

# **PRESS RELEASE**

## **Cast announced for the world premiere of Ambreen Razia's FAVOUR, a Bush Theatre and Clean Break co-production**

A Bush Theatre and Clean Break co-production

### ***Favour***

by Ambreen Razia

Co-directed by Róisín McBrinn

Co-directed by Sophie Dillon Moniram

Set and Costume Designer - Liz Whitbread

Lighting Designer - Sally Ferguson

Sound Designer - Sonum Batra

Design Mentor - Kat Heath

Costume Supervisor - Sabia Smith

Casting Director - Vicky Richardson CDG

Cast - Renu Brindle, Rina Fatania, Avita Jay and Ashna Rabheru

24 June - 6 August

Monday - Saturday at 7.30 pm

Wednesday matinees - 6, 13, 20, 27 Jul & 3 Aug at 2.30pm

Saturday Matinees - 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 Jul & 6 Aug at 2.30 pm

Relaxed Performances - 9 Jul at 2.30pm & 28 Jul at 7.30pm

Captioned performances - 14 Jul at 7.30pm & 23 Jul at 2.30pm

Audio-described performances - 16 Jul at 2.30pm & 21 Jul at 7.30pm

**Press Night - 30 June at 7 pm**

The Bush Theatre continues its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary season with Ambreen Razia's ***Favour*** a world premiere co-produced with Clean Break. Co-directed by Clean Break's Joint Artistic director Róisín McBrinn and Sophie Dillon Moniram, the cast is today announced as Avita Jay, Renu Brindle, Rina Fatania and Ashna Rabheru.

Co-directors Róisín and Sophie said, '*We are thrilled to be working with such an extraordinary group of talented women, to tell this important story of four women whose lives are touched by imprisonment. We can't wait to collaborate with them to embody Ambreen's magnificent script, exploring realities which are often untold.*'

*Favour* is a touching and hopeful family drama that tackles duty, addiction, and the battle of putting yourself back together. Writer of *Diary of a Hounslow Girl* Ambreen Razia's remarkable new play, tells a strikingly frank story of a working-class Muslim family in a way never seen before on stage.

Leila is happy living at home with Noor, her loving but traditional grandmother. When Aleena, her fiercely independent mother, returns home from prison determined to deliver a new world of fun and excitement, their calm lives are upended in a blur of nail varnish and sweet treats.

Family secrets come tumbling into the light, and Leila finds deciding on her future more difficult than she first thought.

**Renu Brindle** who plays Noor returned to her first love, acting, a few years ago after working as a dentist. She graduated from LAMDA in 2006. Since her return, she has appeared in several screen roles including *Call The Midwife*, Joss Whedon's *The Nevers* for HBO and Working Title Films' *Polite Society*. *Favour* is a very welcome return to the stage for Renu.

