

ALFRED FAGON AWARD

DECEMBER 2021

25 BLACK CHAMPIONS OF THEATRE

Featuring Ola Animashawun / Gail Babb / Casey Bailey / Daniel M Bailey /
Monique Baptiste-Brown / Jacqui Beckford / Leila Bertrand /
Lorna Blackman / Annika Brown / Chantelle Carr-Dixon /
Heather Clark Charrington / Tony Gayle / Elaine Grant / Kamara Gray /
Akua Gyamfi / Sophia A Jackson / Stella Kanu / Tobi Kyeremateng /
Samantha McNeil / Samantha Nurse / Amanda Parker / Monaé Robinson /
Femi Temowo / Ysanne Tidd / CJ Lloyd Webley and Pauline Walker

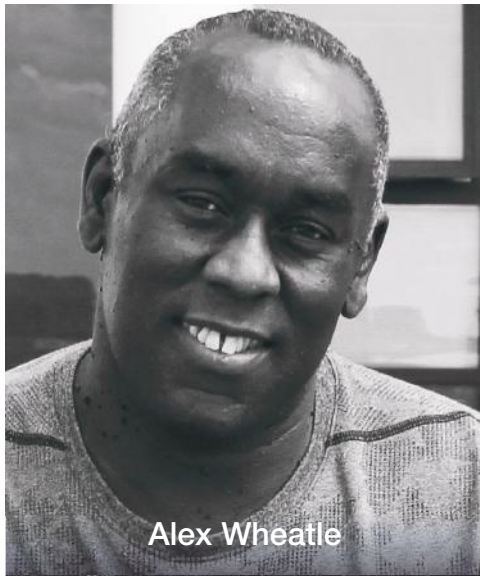
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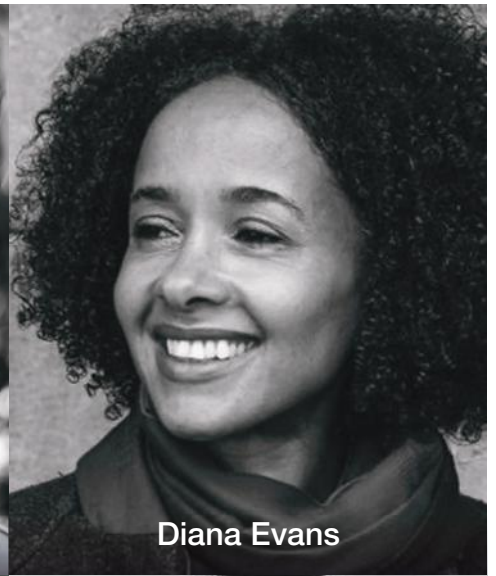
BLACK WRITERS IN THEIR OWN WORDS



Alex Wheatle



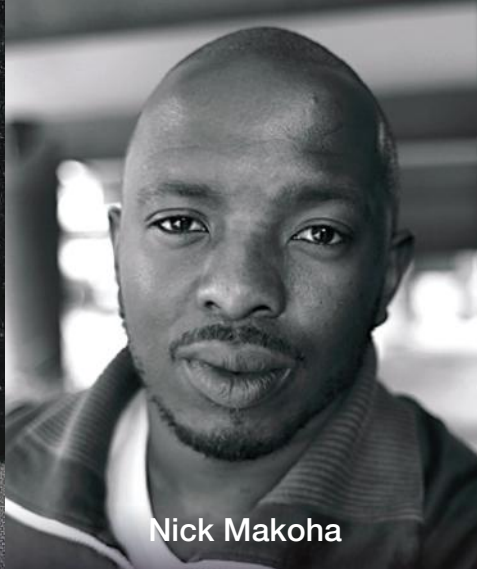
Colin Grant



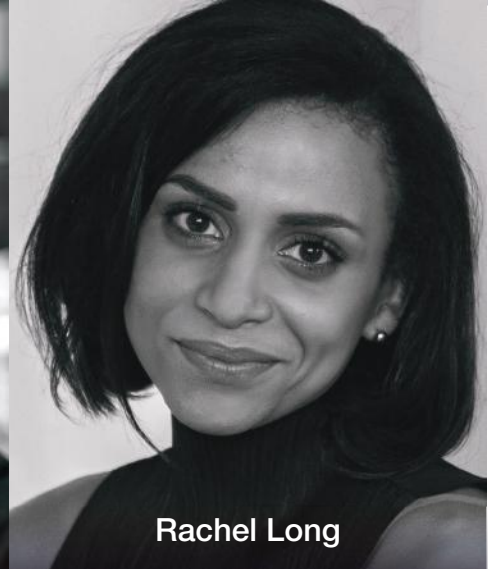
Diana Evans



Juliet Gilkes Romero



Nick Makoha



Rachel Long



@amplify_writers



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The Amplify Project is a new podcast series with writers for the stage, page and screen. They tell us about themselves, their work and what inspires them. Listen to this series, hosted by fellow writers Patricia Cumper and Pauline Walker. Now available to listen on Spotify, Google Podcasts, Amazon and Apple Podcasts.

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Introduction

There's a moment of recognition and appreciation that actors acknowledge just after a performance.

The actors are on stage being applauded by the audience, they take a bow, and then the actors themselves start applauding someone unseen in the auditorium. Someone usually sitting behind the stalls nestled in a small box room, who's just coordinated various technical requirements needed for that performance to run smoothly.

