

National Theatre

15 June 2023

NATIONAL THEATRE ANNOUNCES 12 NEW PRODUCTIONS

RUFUS NORRIS CONFIRMS HE WILL STEP DOWN AS DIRECTOR WHEN HIS SECOND TERM CONCLUDES IN 2025

- Casting across productions includes Lindsay Duncan, Isis Hainsworth, Bella Maclean, Jo Martin, David Oyelowo, Michael Sheen, Hayley Squires, Ami Tredrea and Harriet Walter
- Artists making their National Theatre debuts are Rebecca Frecknall, Sarah Gordon, Katori Hall, PJ Harvey, Natalie Ibu, Amit Lahav, Yannis Philippakis and Beth Steel
- Artists returning to the National Theatre include Annie Baker, Alice Birch, Emily Burns, Clint Dyer, James Macdonald, Ben Power, Tim Price, Ian Rickson, Bijan Sheibani, Lyndsey Turner, Roy Alexander Weise, Roy Williams, and Alexander Zeldin
- Jack Thorne's *The Motive and the Cue*, directed by Sam Mendes, to transfer to London's West End, with Johnny Flynn, Mark Gatiss and Tuppence Middleton returning as Richard Burton, John Gielgud and Elizabeth Taylor
- New titles added to the National Theatre Collection in September will be available to access for free in local public libraries across the UK
- Rufus Norris also confirms that he is to step down as Director of the National Theatre in spring 2025

Director of the National Theatre Rufus Norris today announces upcoming programming with 12 new productions that will play on the National Theatre's South Bank stages, as he also confirms that he is to step down after ten years as Director in mid-2025 when his current term comes to an end.

Under Rufus' leadership the National Theatre has broadened both its programme and audience, while at the same time expanding its reach far beyond the South Bank, making it more accessible to audiences than ever before.

Since joining the National Theatre in 2015 Rufus Norris has shaped a programme of distinctive, thought-provoking work, with a key focus on widening the representation of voices and stories told on the National Theatre's stages. Through establishing the New Work department in 2016 he has ensured that a broad range of artists are supported and nurtured to create new productions at scale for the NT's stages, catalysing a significant increase to the proportion of productions staged by living writers while he has been Director alongside a marked increase in artists making their NT debut.

Since 2015, the NT's South Bank theatres have been on average 88 per cent full – as high as at any point in its history, despite the disruption of Covid. Frequent transfers to the West End and Broadway – from *People, Places & Things* and *Nine Night* to *Angels in America*, *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* and *The Lehman Trilogy* – have attracted huge audiences and garnered numerous accolades, including 14 Tony Awards.

Digital innovation under his leadership has seen the NT reach new audiences in over 180 countries, and the flagship National Theatre at Home platform – born from a passion to create a collective theatre experience during the pandemic – has ensured that the NT's work is shared with the widest audience reach and impact. National Theatre Live, now in its 14th year, has reached over 11.8 million people in cinemas worldwide and broken the event cinema box office record for the UK and Ireland twice.

Passionate about removing barriers to accessing theatre, as Director Rufus has led the NT to create new careers and skills pathways into the industry for those currently underrepresented in the sector through paid placements, apprenticeships and programmes such as Young Technicians. In 2019, the National Theatre Collection was established making world-class theatre productions available to stream for free in schools; the platform is now used by 85 per cent of UK state secondary schools and will soon be available for free to every public library in the UK.

Community engagement has been central to Rufus's vision while at the NT – from the award-winning UK-wide *we're here because we're here* which reached 30 million people through live and digital engagements, to the in-depth work delivered through the celebrated Public Acts programme which embodies his vision of theatre as a force for change.

In parallel with steering the NT through the unprecedented challenges of the Covid pandemic, Rufus has prioritised environmental sustainability as essential to the future of theatre. The National Theatre played a leading role in the creation and implementation of the pioneering Theatre Green Book which is now being adopted by cultural organisations around the world. The NT is also spearheading a new large-scale sustainability initiative, in collaboration with theatres across the industry including the Young Vic, Royal Court and the Kiln. From 2024, it will bring together the theatres' storage of costumes, props and recyclable scenery under one roof a new site in central London to encourage reuse and reduce carbon impacts.

