**VIVA THEATRE AND WATFORD PALACE THEATRE PRESENT**

**A WORLD PREMIERE**

**A group of people in suits

Description automatically generated**

**ADAPTED FOR THE STAGE BY SHENAGH CAMERON**

**AND BASED ON STEPHEN S. THOMPSON’S**

**BAFTA AWARD-WINNING FILM FOR THE BBC**

**HIGHLIGHTING THE INJUSTICES FACED BY THE WINDRUSH GENERATION**

**WHICH CONTINUE TO BE AS RELEVANT TODAY**

A new stage production, based on the 2020 BAFTA winning film **Sitting in Limbo** by **Stephen S. Thompson**, and adapted for the stage by **Shenagh Cameron**, will run at Watford Palace Theatre. This production will not only be marking Windrush Day (22 June) but also sheds a light on the injustices faced by the Windrush generation. The play will also help raise awareness of the government’s mistreatment of those wrongfully deported and the failure of the compensation scheme to reach the majority of those affected.

* In 2018, a Home Office report stated that 164 of the Windrush generation were wrongly deported. [[1]](#footnote-2)
* The government launched the Windrush Compensation Scheme in April 2019, but rather than righting the wrongs, it has become a cause of further distress. In 2020, the government commissioned an independent review titled *‘Windrush Lessons Learned’*. The review made a series of recommendations that the government committed to implementing. [[2]](#footnote-3)In 2023, the government announced that it was dropping its commitment to the recommendations of the ‘*Lessons Learned’* review.[[3]](#footnote-4)
* When the compensation scheme was launched, the Home Office estimated 15,000 people would be eligible for compensation. [[4]](#footnote-5)As of January 2024, only 1,993 people have been offered compensation, with many waiting more than 18 months for a decision.[[5]](#footnote-6)
* The Home Office has refused to allow applicants access to legal aid and 53 claimants have died while waiting for compensation.[[6]](#footnote-7)

**Shenagh Cameron’s** stage adaptation follows the true-life events faced by Anthony Bryan, a painter and decorator, and Tottenham Hotspur fan. After fifty years in Britain, Byran applies for a passport to visit his ailing mother in Jamaica. Having originally travelled to Britain from the Caribbean on her passport, he finds himself in a never-ending series of humiliating struggles which result in him being wrongly detained by the Home Office and threatened with deportation. Throughout this ordeal, his loving family fights to prove his legal existence in Britain, amidst the crossfire of the government’s ‘*Hostile Environment’* policy.

**Stephen S. Thomson’s** original film for the BBC follows his own brother’s experiences, highlighting his disgraceful treatment and honours all those who suffered during the Windrush Scandal, which began in 2018.

Stephen’s partner, **Kass Boucher** has said, *“It’s* c*oming up to two years since Stephen died, and four years since the film was first broadcast, so it’s heartening to think that the play may shine a light on the continuing injustice. I think Stephen would be disappointed at the lack of progress but not, sadly, surprised.*

*Sitting in Limbo was never meant to be Stephen’s swansong. He was on the cusp of great things as a screenwriter when he died, having already established himself as a novelist of distinction. Instead, however, his BAFTA winning film has become his legacy. When first broadcast in 2020, the urgency of the subject matter was already a tragedy; innocent people had become ill, some had already died, waiting for redress for the financial, psychological, and emotional pain caused by the ease with which they were criminalised, detained and, in some cases, deported.*

*Stephen used his BAFTA acceptance speech to honour all the victims of the Windrush Scandal. He’d want us to do the same now; by watching the play and understanding the full, human impact of this assault on the lives of people of the Windrush Generation, and then continuing to hold the Government’s ‘feet to the fire’, as he put it, until justice is fully done”.*