That unseen person is the stage manager and in a sense, part of their job is to remain unseen, in the background making sure everything runs smoothly. The audience may not know who the actors are applauding, but a huge part of their experience, of their enjoyment at an evening in the theatre, is down to the stage manager.

Everyone who works in theatre knows how collaborative it is. There's the creative team, production team, customer service roles and admin team. From sound designers to box office and marketing, from financing to wigs and make-up, there are many parts that need to form a cohesive whole in order for the show to go on.

The critics and audiences will predominantly talk about the writers, directors and actors, and that's fair enough. It's them that's in the spotlight. It's the actors that audiences want to take selfies with, it's the directors arts reporters want to have interviews with. Those interviews and selfies will help sell the show so more of it.

We at the Alfred Fagon Award celebrate Black British writers, specifically to put them in the spotlight and broaden the awareness and appreciation of cultural narratives and wider perspectives. We've been doing this for 25 years now and it's a privilege to be part of the growth across UK theatre of Black British voices.

For our 25th anniversary, the Alfred Fagon Award Board felt this would be a great occasion not only to celebrate writers, but to turn the spotlight on 25 roles which don't normally take centre-stage. The behind the scenes roles that contribute to the ecosystem of the theatre industry, whether that be casting directors, drama teachers, sound designers or volunteer coordinators, each of these 25 play a vital part in the growth and sustainability of theatre, as well as being role models to a generation following behind them.

The Alfred Fagon Award Board wish to say we see you, and we value your work and dedication.

Brian Walters

Trustee

Sammy is an exceptional staff member, she is passionate about volunteering and about Clean Break and makes sure she supports, guides and nurtures volunteers from their first encounter with us, through a tailor-made journey. She is a remarkable asset and advocate for the company, who we are incredibly proud of and lucky to have.

Sammy's passion and commitment came to the fore this summer with two projects that saw her play a crucial role in our recovery and return, welcoming audiences in a Covid secure safe and caring environment. Both our 40th Anniversary exhibition at Swiss Cottage Gallery library and our theatre production *Through this Mist* at our studios in Kentish Town were hosted by a trained team of volunteers and paid Front of House staff. Sammy made sure that everyone was clear on their roles, felt supported and was truly appreciated for the hard work they put in.

Anna Herrmann

Joint Artistic Director,
Clean Break

I am extremely happy that I have been selected to be one of the 25 Black Champions of Theatre by the Alfred Fagon Award. This is nothing less than an absolute honour and I must admit it took me aback. Thank you Anna Herrmann for the nomination.

I am grateful and humble for being recognised for my passion and love for volunteering, theatre, the arts, supporting women who have lived experience through the criminal justice system and of course Clean Break and Lillie Stoute who holds a very special place in my heart for giving me the opportunity starting out as a volunteer many, many years ago, supporting my dreams, vision, commitment and dedication. I am super proud of my achievements over the years especially recruiting amazing volunteers to work alongside with and most importantly not forgetting former and current Members, Trustees and staff team of Clean Break who helped to make my loving job better each day.

SM

Samantha McNeil

Volunteer Coordinator, Clean Break



Monique Baptiste-Brown

Head of Marketing and Audience Development, Brixton House

To be recognised by as champion for Black theatre feels incredibly special as I've passionately worked offstage for many years and had the honour to work with brilliant and talented practitioners telling powerful stories onstage. The Alfred Fagon Award has always been integral in celebrating the success of Black theatre and its 25th anniversary is now part of my story and testament for my love for Black artists creating work in theatre.

MBB





Gail Babb is an inspiration to me. She worked for Talawa for many years championing young Black actors. She began Creating Routes which nurtured young Black facilitators and she is now bringing more facilitators from diverse backgrounds through her work at Goldsmiths doing applied drama. I've worked with her over those years and am constantly surprised and excited by her willingness to discuss and champion Black voices on the theatrical stage.

Arjunan Manuelpillai

Poet, Rapper, Performer and Education Artist

It was a complete surprise to hear that I'd been selected as one of the 25 Black Champions of Theatre. Supporting emerging Black artists, producers and facilitators is the aspect of my work that I'm most proud of, so it feels brilliant to be recognised for it. It's also a real honour to stand alongside the other 24 champions whose work, approach and impact I admire. Thanks AFA!

GB

www.gold.ac.uk/theatre-performance/staff/

babb-gail

[www.cloreleadership.org/network/
clore-fellows/21062](http://www.cloreleadership.org/network/clore-fellows/21062)

Gail Babb

Lecturer at Goldsmiths, University of London, Producer,
winner Kenneth Tynan Award 2021



Jacqui Beckford has a history of 25 years BSL interpreting for theatre, during which Shoreditch Town Hall has asked her to interpret *These Rooms* (2018), *The Big Pink Vogue Ball* (2019) and *The Language of Kindness* (2021). Jacqui is a dedicated and enthusiastic interpreter and performer, who always immerses herself in the show and signs with great character and emotion, taking into account meaning and mood of every scene. Previously Jacqui worked for 11 years as an In-vision interpreter in TV broadcast, primarily to cover BBC News 24, and notably has previously signed for Michelle Obama and Angela Davis.

Jacqui is a warm and engaging person whose exceptional knowledge of theatre is evident in her interpretation. Her ability to respond to each piece of work individually is so skilled as she interprets not just the text, but the essence of the show, and, often, with little preparation.