Speaking about today's announcements, **Rufus Norris** said: *'It has been and remains the greatest privilege of my career to lead the National Theatre. For the past eight years I have had the honour of shaping the programme of extraordinary work that sparks imagination, brings people together and illustrates the vital role theatre can play in all our lives. The daily highlight has been to work with the peerless theatre-makers who work here, together with the incredible range of freelance artists upon whom the present and the future of the art form relies. I am enormously proud to be part of the diverse, thriving, creative hub the National Theatre is today and am fully committed to steering the course over the next two years. From the work on our stages, to the audiences all around the UK and beyond that engage with us on tour, in cinemas, in schools and at home, the NT entertains and inspires people through our creativity, expertise and unique reach. The magic of the National Theatre is that there is nowhere else like it; to have been a small part in its illustrious history, particularly through the challenges of the last few years, is a true honour.'*

Chair of the National Theatre, **Sir Damon Buffini** said: *'Rufus Norris has led the National Theatre with extraordinary skill, foresight and resilience during a decade of huge change in the UK and globally. The National's artistic programme, as shaped by Rufus, has been exceptional in quality, prescience and popular appeal, reaching bigger audiences than at any time in the theatre's history. Alongside that, Rufus' passionate belief in opening up*

hands-on opportunities to young people and communities has boosted creativity right across the country and beyond. Rufus has always been ahead of the game, leading with both heart and head. Rufus' legacy is already immense; I am excited about what will be achieved in the final two years of his tenure as the National Theatre continues to stage unforgettable productions and make great strides in addressing key priorities – from creative education and skills to environmental sustainability. The NT Board and I offer Rufus our most sincere admiration and thanks.'

Recruitment for the new Director will begin imminently, with an appointment expected towards the end of this year or early into the next.

The following National Theatre programming is announced today.

Olivier Theatre

Playing in the Olivier theatre from February 2024 is *Nye*, a new play by **Tim Price** charting the life of Aneurin 'Nye' Bevan and his battle to create the NHS. Directed by **Rufus Norris** and with **Michael Sheen** playing Nye Bevan, this Welsh fantasia is both epic and deeply personal.

Later in the year is a new production of William Shakespeare's Roman tragedy *Coriolanus*, directed by National Theatre Associate **Lyndsey Turner** and with **David Oyelowo** cast as the title role.

Booking dates for *Nye* and *Coriolanus* are to be announced.

Lyttelton Theatre

National Theatre Associate **Alexander Zeldin** writes and directs *The Confessions*, which will play in the Lyttelton theatre from October 2023. A love letter to life and theatre, *The*

Confessions charts the course of one life from birth to death, with music composed by **Yannis Philippakis**.

Olivier Award-winner **Rebecca Frecknall** makes her National Theatre directorial debut with **Alice Birch**'s radical adaptation of **Federico García Lorca**'s modern masterpiece, *The House of Bernarda Alba*. **Harriet Walter** is cast as Bernarda Alba and **Isis Hainsworth** as Adela in this co-production with Playful Productions, playing from November 2023.

Kin, from the critically acclaimed physical theatre company **Gecko** and created by **Amit Lahav**, opens in the Lyttelton theatre in January 2024 following a UK tour. In a poetically intoxicating performance, this provocative story of desperation, compassion and acceptance is inspired by the migration stories of Gecko's international performers.

Tickets for *The Confessions*, *The House of Bernarda Alba* and *Kin* go on sale to the public at 12 noon on Friday 30 June.

Playing in the Lyttelton theatre from February 2024 is *Dear Octopus* by **Dodie Smith**. Directed by **Emily Burns** in its first revival since the 1960s, this play is a tender and touching portrayal of a family on the eve of World War Two. **Lindsay Duncan** leads the cast, with further casting to be announced. **Emily Burns**, who directed *Jack Absolute Flies Again* in the Olivier theatre last summer and adapted *Romeo & Juliet* for the National Theatre's award-winning 2021 film, has been invited by Rufus Norris to join the National Theatre as an Associate.

London Tide, based on Charles Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend*, will have its world premiere in the Lyttelton theatre in April 2024, adapted by **Ben Power** with original songs by **PJ Harvey** and **Ben Power** and directed by **Ian Rickson**. Charles Dickens' final completed novel, a gothic masterpiece of murder, redemption, love and money, is reimagined for the stage in this epic new play with songs. Cast includes **Bella Maclean** and **Ami Tredrea** with further casting to be announced.

Tickets for *Dear Octopus* and *London Tide* will go on sale later this year.

Dorfman Theatre

In the Dorfman from September 2023, National Theatre Deputy Artistic Director **Clint Dyer** reunites with **Roy Williams** for *Death of England: Closing Time*. Exploring family dynamics, race, colonialism and cancel culture, this is the final, standalone chapter of the award-winning *Death of England* series. The cast is **Jo Martin** and **Hayley Squires**. The previous BAFTA-nominated filmed chapter, *Death of England: Face to Face*, will be screened as part of The Windrush Caribbean Film Festival on Monday 19 June.