**Shenagh Cameron**,writer of the stage adaptation, has said, *“This play is a reminder that the Windrush Scandal has not gone away. Although there have been apologies, most are yet to receive compensation, and unforgivably, many died waiting. Stephen was a long-time friend whose career was cut short not long after winning a BAFTA for Sitting in Limbo. It is an honour to adapt his screenplay for the stage and to carry on his legacy. The theatre production will bring a visceral and transformative experience to a new audience.”*

This powerful story highlights the ongoing impact of the Windrush scandal and the resilience of those affected. It is being directed by Directed by **Philip J. Morris**

and stars **Doreene Thompson**, **Gary Mcdonald**, **Rich Dodd**, and **Victor Masha Jr.** and is produced by **Viva Theatre** and **Watford Palace Theatre.**

**NOTES TO EDITORS**

**PHILIP J. MORRIS (DIRECTOR)**

Philip J.Morris received training at the Young Vic's, Introduction to Directing Course, Regional Theatre Young Directors' Scheme and became a Project Associate at the National Theatre for Public Acts. He is the Artistic Director of Trybe House Theatre following a period as Trainee Director at the Royal Court Theatre.

His Theatre credits include: Boujie Lanre's Boulangerie *Romeo & Juliet* (Talawa Firsts On Tour), *First Encounters; Romeo And Juliet* (Royal Shakespeare Company); *What I Hear I Keep; TYPT Programme* (Talawa); *Manorism (*An adaptation by Yomi Ṣode, Southbank Centre); *Bitches* (Residenz Theatre, Munich); *Of The Cut* (Young Vic); *Clutch* (Bush Theatre); *Sessions* (Paines Plough & Soho Theatre); *Eighteen (*New Diorama Theatre) and *Neighbourhood Voices Monologue* Showcase (Young Vic Theatre).

**SHENAGH CAMERON (STAGE ADAPTATION)**

Shenagh Cameron is an award-winning playwright who won the Alfred Fagon Award for her first play *A Pocket in The Sky*and was shortlisted for the Verity Bargate Award. She then became writer in residence at the Tricycle Theatre where she founded the Bloomberg Writers Group. She has had work performed on BBC Radio 4, the Latitude Festival, Tricycle Theatre, and the Royal Court Theatre.  She has been a writer on attachment at The National Theatre Studio and was selected to participate on BBC and ITV schemes. Shenagh worked as a dramaturg on two PLAY*WROUGHT festivals* at the Arcola Theatre. She has taught *How to begin playwriting* (The National Theatre, Synergy Theatre Project). She has been a lecturer at Bath Spa University and has taught Performing Arts at Lewisham and West/Kings College.

Shenagh is currently in development for her latest full-length play *Turpentine & Tobacco* which was long listed for The Alfred Fagon Award 2021.

**STEPHEN S THOMPSON (NOVELIST)**

A highly acclaimed novelist of Jamaican descent, Thompson’s first novel *Toy Soldiers* was published in 2000 and he went on to write three further novels, including *Missing Joe* in 2012 and *No More Heroes* in 2016.

Stephen wrote the powerful feature-length drama *Sitting In Limbo* in response to his brother Anthony Bryan’s fight against deportation amidst the Windrush scandal. The film was broadcast on BBC1 in June 2020, directed by Stella Corradi and starring Patrick Robinson, and won the BAFTA for Best Single Drama. The Independent called it *“…a gripping, upsetting and tenderly told dramatic memoir of one man’s ordeal during the Windrush scandal. Its timing could not have been better.”*

Thompson had written for The Observer, The Voice, Wasafiri, Five Dials and Arena Magazine amongst others, and was the editor and publisher of the online literary journal The Colverstone Review. He lectured in Creative Writing at Winchester University, Birkbeck College and the University of Edinburgh, and taught screenwriting at Central Film School in London.