Emma Blackman

Interim Cultural Programme Manager,
Shoreditch Town Hall

Jacqui Beckford

British Sign Language Interpreter

I am delighted to be recognised by the Alfred Fagon Award celebrating 25 years. My theatre journey has spanned 25, so, it seems befitting and means my artistry has been 'seen' and appreciated. My journey has been amazing with a pivotal shift in 1997 doing my first BSL integrated performance, touring nationally with Greaea Theatre's, *What the Butler Saw*, directed by Ewan Marshall.

Aside from my own passion for the arts, another motivation for providing access for theatre and the arts, is my deaf sister Yvonne and our deaf friends. The hearing population learn a great deal through osmosis, deaf people have less opportunity for incidental learning. Theatre offers layers of creativity, learning and expression and is for everybody, including deaf people.

In December 2019 I set up and ran a two-day theatre/performance workshop for Black and Brown BSL interpreters, exploring their reluctance to work in this domain. This 'safe space' proved invaluable. That workshop was the catalyst for the Interpreters of Colour Network being established in 2020. The network is fertile ground for sharing knowledge and skills.

Thank you for seeing me.

JB

www.interpretersofcolour.net

CJ is a writer, producer and theatre-maker from Birmingham who leads The REP's Lightpost project for young Black men aged 16-26, developing their theatre making skills and producing original, culturally informed productions. Having a writer and theatre maker of CJ's calibre leading the project has significantly boosted the success and reach of Lightpost's work. CJ's impact at The REP has been tremendous.

His creative talent and passion for supporting young people are assets to the whole Creative Learning programme, beyond his focus on the Lightpost project; his wider skills and interests as a community connector and business leader also bring immeasurable value and insight to the whole company.

CJ has pioneered a new opportunity to support pupils at risk of permanent exclusion at three targeted schools through his Lightbearers initiative. Combining his knowledge of cultural education, passion for supporting disadvantaged young people and strategic approach to partnerships, CJ has secured funding from the Violence Reduction Unit and a well respected education partner to create exciting opportunities with those who need them most.

Madeleine Kludje

Associate Director, Birmingham REP

I am honoured to have been selected as one of the 25 Black Champions of Theatre. It has been a difficult year for many of us working in the theatre industry. Therefore, it is amazing to be recognised for my efforts in supporting other artists and creative entrepreneurs through my work as a Lead Artist for Light Post Theatre Company, and as the Founder of The Black Pounds Project. Since childhood, I have longed to see an inclusive theatre industry that celebrates our differences. This prestigious award highlights the array of Black talent who are changing the face of theatre.

CJLW

www.cjlloydwebley.com

CJ Lloyd Webley

Lightpost Lead Artist







Ola Animashawun

Dramaturg, National Theatre

Ola is a dramaturg of incredible skill, experience and sensitivity. At the National Theatre he heads up our Connections programme, as well as working as an artistic associate and lead dramaturg on some of our most ambitious projects. Prior to his time here, Ola had a decades-long career behind him of supporting and nurturing writers, and has played a major part in the creation and development of the UK's present new writing ecosystem. His work at the Royal Court saw him at the centre of some of the most exciting periods in British new writing, and the list of writers who owe their start to Ola's exceptional intelligence and empathy is long indeed.

Stewart Pringle

Dramaturg, National Theatre

What it means to me to be chosen as one of the Black Champions of Theatre? It's a provocation – to change gear, accelerate and go further, push harder, drive quicker – to support, promote, elevate, see, deliver, secure, nurture and applaud even more UK theatre-makers with heritage from the global majority, even louder. I am of course, honoured, humble and grateful. It's a wonderful and timely reminder, that champions, champion.

OA

www.euphoricink.co.uk



Elaine Grant

Head of Access Programmes, Mousetrap Theatre Projects

I am humbled and extremely proud to be a Black Champion of Theatre. Theatre has been my life for over 40 years and I have been blessed to have had a 360 degree experience of the industry. My work at WAC Arts and Mousetrap Theatre Projects have given me the unique opportunity of inspiring thousands of young people and families and overcoming barriers to access to London's rich cultural landscape. Representation in all areas of the Arts is more important than ever and I will use my platform and connections in the industry to continue to promote and celebrate Black Creativity through my work.

EG

www.mousetrap.org.uk





We are nominating Sophia because we believe the work she has done in promoting, reviewing and shining a light on productions by Black artists for well over a decade is invaluable. Afridiziak is an assured place to find out about work by Black artists online and by regular newsletters. We also believe that much of this work is done to ensure that the voices of Black audiences are also heard.

Being interviewed by Sophia for Afridiziak feels like someone who really wants to know the work. Her gentle, personable and professional approach means that as a Black artist, I was given a chance to enjoy talking about my work.

Chinonyerem Odimba

Artistic Director/CEO, Tiata Fahodzi

I feel honoured to be featured as a Black Champion of Theatre in celebration of 25 Years of the Alfred Fagon Awards. Afridiziak Theatre News has been a huge supporter since we launched 13 years ago, and it is wonderful to be recognised amongst our peers. Thank you and congratulations to the fellow Black Champions. Black theatre professionals are truly soaring and that's both on stage and behind the scenes.

www.afridiziak.com is the UK's only website dedicated to Black theatre. We have the latest news, reviews, listings, interviews and celebrating African-Caribbean stage talent.

SAJ



Sophia A. Jackson

Editor and CEO, Afridiziak

Casey Bailey

Writer, Educator, Poet

Casey's impact as a writer and educator in Birmingham is incredible and his current work at The Rep is set to encourage a new generation of artists to engage in the theatre their way and a new audience that do not always access theatre, to see and hear themselves within the theatre landscape. A young Black man from Nechells, Birmingham who celebrates where he is from and writes the joys and heartbreaks of what that means. Casey is not only an exciting writer, but a theatre maker that will use his platform to instil change, one word at a time.