**Rina Fatania** who plays Fozia trained at the Central School of Speech & Drama and has recently been seen as Julie in the UK tour of Tim Firth's *Sheila's Island*. Theatre credits include Susheela Parekh in *NW Trilogy* (Kiln Theatre); Christie in *The Language of Kindness* (Wayward Productions); Brenda Highthorpe in *The Man In The White Suit* (Wyndham's Theatre); Mrs Peachum in *Dead Dog in a Suitcase* (2019 UK Tour); Sameena in *Approaching Empty* (Kiln Theatre, Tamasha & Live Theatre); Panna in *The Village* (Theatre Royal Stratford East); Anna Bronski in *The Tin Drum* (Kneehigh Theatre, UK Tour); Charlotte /Monks in *Oliver Twist* (Regents Park, Open Air Theatre); Jean in *Roller Diner* (Soho Theatre); & Nanima in *Anita & Me* (UK Tour). Other theatre includes Green Genie Uzz in *Sinbad the Sailor* (Theatre Royal Stratford East); Parisa in *Paradise of the Assassins* (Tara Arts); Bindi in *Love N Stuff* (Theatre Royal Stratford East, 2013 & 2016); Mrs Peachum in *Dead Dog in a Suitcase* (UK & International tour); Mummyji in *Mummyji Presents* (Birmingham Rep – The Door); Genie of the Ring in *Aladdin* (De Montford Hall, Leicester); Firoza in *The Empress* (RSC, The Swan Theatre); Fairy Bowbells in *Dick Whittington* (Hackney Empire); Bindi/ Sameena Bibi in *Wah! Wah! Girls* (Sadler's Wells/ UK Tour); The Queen of the Empire in *Cinderella* (Hackney Empire); Abdul/ Mother in *Guantanamo Boy* (Brolly Productions); Bibiji in *Britain's Got Bhangra* (UK Tour); *The Vagina Monologues* (Alchemy Festival, Southbank); Bushra in *The House of Bilquis Bibi* (Hampstead Theatre & UK Tour); Bibiji in *Britain's Got Bhangra* (Rifco Arts); Ayah in *Wuthering Heights* (Tamasha Theatre Co.); Kiran/ Ila in, characters devised by Rina in *It Aint All Bollywood* (Rifco Arts/ National & Pakistan Tour); Mrs. Gupta/ Ruby in *A Fine Balance* (Tamasha Theatre Co.); Zainab/ Hasina in *The Child of Divide* (Tamasha Theatre Co/ New York & L.A Tour); Agnes in *Meri Christmas* (Rifco Arts); Kiran in *The Deranged Marriage* (Rifco Arts); Pushpa in *Strictly Dandia* (Tamasha Theatre Co.); Swing in *Bombay Dreams* (Apollo Victoria, West End); & Dunyazaad in *Arabian Nights* (Midland Arts Centre). TV credits include *Too Close* (Snowed In Productions); *Wanderlust* (BBC, Netflix) & *People Just Do Nothing* (BBC). Film Credits include *Little English* (Resource Productions); *Shawafa* (short, 2019); *Raabta* (Bollywood Film); *Mummyji Presents* (BBC Space/ Pravesh Kumar); Shammu in *Mumbai Charlie* (Pukkanasha Films); Agent in *Catch That Train* (Painting Pictures). Radio credits include Big Babushka in *SLAVS* (Hampstead Theatre); *Relativity* (BBC Radio 4); *Bindi Business* by Tanika Gupta (BBC Radio); *Baby Farming* by Tanika Gupta (BBC Radio 3); Meghna in *We Are Water* (BBC World Service); Meghna in *Oceans Unite Us* (BBC World Service); Mrs. Patel in *Silver Street* (BBC Asian Network).

**Avita Jay** plays Aleena. Her theatre credits include *The Comedy of Errors* (RSC); *The Winter's Tale* (RSC); *Lovely Bones* (Birmingham Rep); *Billionaire Boy* (NST Theatre/UK Tour); *The Secret Garden* (York Theatre Royal); *The Jungle Book* (National Tour); *Bottled Up* (Lyric Hammersmith); *Bring on the Bollywood* (National Tour); *We're Stuck* (Shoreditch Town Hall & National Tour); *Rapunzel* (Park Theatre); *Pioneer* (Sheffield Crucible & Tour); *Warde Street* (Park Theatre); *Unsung* (Wilton's Music Hall); *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (national tour); *Sunday Morning at the Centre of the World* (Southwark Playhouse). Her television credits include *Doctors* (BBC); *Emmerdale* (ITV); *Silent Witness* (BBC); *Coronation Street* (ITV); *Down Under Crew* (DU Productions UK); *L8R* (BBC). On film Avita has appeared in *The Rezort* (Matador Pictures); *London, Paris, New York* (Fox Star Studios); *Twenty8K* (Formosa Films). Other credits include *Milky Peaks* (Workshop at The National Theatre & Theatr Clwyd); *Octopus* (Rehearsed Reading at The Arcola).

