

# NOUGHTS & CROSSES

**MALORIE BLACKMAN**

**ADAPTED BY SABRINA MAHFOUZ**



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# NOUGHTS & CROSSES

based on the novel  
by Malorie Blackman

adapted by Sabrina Mahfouz



NICK HERN BOOKS

London

[www.nickhernbooks.co.uk](http://www.nickhernbooks.co.uk)

## **Contents**

Introduction

Original Production Details

*Noughts & Crosses*

About the Authors

Copyright and Performing Rights Information

## **Introduction**

*Sabrina Mahfouz, adapter*

*Noughts & Crosses* is a book which leaps from the page into every reader's heart. It is a book Malorie Blackman was 'advised' not to write. Thank the skies she did it anyway! And here we are, over twenty years later, with a new theatre adaptation and a television series of the story.

Working my way meticulously through the book, it was startlingly easy to see why it continues to grow into new mediums – it is sadly far too close to our reality to leave our imaginations. We still live in a systemically racist society, no matter how loudly this may be refuted by those at the top of it. Opportunities are still largely determined by what background you are born into, no matter how many like to, or need to, believe that we live in a meritocracy.

The racism within Britain must be addressed in every area of life, not deflected as just an 'American/historical/colonial' thing. *Noughts & Crosses* does not allow deflection, even as it's set in an anonymous location at an unspecified time. Due to the intensity of Sephy and Callum's individual journeys, Malorie makes their world ours. This is what I wanted to draw out on stage the most. These two flawed, fantastic, brave, young people – in love, lost, full of hope and rage, dreams and desires, challenging a supremacist system just by being their complicated selves.

It was a huge honour to adapt such an epic, important, adored book, and it was only made possible with the dedicated hard work of all at Pilot Theatre and all of the astounding actors and members of the original creative team.

*Esther Richardson, director*

We began working on *Noughts & Crosses* at Pilot in December 2016, when I first had the honour to meet Malorie Blackman.

This book means so much to so many, though I've never forgotten Malorie telling me that her greatest wish was for *Noughts & Crosses* to no longer be so relevant. The summer before we met, an MP, Jo Cox, had been murdered by a far-right activist, and the EU referendum result had led to sharp rises in racist and xenophobic attacks across the UK. Staging this piece of work felt necessary and urgent at the end of 2016, and that feeling has only intensified.

What Malorie presents in this story could first appear to be a more extreme context with its racial segregation, capital punishment and systemic oppression of a single community, but we neither need look very far into our own difficult history as a country, nor survey the communities we live in especially deeply, to see the sharpest of truths and parallels with here and now.

When you read this script, what you won't see are the processes that have led us to this presentation of the story. Race, gender, class, mental health and identity are just some of the huge subjects we've interrogated as a company, as fearlessly as possible. It's been vital to have a fully open casting process, and a creative team who were able to bring their own lived experiences of these subjects into the rehearsal room to inform our work. It's also been vital to develop the piece in parallel with work with young people, inviting a group of them to be part of the process.

Making *Noughts & Crosses* has been a huge journey and a special collaboration. My sincere thanks to everyone who has supported its translation to the stage. There is a great

deal of division in the world at the moment, but there are still the radical, powerful forces of kindness, empathy, compassion and love. The whole project has made us not only interrogate, respect and seek to understand our differences, but also brought us together in solidarity in the space of theatre, to learn again what connects us and what we are prepared to fight for: a world where we can truly be equals, and where we can love whom we choose.

This adaptation of Malorie Blackman's *Noughts & Crosses* by Sabrina Mahfouz was commissioned and first produced by Pilot Theatre in a co-production with Derby Theatre, Belgrade Theatre Coventry, Mercury Theatre Colchester and York Theatre Royal. It was first performed at Derby Theatre on 1 February 2019, before touring the UK.

The cast was as follows (in alphabetical order):

SEPHY	Heather Agyepong
JASMINE	Doreene Blackstock
JUDE	Jack Condon
RYAN	Daniel Copeland
CALLUM	Billy Harris
MEGGIE	Lisa Howard
KAMAL	Chris Jack
MINERVA	Kimisha Lewis

*All other roles played by the company, as detailed in the suggested doubling.*

<i>Director</i>	Esther Richardson
<i>Designer</i>	Simon Kenny
<i>Lighting Designer</i>	Joshua Drualus Pharo
<i>Associate</i>	Corey Campbell
<i>Director/Movement</i>	
<i>Music and Sound</i>	Arun Ghosh and Xana
<i>Video Designer</i>	Ian William Galloway
<i>Fight Director</i>	Kenan Ali
<i>Production Sound</i>	Adam McCready
<i>Engineer</i>	

<i>Associate Video Designer</i>	Rafael Vartanian
<i>Production Manager (Derby)</i>	Andy Nairn
<i>Production Manager (Tour)</i>	Andy Reader
<i>Company Stage Manager</i>	Sarah Rhodes Cannings
<i>Assistant Stage Manager</i>	Lizzie Rodipe
<i>Technical Stage Manager</i>	Paul Williams
<i>Tour Set Manager</i>	Luke James
<i>Relighter</i>	Paul Salmon
<i>Creative Associates</i>	Catherine Palmer and Oliver O'Shea
<i>National Press and PR</i>	Duncan Clarke PR
<i>Production Photographs</i>	Robert Day
<i>Production Trailers</i>	Fresh Label
<i>Production Departments</i>	Derby Theatre
<i>Set Construction</i>	Belgrade Theatre Coventry
<i>Special thanks to Suzann McLean, Young &amp; Talented Theatre, and all the Noughts &amp; Crosses Young Creatives.</i>	

## FOR PILOT THEATRE

<i>Artistic Director</i>	Esther Richardson
<i>Executive Producer</i>	Amanda J Smith
<i>Company Administrator</i>	Sarah Rorke
<i>Marketing &amp; Projects Producer</i>	Lucy Hammond
<i>Digital Officer</i>	Sam Johnson

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# NOUGHTS & CROSSES

Malorie Blackman

*adapted for the stage by*  
Sabrina Mahfouz

## **Characters**

SEPHY HADLEY, *Black/Cross young woman, aged thirteen to eighteen*

CALLUM MCGREGOR, *White/Nought young man, aged fifteen to twenty*

THE HADLEYS (Crosses)

JASMINE, *Mum*

KAMAL, *Dad, the Home Secretary*

MINERVA, *Sephy's sister*

THE MCGREGORS (Noughts)

MEGGIE, *Mum*

RYAN, *Dad*

JUDE, *Callum's brother*

LYNETTE, *Callum's sister*

ANDREW, *a member of the Liberation Militia*

SHANIA, *a Nought schoolgirl*

MR BOWDEN, *a teacher at Heathcroft School*

LOLA, *a Cross schoolgirl*

DIONNE, *a Cross schoolgirl*

KELANI ADAMS QC, *a Cross lawyer*

MR PINGULE, *a Cross lawyer*

JUDGE ANDERSON

MORGAN, *a member of the Liberation Militia*

JACKIE, *a Cross prison guard*

EXECUTIONER

PRISON GOVERNOR

PRISON OFFICER

*Plus* PROTESTORS, SCHOOLCHILDREN, POLICE,  
REPORTERS, LIBERATION MILITIA MEMBERS, GUARDS