Madeleine Kludje

Associate Director, Birmingham REP

This recognition is a huge moment for me. Coming from a background of poetry, it is easy for me to question whether I fit or belong in the 'theatre world' but the fact that I know my peers have recognised and put me forward in this way makes me feel more confident with my work going forward, and there is lots of work to come.

CB

www.caseybailey.co.uk





Being a Black creative that wants to make change, lead with their heart and speak up for the oppressed is a radical act. They always want you to conform to a white supremacy agenda. It hangs above us all like forbidden fruit and upon biting you choose to turn blind to all areas of injustice. Doing this is an even more radical act, it is even more harmful to our community. I feel humbled to have been nominated and recognised as a leader in theatre. Everything starts from our community, it's the root, the essence and the foundation. I believe that is the entry point of how we can effectively ignite positive societal change, I hope by this highlighting of my humanity I can inspire many more to lead with their hearts when it comes to being Black in the arts and beyond.

MR

www.theatrepeckham.co.uk



Monaé Robinson

Participation Producer, Theatre Peckham



Firstly I'm very thankful to be selected as one of 25 people who are being recognised by the Alfred Fagon Award. I must admit, I was pretty surprised. I have been getting on with it for so long, that I've not really thought about my own visibility, so it's nice to be reminded.

I've always tried my best to be fair and approachable in my leadership style and be strategic in my thinking. I've done a lot of recruitment in my career, and strive for open and fair in my recruitment practices. I've loved working in this industry, which also has its challenges, but nonetheless, I've made some lifelong bonds with the people I've worked with, including Stella Kanu, who is a powerhouse, and has been pivotal in my career trajectory.

This is great. Thank you!

AB

www.woolwich.works



Annika Brown

Operations Director, Woolwich Works



I am deeply moved and honoured to be celebrated as one of 25 Black Champions of Theatre. I believe that the arts are essential to everyone, everywhere, and can inspire, engage, provoke, entertain, and help us better understand each other and the world around us. I've dedicated myself to the pursuit of connecting arts and audiences, and since moving to the UK 15 years ago, I have had the privilege to work with organisations such as the National Theatre, Talawa Theatre Company, the Unicorn, English National Ballet and now the Southbank Centre. I hope I have been a force for good, helping organisations to be authentic spaces for a democracy of ideas, and to be true in ensuring diversity in the workforce, workplace, and audiences. Something that has been so fulfilling for me is that I have also had the chance to meet, mentor and learn from some exceptional young black women in the arts, and I'm grateful for the opportunities to do so. This recognition from the prestigious Alfred Fagon Award is so humbling, and inspiring.

Thank you.

HCC

www.southbankcentre.co.uk



Heather Clark Charrington

Director of Audiences, Southbank Centre

Femi is an International multi-talented musician, song writer and composer. His unique ability to operate, create and perform both within the music industry and theatre industry results in a lush and exceptional music as he cross pollinates his learning and experience of the two. The outcome for the production and therefore for audience experience is particularly special as the composer is seen at the heart of the music as composer and musician unite. It adds a layer of personability to the work with Femi's wonderfully emotive being / presence. The music is elevated, almost becoming a character in the work. This was particularly successful on *and breathe...* by Yomi Sode, as it was poetic monologue and so it not only enhanced the lyrical element but allowed the actor to have another energy to play against.

Femi is a very calm and positive energy to have on a production. He is incredibly open and honest which makes for healthy working relations.

Femi was really popular in the building, good natured and entertaining. His music brought a warmth and intimacy to the show as did his presence on stage; it became an integral part of *and breathe...* He's remarkably talented and skilful.

Tara Wilkinson

Producer, Almeida Theatre

To be chosen as a champion of theatre is one of the biggest honors of my life so far. Aside from the fact that I only entered the theatre realm a mere two years ago, I have always maintained that awards and accolades are not the driving force behind the work that we do. But to be recognised in this way inspires me to want to make better, more inspired art. Also, it reminds me to look around me and take the time to recognise others and the incredible things that are happening in my orbit and beyond.

FT

www.femiguitar.com

Femi Temowo

Musician and Composer, winner
Best Musical Director, Black
British Theatre Awards 2021





Akua Gyamfi

Founder of the British Blacklist

Akua Gyamfi is the Founder and Managing Director of The British Blacklist. Described as 'the IMDB for the UK's British African and Caribbean market', The British Blacklist serves as an online portal chronicling the careers of professionals from film, television, theatre, literature and music.

www.thebritishblacklist.co.uk

It is an absolute honour to be recognised by the Alfred Fagon Award as a Black Champion of Theatre. It's humbling because, in my opinion, I wouldn't be a champion if there wasn't any work to champion. So I have to say thank you to all the Black playwrights who have dedicated themselves to this oftentimes difficult space to navigate. Who have committed to sharing their stories with us, to inspire, educate, challenge, and uplift us. I thank Pauline Walker and her work behind the scenes to keep the Alfred Fagon Award going from strength to strength and shining a light on important voices!

AK



Leila Bertrand

Casting Director

It means so much to me to be recognised by the prestigious and essential Alfred Fagon Award.