**Ashna Rabheru** plays Leila. Ashna trained at Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and her theatre performances include *The Animal Kingdom* (Hampstead Theatre) *Two Billion Beats* (Orange Tree Theatre) *Living Newspaper Project* (Royal Court Theatre); *Santi & Naz* (VAULTS Festival); *[BLANK]* (Donmar Warehouse); *Top Girls* (National Theatre) and *Trojan Horse* (LUNG/Leeds Playhouse). Ashna's television work includes: *Red Rose* (Netflix/BBC), *All the Small Things* (BBC); *Pickle Jar* (NBC Universal); *Sex Education* (Netflix) *Year of the Rabbit* (Channel 4); *Bounty* (Channel 4); *Indian Summers* (Channel 4); and *Is This Thing On?* (BBC). On radio she has appeared in *The System* (BBC Radio 4), *Electric Decade: The Good Soldier* (BBC Radio 4); *Bottled* (BBC Radio 4); *Deacon: Moonlight on Water*, (BBC Radio 4); *Sploot* (BBC Radio Wales), *Dangerous Visions*; *Perimeter* (BBC Radio 4) and *Where This Service Will Continue* (BBC Radio 4).

**Ambreen Razia** is an actress and writer from South London. Her critically acclaimed play *The Diary of a Hounslow Girl* toured nationally around the UK and was adapted as a BBC Three pilot. Her play *POT* which focuses on girls in gangs and children in UK care system was published by Oberon books and completed a national tour around the UK in 2018. She co-wrote her short film *Relapse* which centred around reoffending after prison. Her screenplay *Romani Girl* was commissioned and produced by Theatre Royal Stratford East in 2020. Ambreen co-edited the BBC Radio 4 chat show *Gossip and Goddesses* with Meera Syal as well as being a part of several writers' rooms. Ambreen was part of BBC writers' room and on the BBC Talent Hotlist as well as being a member of the Royal Court Writers Group. Recent acting credits include *Hounslow Diaries* (BBC), *Scrapper* (BFI/Film 4), *Black Mirror* (Netflix), *This Way Up* (Channel 4), *Starstruck* (BBC) and *The Curse* (Channel 4). Awards include 'Best Newcomer' (Asian Media Awards), Eastern Eye's 'Emerging Artist' award and 'Best Newcomer' at the Edinburgh Television Awards.

**Róisín McBrinn** is Joint Artistic Director of Clean Break. She has over fifteen years' experience as a theatre director working in the UK, Ireland and internationally. For Clean Break she has directed *Thick as Thieves* (Theatr Clwyd), *Joanne* (Soho Theatre and RSC) and *House/Amongst the Reeds* (Yard Theatre). Amongst others, Róisín has directed for The Abbey Theatre in Dublin (*A Taste of Honey/No Escapel Perve/Heartbreak House*), The Gate Theatre Dublin (*The Snapper*), Sheffield Theatres (*Afterplay*), Leeds Playhouse (*Yerma*), The Tricycle (*The Field*) and as Associate Director for Sherman Theatre (*Before It Rains*, *Sleeping Beauties* and *It's A Family Affair*). Her awards include the Quercus Award (National Theatre) and the Young Vic Jerwood Young Directors' Award. She has been nominated for the Irish Times Best Director Award.

**Sophie Dillon Moniram** was attached to The Old Vic as an Old Vic 12 director in 2018 where she developed new play, *Homo Sacer*. She has been on The National Theatre Studio's Directing Course and is a graduate of Mountview Academy's Theatre Directing MA. Her directing credits include *POT* by Ambreen Razia (National Tour produced by Rua Arts, supported by Ovalhouse and Stratford Circus); *The Diary of a Hounslow Girl* by Ambreen Razia (initially commissioned by Ovalhouse, with subsequent National Tours produced by Black Theatre Live & House Theatre, and produced as an audio play for Audible); *The Falling* (audio piece for Audible/LAMDA); *You Bury Me* (Staged reading) (The Gate); *Uncle Vanya* (Guildhall); *As You Like It & A Winter's Tale* (LAMDA); *Three Sisters* (Guildhall); *Homo Sacer* (Staged Reading) (Old Vic); *'Tis Pity She's a Whore & Women Beware Women* (LAMDA); *dirty butterfly* (Guildhall); *Midsummer Roman Feast* (RSC); *F\*\*king Outside the Box* (VAULT Festival); *The Five Stages of Waiting* (Tristan Bates Theatre); *Indian Summer* (White Bear Theatre); *Creditors* (The Cockpit Theatre); *The Star-Spangled Girl* (Karamel Club); *Purgatorio* (Karamel Club); *Noah* (short play) by Amir Nizar Zuabi (Young Vic Theatre) and several series of short plays written by prisoners (Synergy Theatre Projects). Her productions as Associate/Resident Director include *The Greatest Wealth* directed by Adrian Lester (Old Vic), *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* directed by Katy Rudd (National Theatre & Duke of York's Theatre), *The Visit* directed by Jeremy Herrin (National Theatre), *Myth*