Annie Baker returns to the National Theatre with *Infinite Life*, which has its UK premiere in the Dorfman theatre from November 2023, following a run at Atlantic Theater Company in New York. Directed by **James Macdonald**, this new play is a surprisingly funny inquiry into the complexity of suffering, and what it means to desire in a body that's failing you.

Tickets for *Death of England: Closing Time* and *Infinite Life* go on sale to the public at 12 noon on Friday 30 June.

Former National Theatre writer in residence **Beth Steel** will make her National Theatre debut with *Till the Stars Come Down*, directed by **Bijan Sheibani** which will play in the Dorfman theatre from January 2024. Set over the course of a wedding, *Till the Stars Come Down* is a passionate, heartbreaking and hilarious portrayal of a larger-than-life family who are struggling to come to terms with a changing world.

Underdog: The Other Other Brontë will then play from March 2024, written by **Sarah Gordon** and directed by Northern Stage Artistic Director **Natalie Ibu**, who both make their National Theatre debuts in this co-production with Northern Stage. Winner of the Nick Darke Writer's Award in 2022, *Underdog: The Other Other Brontë* is an irreverent retelling of the lives of the Brontës, looking behind the legend to tell the story of the sibling power dynamics that shaped their uneven rise to fame.

Finally, Olivier Award-winning playwright **Katori Hall** makes her National Theatre mainstage debut with *The Hot Wing King*, directed by **Roy Alexander Weise** as they reunite following

their critically acclaimed, sell out production of *The Mountaintop*. Set in Memphis on the weekend of the hotly anticipated and highly competitive hot wing contest *The Hot Wing King* tells a story of love, family and masculinity, and will play from July 2024. The play received the 2021 Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

Booking dates for *Till the Stars Come Down*, *Underdog: The Other Other Brontë* and *The Hot Wing King* are to be announced.

National Theatre in the West End

Jack Thorne's critically acclaimed new play, *The Motive and the Cue*, inspired by the making of Burton and Gielgud's *Hamlet* and directed by **Sam Mendes**, will transfer into the Noël Coward Theatre from 9 December 2023 until 23 March 2024.

Co-produced with **Neal Street Productions**, **Johnny Flynn**, **Mark Gatiss** and **Tuppence Middleton** will return to play the iconic roles of Richard Burton, John Gielgud and Elizabeth Taylor.

Performance dates for Sheffield Theatres' production of *Standing at the Sky's Edge* at the Gillian Lynne Theatre are now announced. Co-produced by the National Theatre and Various Productions, this Olivier Award-winning new British musical will run from 8 February 2024.

Standing at the Sky's Edge is directed by Sheffield Theatres' Artistic Director, **Robert Hastie**, featuring songs by **Richard Hawley** with book by **Chris Bush**.

Tickets for *The Motive and the Cue* and *Standing at the Sky's Edge* will go on sale to the public at 12 noon on Friday 30 June.

National Theatre Learning

Launched in 2019, the free streaming platform for schools, National Theatre Collection, is now being used in the classroom by 85 per cent of state secondary schools across the UK. We are continuing to build our offer of free streaming content to schools and libraries in the UK through our growing partnership with Bloomsbury Publishing via their digital platform Drama Online. This September, the third collection of theatre titles will be added to the platform taking the number of productions available to watch to 70 by February 2024. New titles include *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Jack Absolute Flies Again*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Othello*, *The Crucible*, *Phaedra*, *Wuthering Heights* and Zadie Smith's *The Wife of Willesden* filmed at the Kiln theatre, joining titles already on the platform including *Small Island* and *Barber Shop Chronicles*.

From September these new titles will also be available to access for free in local public libraries across the UK to library members.

In partnership with the Unicorn Theatre, new titles will also be made available free for UK state primary schools via the National Theatre Collection in September.

Following the successful tour to secondary schools last year reaching nearly 7,000 students, **Evan Placey's** reimagining of ***Jekyll & Hyde*** directed by **Kirsty Housley** will return for a second schools tour from January 2024. The tour will visit secondary schools across 12 Theatre Nation Partnership areas across England and be seen by over 10,000 pupils in secondary schools.