Throughout my career as a Casting Director, I have loved finding great talent from all ages and backgrounds in the UK and abroad, and supporting people on their journey. I fell into Casting by chance, having been an actor myself so I have deep respect and admiration for those who tread the boards.

The writers and directors that I have had the pleasure to help in creating their vision has been inspiring, difficult at times and with lots of laughs along the way.

I feel honoured to be part of the theatre family because that is how I see it. Now more than ever it is necessary that it is a family of people from all different backgrounds and walks of life.

Many years ago, I cast a young actor – his name is Arinze Kene, who is now giving a sublime performance in *Get Up, Stand Up! The Bob Marley Musical* directed by one of the leading lights in theatre today, Clint Dyer.

When I hit the right note as a Casting Director it is joyous, uplifting and I love my job.

Thank you.

LB

www.thecdg.co.uk/members/leila



Daniel is a detailed orientated focused Producer and Director. He is a great communicator and has a natural rapport with artists. Daniel came on board with Run It Back digital production at a critical moment. He mapped out the project, organised the brief and held the artists vision for the capture, whilst keeping Talawa involved and informed on process. It is due to his dedication that the capture occurred and was a success. His contribution to the digital arts sector cannot be understated. He is a force to be reckoned with.

Carolyn ML Forsyth

Talawa Executive Director & Joint CEO

It's an absolute honour to be selected as one of 25 Black Champions of Theatre, particularly as my work engages with theatre in a non-traditional way. Digital Capture repurposes theatre for the digital age and enables great stories and productions to travel further and impact a broader spectrum of people. It's great to be recognised for this type of work during this landmark year for the Alfred Fagon Award and amidst such a pivotal time for the theatre and creative industry. I hope I can continue to create and support great work and inspire others to do the same.

DMB

www.blackapronent.com



Daniel M Bailey

Digital Capture Producer





Amanda is the Founder and Chief Executive of Inc Arts. Inc Arts are shaping a national anti-racist strategy for arts and culture. They develop reporting mechanisms, codes of conduct, a way to celebrate best practice, and more.

The focus of their business is on the 'teams behind the scenes'. This means those who work in roles off-stage and support creative production.

www.incarts.uk

For the past 25 years the Alfred Fagon Award has celebrated the richness of ethnically diverse UK playwriting talent and the achievements of peers doing phenomenal work across the theatre industry.

I am here in service to that talent. I'm committed to championing the rights of ethnically diverse creatives to grow their exceptional craft without the additional burden that's too frequently placed on them – requiring them to act as advocates and navigate prejudice, whilst also flexing their creative muscles.

Thank you to the Alfred Fagon Award nominations committee – it's an honour beyond measure to join the roll call of talent that this Award recognises.

AP

www.amandaparkerassociates.uk



Amanda Parker FRSA

Founder and Chief Executive, Inc Arts



Kamara Gray

Founder and CEO of Artistry Youth Dance

I am truly grateful to have been recognised as one of the 25 Black Champions of Theatre. What an honour! To be acknowledged amongst such a rewarding list of individuals is quite incredible, and I thank the Alfred Fagon Award for this opportunity. I am passionate about supporting young people, and in particular, creating opportunities for young dancers of African and Caribbean heritage, so to be recognised for this work is something that I am very thankful for. I appreciate everyone who has supported me along this journey, including my family, friends and team at Artistry Youth Dance.

KG

www.artistryyouthdance.com

Lorna has been a grass roots theatre practitioner, drama facilitator and teacher in the London Borough of Haringey (Tottenham) for over 28 years. With very little press, support or funding, Lorna has trained from ground up some of the most talented actors within the Black community including Tameka Empson (EastEnders). Since 2000 Lorna has been running groups The Stylisters and the Big People's Theatre. Without Lorna, a lot of the Black youth in Tottenham and surrounding areas wouldn't have had any space or chance to express themselves and know the arts. Her facilitation work took many of us to pass our LAMDA exams as small children. Lorna is absolutely deserving of this recognition.

Kamahl Sami-Miller

Actor, Writer, Youth Mental Health
Ambassador

Alfred Fagon's life reminded me of the struggle that the community, Black art/ theatre practitioners are now facing. As a child my mother had doors slammed in her face when she tried to get me into Theatre school. I was only seven. Time and time again having doors slammed in my face has made me stronger and resilient. Challenges? Sabotaging, undermining, negativity, but most of all struggles. I am sure that Alfred Fagon faced these challenges. I thank my mentors Martha Harris, Rose Hughes, Peter Nelson, Kamahl Sami-Miller and ALL the children and adults. I salute the Alfred Fagon Award. I believe this recognition will increase the profile of the groups' work.

LB

www.frontroom.link/LornaBlackman



Lorna Blackman

Drama Teacher





As a Black, female, Finance Officer working in the Arts sector, news of my nomination was such an unexpected and fabulous way to celebrate all the hard work that occurs behind the scenes; 'back office' functions are so rarely recognised! The pandemic presented everyone with hidden challenges, but I was able to ensure Yorkshire Dance finances continued to run smoothly. What an amazing privilege it is to be able to raise my profile and use my voice; under-represented and talented people from minority backgrounds are also waiting to be recognised. This recognition presents an opportunity to ensure we are visible.

Thank you!

CCD

www.yorkshiredance.com



Chantelle Carr-Dixon

Finance Officer, Yorkshire Dance

Tony Gayle

Sound Designer,

Light and Sound Recognition Award, Black British Theatre Awards 2021

Tony has a Production Sound Engineer background which means his ability to combine the technical aspects of the sound design with the creative are second to none. He has worked across a range of shows and scales with huge experience of musicals – the toughest, ultimate sound design gig of all!

