

CLEAN BREAK

PRESS RELEASE

CLEAN BREAK ANNOUNCES THE APPOINTMENT OF NEW CO-CHAIRS JOSETTE BUSHELL-MINGO OBE + SARAH-JANE DENT

Award-winning actor and director **Josette Bushell-Mingo OBE** and writer, actor, and Clean Break Member artist **Sarah-Jane Dent** have been appointed co-Chairs of the Board of Trustees for Clean Break, the acclaimed women's theatre company. Josette and Sarah-Jane take up the position from 24 July, succeeding Alison Frater and Alex Rowse, who step down from their roles as co-Chair and interim co-Chair respectively, with Alex remaining a Trustee. The company also welcomes new Trustee **Joni Emery**.

Josette Bushell-Mingo is Principal of Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (CSSD). Her career has included performances with the RSC, National Theatre, and Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester and she was nominated for an Olivier Award for her role as Rafiki in the West End production of *The Lion King*. As a director, she was Founder and Artistic Director of PUSH, a Black-led theatre festival with the Young Vic Theatre and through this work she was awarded an Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to the arts. She is an active spokesperson for inclusive arts and politics and has served on the board of Swedish Film Institute, as Chair for CinemAfrica, and as Patron of the Unity Theatre, Liverpool.

Sarah-Jane Dent has been in several Clean Break productions including devising and performing in *The Trials and Passions of Unfamous Women* (Clean Break's co-production with LIFT at Brixton House), *Hours Til Midnight* by the late Sonya Hale, *Hear* by Deborah Bruce, and collaborating with Chloë Moss on *Through This Mist*. Further stage credits include Donmar Warehouse's all-female Shakespeare Trilogy directed by Phyllida Lloyd, and *Zina*, a one-woman show by Naomi Westerman at Vaults Festival.

Joni Emery enjoyed a 14-year legal career and has worked in the criminal justice voluntary sector with the charity User Voice and infrastructure organisation CLINKS. She leads on four main areas in her work including finance, income generation, HR, and governance. Her passion for supporting women in difficult and challenging circumstances stems from her own lived expertise and enables her to bring an authentic outlook.

Josette Bushell-Mingo OBE: *"To say that this is a total honour would be too short a response. Clean Break's work to serve, to champion, and to understand chimes with my belief that the arts are fundamental to a person's life and wellbeing and help to create meaningful societal change within our communities. This is a shared Chairwomanship, and I am delighted to work alongside the talented Sarah-Jane Dent and to welcome new*

Trustee Joni Emery. Clean Break is an iconic organisation using theatre to transform women's lives in prisons, on stages, and within communities. Anti-racism, care, equity, and justice are central to everything they do - and they prove that whatever our herstories, they are never a barrier to greatness. I look forward to this journey."

Sarah-Jane Dent: *"I am absolutely thrilled to be taking on the role of the co-Chair at Clean Break, alongside the brilliant Josette Bushell-Mingo and a board of such skilled and diverse women. To be part of the incredible work the women of this company do in helping to empower other women is phenomenal. It is an organisation incredibly close to my heart and I cannot wait to contribute and help to shape its future, putting our Members at the forefront of its work. I look forward to continuing the great work of the previous co-Chairs and am thankful for all their work and commitment to the company."*

Joni Emery: *"I am honoured to be joining the board of such a valuable and impactful organisation. Clean Break is truly inspiring to women within the justice system and I am proud to step into the role of Trustee and add my support to the work in whatever way I can. I know first-hand their work as an authentic audience member, through working relationships, and now to be directly involved on a personal basis is wonderful."*

Erin Gavaghan, Anna Herrmann - Clean Break's leadership team: *"We are thrilled to welcome Josette and Sarah-Jane as co-Chairs, and Joni as a Trustee to the Board of Clean Break at this pivotal moment where we deepen our resolve to achieve greater equity, diversity, and lived experience representation at every level of the organisation. Josette is such a powerhouse who speaks passionately about the transformative role of the arts, and her energy and commitment to theatre and inclusion is infectious and energising. Sarah-Jane has been connected to Clean Break since 2010 and throughout that time her passion for women, for justice, and for theatre has shone through. She shows great compassion, care, and understanding for others, and we cannot wait to get started with them both, alongside Joni and our existing trustees, on leading Clean Break into the future."*

Clean Break thanks outgoing co-Chairs Alison Frater and Alex Rowse (who remains a Trustee) for their invaluable contribution to the company in the role of co-Chairs:

Erin Gavaghan, Anna Herrmann: *"We would like to give our heartfelt thanks to Alison and Alex for their support as we transition leadership of the Board. Alison in particular, came into post as Chair in July 2020 and supported the charity through the pandemic, then with her wisdom and insight nudged us towards a co-Chair model, bringing lived experience and diversity into the heart of decision making. Alex, who stepped into the Interim co-Chair position, following Tanya Tracey's end of term in July 2023, has offered her counsel and her expertise, and together they have held our values close to their hearts. We thank them for their kindness, gentle challenge, support, and unswerving belief."*

Clean Break Board: Emily Ashton, Josette Bushell-Mingo (co-Chair), Sarah-Jane Dent (co-Chair), Joni Emery, Catriona Guthrie, Lara Grace Ilori, Alison Jefferis, Rania Jumaily, Rose Mahon, Carien Meijer, Winsome Pinnock, Amanda Richardson, Alex Rowse, Naima Sakande, Jess Southgate, Nola Sterling.