**GARY MCDONALD (ANTHONY)**

Gary started his career at the prestigious Royal Court Theatre Activists and progressed to performing at the Royal Court in many productions including *Hardtime Pressure*, *Hero's Welcome, Gregory Motton's Downfall, Some Singing Blood* and the critically acclaimed *Been So Long*. His vast theatre background saw him at the beginning of the black theatre explosion in the 80's, working with Tour-de force companies such as BTC and Talawa in *A Raisin in the Sun* and The *Importance of Being Earnest* to name but two. His TV debut as Ethnic in Jack Rosenthal's Bafta award winning *London's* *Burning* Pilot had critics citing Gary's performance as 'moving and sensitive'. Soon after, *EastEnders* came calling and Dirty Den's nemesis the flashy, brash character of Darren Roberts was born. Worried about being typecast, after a year he left the soap and went back to the theatre doing plays at the National with directors Peter Gill and John Burgess in *Macbeth* and *Black Poppies* respectively. Combining film and television, he won lead roles in Valentine Falls with Michelle Fairley and Ian McElhinney and *Shooting Stars* by Barry Hines (*Kes*) directed by Chris Bernard (*Letter to Brezhnev*). On prime-time television, McDonald was a regular on the hit shows *Thief Takers*, *Brothers and Sisters* and Sky One's flagship *Dreamteam.* As a stalwart of the Mike Leigh process, he managed to work with his mentor on *Secrets and Lies*, *All or Nothing* and the sellout play It's a *Great Big Shame*. Finally, Gary got the chance to perform at the acting powerhouse Donmar Warehouse in *Lobby Hero* which after a triumphant run, transferred to the West End. Once again at the National Theatre, Gary was Leonardo in *Blood Wedding* and the Trader in *Market Boy*, he has also dipped his toe in the American Pond and has appeared in Numbers and several independent films including *Until Death*, *The Shepherd* with Jean-Claude Van Damme, *Mob Rules* for Lionsgate and MOW in *Airforce One is Down*. In the UK he has starred in *Outpost 2 Black Sun,* and soon to be released *Lapse of Honor*. Back at the Royal Court *Choir Boy* received rave reviews in which Gary McDonald played the powerful *Headmaster Marrow*.

**DOREENE BLACKSTOCK (JANET)**

Theatre credits include: *The Key Workers Cycle* (Almeida Theatre); *Foxes* (Theatre503, Peckham); *#846LIVE* (Theatre Royal, Stratford East); *Unknown Rivers* (Hampstead Theatre); *Equus* (Trafalgar Studios); *Noughts and Crosses* (Pilot Theatre Tour), *Bullet Hole, Distance* (Park Theatre); *Much Ado About Nothing* (The Globe); *Roundelay* (Southwark Playhouse); *Cymbeline, Hamlet, Noughts & Crosses* (RSC); *Antigone, Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (Pilot Theatre Company); *Holloway Jones* (Synergy Theatre Project); *The Container* (Young Vic Theatre); *Any Which Way* (Only Connect Theatre); *One Under, The Gift* (Tricycle Theatre); *25/7* (Talking Birds Theatre Company); *Document Given To Me By a Young Lady from Rwanda* (Ice &amp, Fire Theatre Company); *The Carver Chair* (Contact Theatre); *Leave Taking, Girlie Talk* (Belgrade Studio); *Rosie and Jim's Big Adventure* (Ragdoll Theatre Company) and *Leonora's Dance* (Black Theatre Co-operative).

Screen credits includes: *The Colour Room* (Caspian Films); *Sex Education* (Netflix); Doctors, *Death in Paradise, The Child in Time,* *EastEnders, Silent Witness, Family Business*, *Holby City Casualty, The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* and *The Game* (BBC); *Trinity* (Roughcut TV); *The Bill*, *Wire in the Blood* and *Medics* (ITV); *Life Begins* (Granada Telebision, BBC); *Judge John Deed* (One Eyed Dog); *Gimme Gimme Gimme* (Tiger Aspect Productions) and *This Year's Love* (Entertainment Film Distributors).