Tony is a very positive presence to have in the company and building. A real can-do attitude and dedication to delivering high quality shows, which is always met.

His skill and meticulousness were valuable to the crafting of *and breathe...* He's a hard worker and the quality of his work is clear.

Tara Wilkinson

Producer, Almeida Theatre

Being chosen as one of the Black Champions of Theatre is truly an honour on a personal level and a welcome acknowledgement on a professional level, of all Black theatre practitioners who work tirelessly to bring theatre to everyone.

This recognition is not just for me but for my family and colleagues who have enabled and supported me since I started in Theatre back in 1993.

I will continue to push the door wide open for the future Black Champions.

TG

www.tonygayle.co.uk





Ysanne Tidd

Costume Supervisor,
Dyeing and Breakdown Artist,
Young Vic

A first memory of mine was being in absolute awe at the plethora of jaw-dropping outfits and treasure troves of shoes my mother possessed. Armed with her 21-inch waist, she had a look for EVERY occasion!

In my youth, I'd look at my father's sewing machine and watch him attentively cut patterns for box shift dresses to drainpipe trousers, thinking one day I'd be just as good. My beautiful mother would dance to calypso of her beautiful homeland. I believe this carnival-steeped family birthed an excitingly creative being.

Given my uniquely beguiling name, I couldn't help but feel destined for great things and create aesthetically pleasing pieces lol. Through my Trinidadian roots my mother and I shared a love for the influences of this sunshine island and so I became a carnival queen. This leant a hand to my intrigue in the creation of costumes allowing me to perform before the Queen.

My sister establishing a long-standing career as Stage Manager in the West End, my love for creative elements of the arts; starting out as a dresser through to managing a tour in South Korea and most recently Supervising a world-first; AI scripted production for Young Vic, how could I not fall in love with every facet of costume.

YT

www.youngvic.org





Samantha Nurse

Creative Producer

I am honoured to be recognised by the Alfred Fagon Award charity for the many years of contribution I have made to the theatre industry. It's not often the spotlight is shone on the people behind the scenes and the great work they do in supporting the amazing work that is created onstage. We have a wealth of unseen Black British backstage talent but we are still widely under-represented in the industry and so I hope this project will inspire more Black Britons to take up a career in our wonderful industry.

SN

Stella Kanu

Executive Director, LIFT

It's an incredible honour, and surprise, to be named one of the 25 Black Champions of Theatre. I love that in its 25th year the Alfred Fagon Award has given me the opportunity to take stock of all I have contributed to and to celebrate all the other hands, hearts, brains and energy that make and support work that has consistently contributed to the huge canon of exceptional theatre, especially by Black talent. It's a real privilege to do what I do over the last two decades. I've had the pleasure of nurturing, programming, inspiring and advocating for artists, creatives, and leaders. It reminds me that being committed to doing the work matters. And that some days are made for smiling.

SK

www.liftfestival.com

www.artscouncil.org.uk/users/stella-kanu

www.blackwomxnintheatre.com/the-bwit-team



To be acknowledged by an organisation as trailblazing and history-defining as the Alfred Fagon Award is humbling. When Black Ticket Project launched, the me at the time – a 23-year-old stumbling her way through this wild industry – had no idea of how loved and held it would become. Three years on, I'm still stumbling, but I'm grateful to organisations like the Alfred Fagon Award that make it a priority to remind us all that we are truly seen.

TK

www.tobikyere.com



Tobi Kyeremateng FRSA

Founder of Black Ticket Project





Special recognition

Pauline Walker

Along with celebrating 25 Champions, the Board would like to take this opportunity to celebrate their own Champion, Creative Producer and Administrator Pauline Walker.

Pauline has been working with the Alfred Fagon Award since January 2014 and as well as producing the award day at the National Theatre and curating a series of one to one conversations with writers, Pauline is the Administrator for both the Alfred Fagon Award Board and the script panel, manages the publicity and does so much more in-between to keep us all on track and keep the purpose and meaning of the Award at the forefront of all we do.

She does all this while also running her other projects, including her podcast with Patricia Cumper, The Amplify Project, and writing her novel.

Board member Sheelagh Killeen says of Pauline: "I don't think we would be where we are today, without Pauline's considerable expertise, input and dedication to putting the Alfred Fagon Award on the National Map of Artistic Achievements in the U.K."

A sentiment which is shared by all members of the Board and the readers' panel. It's no exaggeration to say we'd be lost without her.

Thank you Pauline.

Board of Trustees
Alfred Fagon Award

I'm thrilled to be celebrated by the AFA trustees. It's a privilege to work with and learn from these dedicated and supportive professionals. I'm thankful for the many readers and judges I've worked with over the last eight years including the three Chairs of the Judges – Anton Phillips, Brian Walters and Mimi Findlay.

Since joining the theatre sector I've combined writing with my commitment to work with organisations and on projects that promote cultural diversity and push for the inclusion and recognition of the contribution of Black British artists in UK society. They include The London Hub of Sustained Theatre, StrongBack Productions, Wasafiri, the AFA, mentoring emerging producers, Sculptress, and my current project, The Amplify Project, a podcast series featuring Black British writers from the page, stage and screen.

Being visible matters and I'm proud to have helped the AFA transition into a becoming a charity and raise the profile of the organisation within the industry, the media and the public.

