

**Issued on behalf of Green Door Pictures, Manchester International Festival (MIF) and the Young Vic:**

We are deeply saddened to read Tori Allen-Martin and Sarah Henley's article published today online. *Tree* is a new work, based on a concept by Idris Elba with an original script by Kwame Kwei-Armah.

It is a fact that Green Door Pictures, MIF and the Young Vic are passionate about supporting and nurturing emerging talent within the creative industry from the widest variety of backgrounds and we are committed to ensuring fair representation on stage and behind the scenes. Tori Allen-Martin and Sarah Henley acknowledge in their article that it is common practice to workshop theatrical projects during their development, as with this project. Whilst we appreciate that they were involved in exploring ideas for a project based on Idris' original concept, the truth of the matter is that MIF and Green Door did not feel their proposed direction was artistically viable. It was decided by these producers that the show needed to go in a very different direction with a new writer attached, using Idris Elba's original concept as the starting point. Several offers were made to Tori Allen-Martin and Sarah Henley to discuss the future of the show, and how the producers could continue working with them, which they declined.

John McGrath, Artistic Director and CEO of MIF said: *"Kwame came on board as director and writer of Tree at the invitation of Idris and MIF. His involvement has been characterised by the integrity and creativity for which he is widely known. His script for Tree is entirely his creation and is, in my opinion, a resonant and exciting response to the themes of Idris's Mi Mandela album."*

Idris Elba created Green Door to champion diversity of thought and offer opportunities to gifted filmmakers from across all genres, race and gender. His two TV projects boast a 50-75% split in the writers' room in favour of female writers, as well as an extremely diverse group ranging from British Ghanaian to West Indian and Asian. Kwame Kwei-Armah's career in theatre, up to and including the season he has just announced for 2020 at the YV is testament to his passion and drive to support and nurture a diverse range of talent: the Young Vic Director's Program is dedicated to nurturing and supporting emerging talent – every day a different artist from the program joined the *Tree* rehearsal room. His upcoming programmed work at the Young Vic champions some excellent female writers and directors.

It is not accepted that, by moving the project in a different direction and commissioning Kwame Kwei-Armah to write a brand new script based on Idris Elba's original concept, there has been a breach of any legal obligations owed to Tori Allen-Martin and Sarah Henley's original workshop contract. Despite attempts by the producers to resolve the issue with them, they decided to instruct solicitors. Efforts then continued through the parties' lawyers to reach a compromise, which included the offer of a credit and an additional payment to acknowledge their initial involvement in the project. These proposals were made in spite of that fact that the claims by Tori Allen-Martin and Sarah Henley have no legal basis, and were made only in the spirit of

reaching a compromise. It is simply not the case that the attempts to resolve the concerns which Tori Allen-Martin and Sarah Henley have raised were an attempt to 'buy them off' and it is therefore disappointing that they have characterised the position in this way.

As stated in the foreword of the Tree programme, the producers are grateful to Tori Allen-Martin and Sarah Henley for the work they did on the initial workshops for the show, alongside all the other actors, creatives and producers who have contributed to the show along its journey.