latter two films, Philip co-wrote a number of original songs, one of which, *Who Will Love Me Now?* (performed by P.J. Harvey) was voted BBC Radio 1's Top Film Song of 1998.

In 2012 *What's On Stage* named him a Jubilee Playwright (one of the most influential British writers to have emerged in the past six decades). Philip has won both the *Evening Standard's* Most Promising Newcomer to British Film and Most Promising Playwright Awards. The only person ever to receive both prizes.

ROBERT CHEVARA

DIRECTOR

Robert Chevara is an award-winning theatre director, opera director and writer. He won the Prudential award for his production of *Carmen* (MidWales Opera) and best contemporary Swedish opera productions for both Tom Adès' *Powder Her Face* (Ystad) and Poulenc's *La Voix Humane* (Stockholm). His production of Tennessee Williams's *Vieux Carré* won Best Revival of a Play Award 2013 from Front Row Dress.

Plays he has directed include *Hamlet*, *Mary Rose* by J.M. Barrie, *Top Girls* by Caryl Churchill, *Unity 1918* by John Kerr and *An Evening with Beau* by Rikki Beadle-Blair. He has directed at theatres and opera houses around the world including The Old Vic, The San Francisco Opera, The Arcola Theatre, The Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, The Bush Theatre, Opera New Zealand, Théâtre de Nesle, Paris, Aalborg Theatre, Denmark, Opéra Comique, Paris, HAU, Berlin and The Park Theatre, London. His numerous productions include Williams' early piece *The Chorus Girl Plays* (World premiere – Tennessee Williams Festival, Provincetown 2013), Lionel Bart's *Quasimodo* (World premiere - Kings Head Theatre), *The Glass Menagerie* (TheatreSpace, London), *Madam Butterfly* (Opera New Zealand), Luciano Berio's *Twice Upon* (World premiere - Royal Festival Hall, South Bank Centre commission) and *Hotter than Rochester* by Paul Doust (Paines Plough - The Gate Theatre). In 2016 he directed the Danish premiere of Mike Bartlett's *Cock and Bull*, Britten's opera *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Copenhagen Opera Academy) and the world premiere of Alexis Gregory's *Bright Skin Light* (Theatre Royal Stratford East). In 2017 his production of Tennessee Williams' *In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel* starring Linda Marlowe at the Charing Cross Theatre was named by The Times as one of the year's 10 best London theatre productions. In 2018 his stagings of both Philip Ridley's controversial *Vincent River* at The Park Theatre and Alexis Gregory's *Sex/Crime* at The Glory received great critical acclaim in the UK press. In 2019 he directed the German premiere of Gail Louw's play about a Jewish German woman who worked for the Nazis, *Blonde Poison*, in Berlin. It received rave reviews. *Sex/Crime* was revived for a sell-out season at the Soho theatre at the end of 2019 and *Vincent River* revived in 2020 at the Trafalgar Studios. Future plans include *Carmen* in Paris/Belle-Île-en-Mer, Tennessee Williams' *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore* at the Charing Cross Theatre, *Romeo and Juliet*; *Rethink* at the Southwark Playhouse and Dominic Argento's *Postcard from Morocco* in Amsterdam. Robert has had one book published by Bloomsbury Books and an anthology of his poetry is being published in March 2022 by Team Angelica. Contact Robert on www.robertchevara.com.

JESS CURTIS

DESIGNER

Jess trained at Motley.

Recent work includes Genesis INC. (Hampstead Theatre), Losing Venice (The Orange Tree Theatre), Uncle Vanya (Almeida), Vilette, Dangerous Corner (West Yorkshire Playhouse), Kiss Me Quickstep, Haunting Julia (The Queen's Theatre), One For The Road, Glass Cage, Follies (Royal and Derngate, Northampton), The Holy Rosenbergs (National Theatre), Hotel Cerise (Theatre Royal, Stratford East), Another Door Closed (Theatre Royal Bath), Endgame (Liverpool Everyman), Dangerous Corner (West Yorkshire Playhouse/West End), Frankenstein (Frantic Assembly, Northampton), Burial At Thebes (Nottingham Playhouse/Barbican/US Tour) and Rhapsody, Fantasy (Royal Opera House).

She has also designed the Grovesnor Park Open Air Season 2013-2016, the opening season for Storyhouse and bar interiors for Underbelly at the South Bank, Hyde Park and Leicester Square.

She is part of the Society of British Theatre's Sustainability working group.

MIKE ROBERTSON

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Mike is a Guildhall graduate and an Olivier Award winner. His work thankfully takes him all over the world designing lighting for plays, musicals, operas and concerts together with events, architecture and special projects. He has many credits in the West End, New York, on tour and in regional repertory theatres. Outside of the UK, he has lit stage shows in Brazil, France, Monaco, Finland, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Hong Kong, Macau, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Cuba and the USA.

In theatre, recent acclaim came for Trolle, School of Rock, Sex/Crime, Fascinating Aida, Macbeth, Billy Elliot, Girlfriends, Annie, Privacy, The Rubenstein Kiss, The Philanthropist, Honeymoon In Vegas, Monstrous Bodies, The Owl & The Pussycat, A Princess Undone, as well as the classics, Much Ado About Nothing, Camelot, State Fair, When We Were Women, Art, The Sisterhood, Great Expectations and Toast.

Outside of theatre, his team has lit hundreds of concerts and events, even designing the interior lighting for Aircraft including Virgin Atlantic J2000 fleet and the concept for the Airbus A380.

PRODUCTION MANAGER
STEVE BREE

STAGE MANAGER
ABBIE MOORE

PRODUCER

THE BRIDGE PRODUCTIONS ASBL
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STRATEGIC DIRECTOR: ÉVA KAMARÁS
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LET'S REPORT LGBTQIA+ PHOBIA

VICTIME
SLACHTOFFER
VICTIM ?

PARLEZ-EN !
PRAAT EROVER !



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(in alphabetical order)

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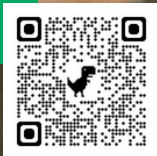
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