As we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the AFA I'm excited to be working on activities to mark this milestone – so watch this space!

PW

More on our Champions

Casey Bailey

Casey is the Birmingham Poet Laureate 2020-2022. He is a writer, performer and educator from Birmingham, who uses words to inspire, celebrate and educate. A secondary school Assistant Headteacher, Casey focuses on addressing barriers to having access to, or engaging young people within the curriculum. Born and raised in Nechells, Birmingham, Casey has experienced first-hand the impact of deprivation and lack of direction, but also the strength and resilience that has given him. Working within his community, along with his other work in education and poetry Casey has been recognised by Birmingham Live 2018 as one of the 30 most influential under 30's in the city (#Bum30Under30). Followed up in 2019 by the University of Worcester acknowledging the work he does in his community and awarding him an honorary Fellowship and membership to the university's College of Fellows. Casey has two published collections of poetry and has been commissioned by The Birmingham Rep for his debut play *Grimeboy* which will play in the Door in 2022. Casey has also been commissioned by the BBC, Birmingham Royal Ballet and The Bush for his great ability with words and poetic storytelling.

Madeleine Kludje

Associate Director, Birmingham REP

Daniel M Bailey

Daniel and his team were with us on the 15th and 16th September for the digital capture of our show *Run it Back*. On the 16th September 2021 we had a very busy morning of filming scheduled with the cast of *Run It Back*. We only had 4 hours of filming time before the cast of 10 had to be released for their afternoon break before the show's evening performance. After spending the previous evening and much of the night reviewing the previous days filming, Daniel and his team arrived prepared to tackle a very extensive morning of filming. He worked patiently and effectively with the shows Director and our young, cast (some of which had no filming experience) to ensure that we were able to get all the extra bits of filming that we needed to complete the digital capture and that the whole experience was enjoyable and educational for everyone involved."

Carolyn ML Forsyth

Talawa Executive Director & Joint CEO

Femi Temowo

Due to Covid the Almeida held on its 2021 Spring / Summer programming as we waited for road map to be confirmed and so *and breathe...* by Yomi Sode was programmed at short notice. Due to this creative team were put together and engaged with little to no prep time and four weeks till performance.

Femi had a pre-existing relationship with Director (Miranda Cromwell). Even with this huge time pressure Femi composed 60 minutes of constant underscoring that worked rhythmically with spoken word and the video design – they worked so intimately together that they almost fused as one. Further to this, and as mentioned before, Femi undertook performing his own composition and did this with love and a beaming presence. Femi received high praise in reviews (press and non-press) both on and off stage.

Tara Wilkinson

Producer, Almeida Theatre

Ola Animashawun

Ola has been pushing writers and working in new writing for over twenty five years. He directed a reading of mine years ago and has been my 'go to' literary person ever since. I find his input generous, intuitive and thorough. He is uplifting and positive and a huge uncelebrated asset to the British theatre scene.

Shenagh Cameron

Playwright

Tony Gayle

Due to Covid the Almeida held on its 2021 Spring / Summer programming as we waited for road map to be confirmed and so *and breathe...* by Yomi Sode was programmed at short notice. Due to this creative team were put together and

engaged with little to no prep time and Tony was also new to working with the Director (Miranda Cromwell). Even with these challenging factors Tony worked with rich creativity, nimble responses and with openness, respect and ease, not only for the work, but the team around him. The way each element of the show weaved together so neatly and supportively was testament to how readily Tony (and the other members of the team) took a leap of faith together.

Tara Wilkinson

Producer, Almeida Theatre

Monique Baptiste-Brown

Monique is an arts and cultural strategist and marketer, academic lecturer and researcher. She has worked extensively in the arts for over a decade with an emphasis on audience development and working with communities. She has led campaigns such as the Broadway musical *Fela!* at the National Theatre, West End productions as well as co-curating and producing #BCAFilmFest celebrating the archives of Black British film and led the opening campaign for the Black Cultural Archives – the UK's first Black heritage centre. Her academic research includes investigating cultural value and arts policy to the British education system. She is currently the Head of Communications and Audiences at Brixton House, and lectures at Mountview Drama School. www.brixtonhouse.co.uk

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About Concord Theatricals Ltd