NOTES TO EDITORS

About 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 in prison who believed that theatre could bring the hidden stories of women who are criminalised 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.

Clean Break productions include *Dixon and Daughters* (by Deborah Bruce at National Theatre, now available on NT at Home), *Blis-ta* (an audio drama by the late Sonya Hale, BBC Audio Drama Award winner), *Sweatbox* (a film of Chloë Moss's acclaimed play set in a prison van), *Hope* (a film by Nicole Hall, Michelle Hamilton, Kirsty Housley, Carina Murray, Natasha Jean Sparkes, and River, available on Clean Break's Knowledge Hub). Recent productions include *The Trials and Passions of Unfamous Women* (a co-production with LIFT in association with Brixton House), *Catch* (a small-scale touring play by Sonya Jalaly), *Favour* by Ambreen Razia (Bush Theatre), *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 launched a digital archive on its website in 2022.

www.cleanbreak.org.uk

Josette Bushell-Mingo OBE

Josette Bushell-Mingo OBE is the Principal and CEO of The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. She is a Trustee of the University of London, the Chair of Equality and Diversity for Conservatoires UK, sits on the Board of Hackney Empire, and is the Chair of the Mayor of London's Community Advisory Group for Black on the Square, which celebrates Black cultures and creativity in the capital.

Previously the Head of Acting at Stockholm University of the Arts, Sweden, Josette is an award-winning actor and director whose career has included performances with the Royal Shakespeare Company, the National Theatre and the Manchester Royal Exchange. She was nominated for an Olivier Award, is the recipient of a TMA Award, and starred in the internationally acclaimed production *Nina: A Story about Me and Nina Simone*, now a documentary film for SVT Sweden.

For 13 years, Josette was the Artistic Director for The National Touring Swedish Deaf Theatre ensemble Tyst Teater, where her work focused on fostering the understanding, respect and potential of sign language arts and the artistic, linguistic and cultural rights of the deaf.

As a director, she was Founder and Artistic Director of PUSH, a Black-led theatre festival with the Young Vic Theatre. Through her work with PUSH, she was awarded an Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to the arts, a Judy Craymer Award for Innovation, and the Southbank Cultural Diversity Award.

Born in London and based in Sweden from 2005 – 2021, Josette is an active spokesperson for inclusive arts and politics. She co-founded PUSH's sister organisation in Sweden, TRYCK, which works to inspire and challenge the artistic and cultural representation of Afro-Swedes and African descent artists on national stages in Sweden. In 2021, Josette was awarded H.M. The King's Medal 8th size with the ribbon of the Order of the Seraphim by H.M. King Carl XVI Gustaf.

She has served on the board of the Swedish Film Institute, as chairwoman for CinemAfrica, a Swedish Non-Profit organisation devoted to celebrating African and Diaspora film culture, and is Patron of the Unity Theatre, Liverpool and Face Front Inclusive Theatre.

As a director and teacher, Josette travels internationally giving lectures and workshops in the creation of sign language theatre, cultural diversity challenges and inclusion. She has taught in Stockholm, Malmö and Luleå theatre schools, LAMDA, the London College of Fashion, and New York University's TISCH School of the Arts amongst others.

Sarah-Jane Dent

Sarah-Jane Dent is a writer, actress and Clean Break Member artist. She has been in several Clean Break productions including *The Trials and Passions of Unfamous Women* (a co-production with LIFT at Brixton House), *Hours til Midnight* by Sonya Hale, *Meal Ticket* (Latitude Festival), *Hear* by Deborah Bruce, and *There Are Mountains* by Chloë Moss. For Clean Break, she worked with Chloë Moss to write and perform in *Maren* for *Through This Mist*. Her recent film credits include *Silver Haze* (dir. Sasha Polak, EMU Films Limited), *My Dad's Christmas Date* (Dir Mick Davis, Cinema Films Ltd), *My Mother's Daughter* (short film, dir. Amelia Morek), and *Cywife* (Champ Dog Films). Her recent theatre credits include: *Change* (Union Theatre) and *Zina* (one woman show, Vault Festival). She was also in the company as the prison guard and understudy for Donmar Warehouse's all-female *Shakespeare Trilogy* (dir. Phyllida Lloyd).

Joni Emery

Joni enjoyed a 14-year legal career after studying Law at Solent University. Her career in the criminal justice voluntary sector began in 2018 with the charity User Voice and subsequently has been working for the infrastructure organisation; Clinks, for the past four years. Joni leads on four main areas in her work including finance, income generation, HR and governance. Her passion for supporting women in difficult and challenging circumstances stems from her own lived experience and enables her to bring an authentic outlook. Joni has always loved going to the theatre personally and values the power and impact of dramatised stories.

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