ENDS

For images, [click here](#)

Production	Theatre	Dates	Press Night
<i>Death of England: Closing Time</i>	Dorfman theatre	Wed 13 Sep – Sat 11 Nov 2023	Wed 20 Sep

<i>The Confessions</i>	Lyttelton theatre	Thu 19 Oct – Sat 4 Nov 2023	Fri 20 Oct
<i>The House of Bernarda Alba</i>	Lyttelton theatre	Thu 16 Nov 2023 – Sat 6 Jan 2024	Tues 28 Nov
<i>Infinite Life</i>	Dorfman theatre	Wed 22 Nov 2023 – Sat 13 Jan 2024	Thu 30 Nov
<i>The Motive and the Cue</i>	Noël Coward Theatre (West End)	Sat 9 Dec – Sat 23 Mar 2024	Mon 18 Dec
<i>Kin</i>	Lyttelton theatre	Fri 12 Jan – Sat 27 Jan 2024	Tues 16 Jan
<i>Till The Stars Come Down</i>	Dorfman theatre	From Jan 2024	TBC
<i>Dear Octopus</i>	Lyttelton theatre	From Feb 2024	TBC
<i>Standing at the Sky's Edge</i>	Gillian Lynne Theatre (West End)	From Thu 8 Feb 2024	Wed 28 Feb
<i>Nye</i>	Olivier theatre	From Feb 2024	TBC
<i>Underdog: The Other Other Brontë</i>	Dorfman theatre	From Mar 2024	TBC
<i>London Tide</i>	Lyttelton theatre	From Apr 2024	TBC
<i>The Hot Wing King</i>	Dorfman theatre	From July 2024	TBC
<i>Coriolanus</i>	Olivier theatre	From Sep 2024	TBC

For all media enquiries please contact: press@nationaltheatre.org.uk

With thanks

Nye

This production is supported by the Huo Family Foundation.

This play is a recipient of an Edgerton Foundation New Plays Award.

Coriolanus

This production is supported by the Huo Family Foundation.

The Confessions

With thanks to the Arete Foundation, who support the National Theatre to make work that is ambitious and socially relevant.

The House of Bernarda Alba

This production is supported by the Red Butterfly Foundation.

Death of England: Closing Time

With thanks to the Arete Foundation, who support the National Theatre to make work that is ambitious and socially relevant.

Edgerton New Plays Commission.

New Play Commissions are also supported by the Pritzker Pucker Family Foundation.

Infinite Life

The New American Work Programme is supported by Lawton W Fitt & James I McLaren Foundation.

Till The Stars Come Down

With thanks to the Arete Foundation, who support the National Theatre to make work that is ambitious and socially relevant.

The Hot Wing King

The New American Work Programme is supported by Lawton W Fitt & James I McLaren Foundation.

The Motive and the Cue

Supported by Mark Pigott KBE, KStJ. This play is a recipient of an Edgerton Foundation New Plays Award.

NT Collection

Lead philanthropic support from Richard and Kara Gnodde.

NT Collection is made possible in primary schools by the Hearn Foundation, as the Principal Funder of the Primary Schools Programme.

NT Collection is also supported by Bank of America, The Attwood Education Foundation and Delta Air Lines.

New York City Public Schools access is generously supported by the Jerome L. Greene Foundation.

The Mohn Westlake Foundation supports nationwide Learning programmes for young people.

Nationwide learning is supported by Buffini Chao Foundation, Garfield Weston Foundation, Clore Duffield Foundation and Tim & Sarah Bunting

Secondary Schools Tour

Secondary Schools Touring is supported by The Mohn Westlake Foundation, Delta Air Lines, The Ingram Trust, The Constance Travis Charitable Trust, The Dorset Foundation – in memory of Harry M Weinrebe and Susan Miller & Byron Grote

With thanks to all the supporters of the National Theatre's Learning work.

About the National Theatre

The National Theatre makes theatre that entertains and inspires using its creativity, expertise and unique reach. The National Theatre shares unforgettable stories with millions of audience members across the UK and around the world – on its own stages, on tour, in schools, on cinema screens and streaming at home.

World-leading artists make their best work at the National Theatre with the widest possible audience and impact. The National Theatre invests in talent and innovation on stage and off, taking seriously its role as the nation's theatre. Of the new productions developed each year with a wide range of theatre companies, a third of that research and development resource is dedicated to shows staged at theatres outside London.

Through touring our work to local theatres and schools and nationwide education and community programmes, we are active in 71 of the 109 levelling up priority areas in the UK. A registered charity with deeply embedded social purpose, the National Theatre works with hundreds of schools and communities across the UK to fire imagination and inspire creativity, and to develop skills and pathways for careers in theatre.

For more information, please visit nationaltheatre.org.uk

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