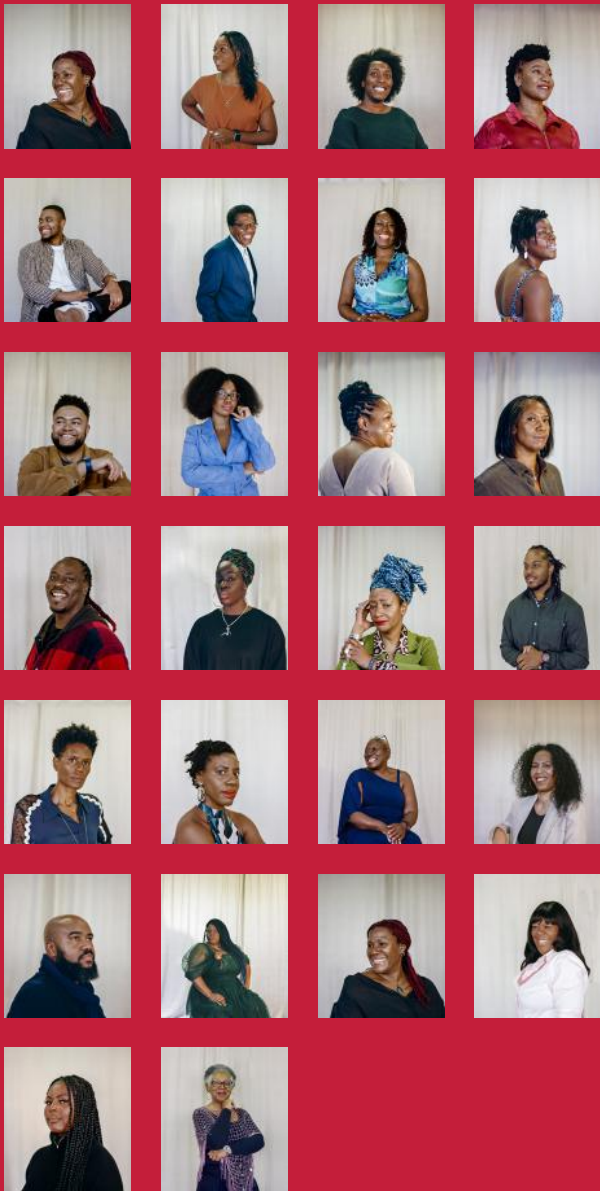
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It was an honour to be commissioned by the Alfred Fagon Award to take a series of photographs of the 25 Black Champions of Theatre. To share time, space and thoughts with 25 innovators, leaders, artists and thinkers was an experience like no other. I am forever changed by the beautiful conversations and interactions I had with all of the champions. I am also inspired by the brilliant work the Alfred Fagon Award does in championing and celebrating Black movers and shakers within the world of theatre.



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Photographs were taken during October and November at Jerwood Space, London.

Myah Jeffers

Photographer

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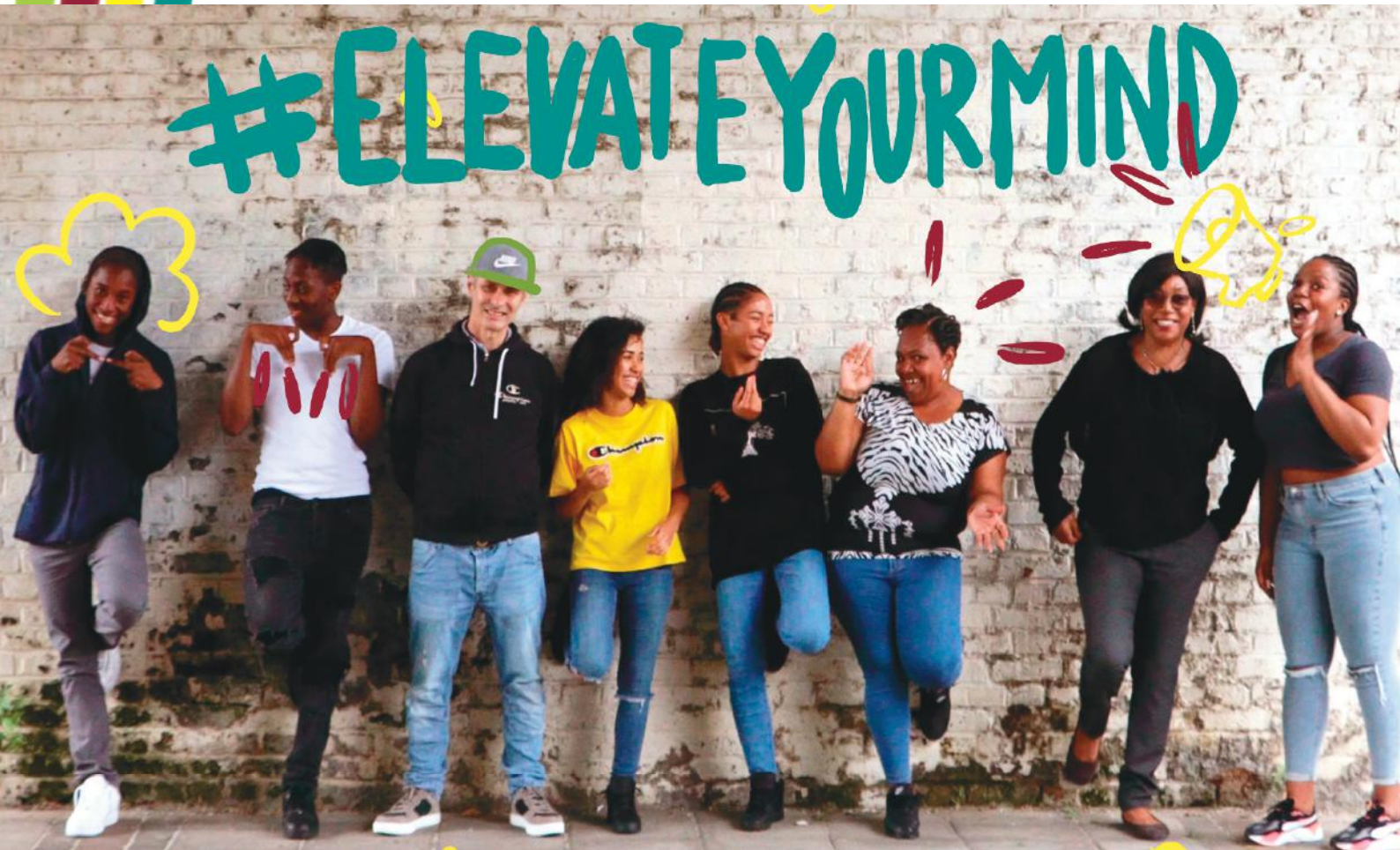
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