



LAMENT FOR SHEKU BAYOH

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OTLAND.

JR SHEKU BAYOH
irected by Hannah Lavery

A YOUNG BLACK
MAN LOST
HIS LIFE. FIVE
YEARS AGO.
IN POLICE
CUSTODY.
IN SCOTLAND.

LAMENT FOR SHEKU BAYOH
Written and directed by Hannah Lavery

HANNAH LAVERY ON LAMENT FOR SHEKU BAYOH

Hannah Lavery is no stranger to the subject of grief. Her 2019 show *The Drift* focused on the loss of her father, a Scottish Black man who was largely absent during her childhood. Through the prism of that personal loss Lavery explored broader questions of legacy, identity and shame, bringing to light Scotland's history of colonialism and slavery, and the continuing racism inflicted on people of colour in the country today.

Now Lavery is revisiting *Lament for Sheku Bayoh*, a play that was first written and shown as a rehearsed reading at the Edinburgh International Festival in 2019. Like *The Drift*, *Lament...* is an expression of grief for the loss of a man's life, and a call for accountability from a society and a system that remains determined to look the other way. It tells the story of Sheku Bayoh, the gas engineer, husband and father of two young children who was killed by police on the streets of Kirkcaldy, Fife in 2015. He was 31 years old.

"I felt like I wanted people to say his name, to create a lament in which we remembered this deeply loved man." Not many people she spoke to had heard of the killing of Sheku Bayoh – "no-one seemed to know about it" – which only pushed Lavery to see the project through with more urgency. She began finding out what she could about him online. "We were looking at the questions that have been unanswered for the family," she says. "[The play] is not an investigation – it's an exploration of what was out there in the media." The media's depictions of the circumstances of Bayoh's death led her no closer to discovering who he was – some included racial tropes and pre-existent racist narratives. "I was looking at what I could see, what I could read, what I could find and how that affected me. My response as a person of colour... was a desire to say his name, and to get other people to say his name with me."

One powerful aspect of the Black Lives Matter Movement is the 'SayTheirNames' ritual that takes place both online and in physical spaces of resistance. With *Lament...*, Lavery draws on this process, saying Bayoh's name and creating an artistic space in which he can be mourned.

"I am writing in that tradition of the lament," says Lavery. "It's about grief. It's about loss and what that says to us – as citizens, as a country. Art creates a space for empathy. This work doesn't necessarily demand any action from you, except your empathy."

A lot has changed since Lavery first wrote the play – a public inquiry into Bayoh's death has been announced, and the murder of George Floyd in the US provoked global protests. How did it feel returning to the piece in 2020? "In so many ways we're in a different place," she responds. "But also, we're not."

"There will be points in the play that resonate more than they did last year because of what we've experienced this year. But the Black Lives Matter Movement existed when I wrote it. It's more [embedded in] the popular imagination now – society has changed a little and the public has changed a little. How much by still remains to be seen."

The world has, of course, changed in other ways too. *Lament for Sheku Bayoh* will be performed to an empty auditorium in the Lyceum in Edinburgh, and streamed online for viewers to watch at home. Lavery hopes that it will be shown to a live audience one day, though "streaming is more accessible in some ways, so that's a silver lining."

"It's certainly different!" she says, "but I'm just glad it's getting made." So are we.

This article was originally written for The Skinny by Eliza Gearty and published with their kind permission.

A National Theatre of Scotland, Edinburgh
International Festival and Royal Lyceum Theatre
Edinburgh co-production.

TEAM

Performer **Saskia Ashdown**
Performer **Patricia Panther**
Performer **Courtney Stoddart**

Composer and Musician **Beldina Odenyo**

Voiceover **Finn den Hertog**

BSL interpreter **Jacqui Beckford**
Video Director **Anna Chaney**
Set and Costume Designer **Kirsty Currie**
Additional Music **Alex Dean**
Lighting Designer **Emma Jones**
Writer and Director **Hannah Lavery**
Movement Director **Natali McCleary**
Audio Describer **Emma-Jane McHenry**
Associate Director **Caitlin Skinner**
Video Designer **Ellie Thompson**
Creative Consultant **Fatima Uygun**
Production Manager **Fiona Fraser**

Lighting Programmer **Ross McFarlane**
Stage Supervisor **Paul Skeggs**
Company Stage Manager **Gemma Smith**
Deputy Stage Manager **Claire Williamson**
Costume Supervisor **Caitlin Wiedenhof**
Sound Supervisor **Tom Zwitserlood**

FOR INNER EAR

Lead Camera Operator **Gordon Ballantyne**
Vision Mixer **Alan Brown**
Camera Operator **Andy Brown**
Sound Engineer / Recordist **Barry Jackson**
Producer **Findlay Jamieson**
Camera Operator **Kirstin McMahon**
Executive Producer **Dougal Perman**
Camera Assistant **Tom Watton**

ARCHIVE

Abz Mills, AJ Hammerton, Duncan Brown, freesfx.co.uk,
Hazel Mirsepasi, Jamal Yussuff-Adelakun, Jo Hanley,
Justice for Sheku Bayoh campaign, Kay Williams, Langtoon
Films, MonarchTours, Nature Clip, PA Images / Alamy, Ruth
Slotman, Wezi Mhura.

Filmed on stage at the Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh.

Lament for Sheku Bayoh was originally commissioned by
Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh and performed at the
2019 Edinburgh International Festival as a work in progress
as part of the *You Are Here* series.

Development work supported by the Stephen W Dunn
Creative Fund.

To read more about the performers and team please visit
nationaltheatrescotland.com/lament

THE COMPANY WOULD LIKE TO THANK

Aamer Anwar and the family of Sheku Bayoh.

ABOUT NATIONAL THEATRE OF SCOTLAND

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Or contact Adam McDougall, Development Manager:
adam.mcdougall@nationaltheatrescotland.com



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speak to the world.

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Mike Griffiths Executive Director and Joint Chief Executive
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A list of The Lyceum staff involved in this and all Lyceum
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Lament for Sheku Bayoh was conceived, developed
and performed by talented artists, many of whom are
freelance. The Lyceum is committed to supporting them by
continuing to work with our partners in Edinburgh and the
whole of Scotland to employ them and keep their talents
and skills in the Arts for the benefit of all of us.

You can support us in this by giving to The Lyceum
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Or contact Mairi Rosko, Development Director:
mrosko@lyceum.org.uk