directed by Kirsty Housley (RSC) and *Yerma* directed by Simon Stone (Young Vic Theatre & NT Live).

**Tickets priced from £20 (concessions available) can be booked at [bushtheatre.co.uk](http://bushtheatre.co.uk) or at the Box Office on 020 8743 5050.**

**Ends.**

For further press information on the Bush Theatre's 50th Birthday season and *Favour*, please contact Martin Shippen / [press@bushtheatre.co.uk](mailto:press@bushtheatre.co.uk)

For further press information on Clean Break please contact Nancy Poole / [nancy@nancypoolepr.com](mailto:nancy@nancypoolepr.com)

**The *Favour* poster image along with photographs of the cast and Ambreen Razia can be downloaded - [here](#)**

**The Bush Theatre's 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday season trailer can be downloaded - [here](#)**

## **Bush Theatre**

Opened in 1972, the Bush Theatre is an internationally renowned '*new writing powerhouse whose size belies its influence*' (Financial Times).

A champion of playwrights and operating in one of the most culturally diverse areas of London, the Bush Theatre has a commitment to its local community and the wider artistic community. Braiding these two strands of work together, the Bush produces an engaging and challenging programme that reflects the world we live in.

Recent successes include Arinzé Kene's *Misty* which transferred to the West End; *Jellyfish*, Ben Weatherill's love story about a young woman with Down's Syndrome which transferred to the National Theatre; a re-imagining of Jackie Kay's 1986 masterpiece, *Chiaroscuro*, directed by the Bush's Artistic Director Lynette Linton and the co-production of Richard Gadd's *Baby Reindeer*, which won the Olivier Award for 'Outstanding Achievement in an Affiliate Theatre' in 2021.

The Bush Theatre's talent development programmes discover and develop the very best of the UK's leading artists. The Bush team believe the theatre has a responsibility to programme and generate opportunities for new and established makers and, with long-term residencies, add to the sustainability of their careers.

Since re-opening in March 2017 after a year-long £4.3 million renovation by architects Haworth Tompkins, the Bush continues to create a space where all communities can be part of its future and call the theatre home.

## **Clean Break**

**Clean Break** changes lives and changes minds through theatre – on stage, in prison and in the community. It produces ground-breaking plays with women's voices at the heart of its work. Founded in 1979 by two women prisoners who believed that theatre could bring the hidden stories of imprisoned women to a wider audience, it remains true to these roots: inspiring playwrights and captivating audiences with the company's award-winning plays on the complex theme of women and criminalisation. Its commissioned playwrights have included Alice Birch, Deborah Bruce, Lin Coghlan, E V Crowe, Vivienne Franzmann, Tanika Gupta, Katie Hims, Sam Holcroft, Theresa Ikoko, Lucy Kirkwood, Chloë Moss, Rebecca Lenkiewicz, Winsome Pinnock, and Rebecca Prichard.

Current Clean Break productions include *Blis-ta* (an audio drama by the late Sonya Hale, BBC Audio Drama Award winner), and *Sweatbox* (a film of Chloë Moss's acclaimed play set in a prison van). Recent productions include *Typical Girls* by Morgan Lloyd Malcolm (Sheffield Crucible) and *More Than We Can Bear* by Eno Mfron (part of *The Keyworkers Cycle*, Almeida Theatre). In 2021, the company presented *I am a theatre*, a retrospective exhibition at Swiss Cottage Gallery celebrating four decades of the company and it has recently launched a digital archive on its website.