**RICH DODD (TREVOR/KEN/GEORGE/MR HARDCASTLE/SARGEANT/BAKER/ BUCHANAN/BARRISTERRICH DODD)**

Theatre credits include: *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet* *Street* (The Brook); *Adams Family* (St Peter's Hall Wilburton); Hopper (Stranger Sings); Professor John Gray (Corkscrew Theatre); *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (Cambridge Theatre Company) and *One Man Show 'Morecambe'* (Edinburgh Fringe).

**VICTOR MASHA JR. (GARY BRYAN/MALAKAI/DWAYNE)**

*Sitting In Limbo* will be Victor’s professional stage debut.

**WATFORD PALACE THEATRE**[www.watfordpalacetheatre.co.uk](http://www.watfordpalacetheatre.co.uk)

We are Watford’s Palace of Entertainment.A great night out. The best shows. Something for everyone.We bring the world to Watford with theatre, comedy, cabaret, drag, dance, stand-up, film, musical, panto, bands, café, bar, groups, masterclasses, popcorn and loads more.We take Watford to the world through careers in the arts, skills, training, West-End transfers, and touring as a local launchpad with a national profile.

Watford Palace Theatre is a charity and generously funded by Arts Council England and Watford Borough Council.

The ***Watford Palace Young Company*** offer regular weekly groups and masterclasses to anyone aged 7 and above. Their work reflects everything we have on our stages and gives anyone the chance to experience theatre, performance and all the hard work that goes on behind the scenes. More details available at <https://watfordpalacetheatre.co.uk/take-part/>

**VIVA THEATRE**

*Sitting in Limbo* was made possible by a grant from Arts Council, England.

Viva Arts was founded by Dan Schumann in 1997 to enable wider access to and greater participation in the performing arts. Over the past 27 years Viva has produced over 60 exciting and critically acclaimed productions and delivered a variety of projects aiming to create exciting arts and cultural opportunities for its audiences and community to participate in, learn from and enjoy. The Viva Theatre is a brand new £3 million theatre which provides the home for Viva Arts. The Viva Theatre presents a range of productions including plays and musicals, as well as a regular programme of Film, Live Music, Comedy, Cabaret, and National Theatre Live Productions. Viva also produces its own hugely successful pantomime each Christmas.

For more information, please visit [www.viva-group.org.uk](http://www.viva-group.org.uk/)

**LISTINGS**

***WATFORD PALACE THEATRE***

**19-22 June 2024**Adapted by **Shenagh Cameron**

Directed by **Philip J. Morris**

**Address:** Watford Palace Theatre, 20 Clarendon Road, Watford, WD17 1JZ

**Box Office:** 01923 225671

**Production Artwork:** Available to download [**HERE**](https://we.tl/t-naNgohlsUX)

**Headshots:** Available to download[**HERE**](https://we.tl/t-Q9YuDn520d)

**Theatre Logo:** Available to download [**HERE**](https://we.tl/t-d1vJwlmHPH)

**Press Night:** 22 June, 7:30pm

**Age Recommendation:** 12 years+

**Socials:**

**Website:** watfordpalacetheatre.co.uk

# X/Twitter/Instagram/TikTok: @watfordpalace Facebook: Watford Palace Theatre

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1. [Windrush Lessons Learned Review: progress update (accessible) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/windrush-lessons-learned-review-progress-update/windrush-lessons-learned-review-progress-update-accessible) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. [Windrush Lessons Learned Review: progress update (accessible) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/windrush-lessons-learned-review-progress-update/windrush-lessons-learned-review-progress-update-accessible) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. [Written statements - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament](https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2023-01-26/hcws523) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. [Windrush Compensation Scheme data: January 2022 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/windrush-compensation-scheme-data-january-2022) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. [id205516-windrush-compensation-report\_final.pdf (ageuk.org.uk)](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/equality-and-human-rights/id205516-windrush-compensation-report_final.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. [id205516-windrush-compensation-report\_final.pdf (ageuk.org.uk)](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/equality-and-human-rights/id205516-windrush-compensation-report_final.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)