

National Theatre

Strictly Embargoed until 00.01 on Wednesday 13 December

Indhu Rubasingham appointed as Director of the National Theatre

The National Theatre announces today the appointment of **Indhu Rubasingham** as the next Director and Joint Chief Executive of the National Theatre.

Indhu will work alongside Executive Director **Kate Varah** who also becomes Joint Chief Executive in a co-leadership model.

Indhu will succeed current Director and Chief Executive Rufus Norris, who will leave the National Theatre in Spring 2025 when his second term ends.

Indhu has been Artistic Director of Kiln Theatre since 2012. Notable collaborations during her tenure, include with Zadie Smith on *White Teeth*, and most recently *The Wife of Willesden* which transferred to BAM in New York earlier this year, and with Ayad Akbar on *The Invisible Hand* which was twice Olivier Award nominated. Other directing credits include the multi award-winning *Red Velvet* and *Handbagged*, *When The Crows Visit*, *A Wolf In Snakeskin Shoes*, *Multitudes*, *The House That Will Not Stand*, and *Paper Dolls*. Highlights of her programming include Florian Zeller trilogy – *The Father*, *The Mother* and *The Son*; and Ryan Calais Cameron's *Retrograde*.

During her tenure, new writing became a mainstay of the mission, bringing voices into the mainstream. She oversaw a major £9m capital campaign, reopening the brand new building in 2018 as Kiln Theatre.

She has worked regularly at the National Theatre in all three South Bank auditoriums, directing productions including *The Waiting Room*, *The Ramayana*, *The Motherf*cker With the Hat*, *The Great Wave*, *Ugly Lies the Bone*, *Kerry Jackson* and most recently the critically acclaimed sell out production of Anupama Chandrasekhar's *The Father and the Assassin* which returned to the Olivier theatre earlier this year.

Indhu will join the National Theatre as Director Designate from Spring 2024.

Speaking about her appointment **Indhu Rubasingham** said, "It's a huge honour to be appointed Director of the National Theatre – for me, this is the best job in the world. The National has played an important part in my life - from tentative steps as a teenage theatregoer, to later as a theatre-maker, and to have the opportunity to play a role in its history is an incredible privilege and responsibility. Theatre has a transformative power – the ability to bring people together through shared experience and storytelling, and nowhere more so than the National.

I've been fortunate to have directed on the National Theatre's stages and to have witnessed firsthand the commitment, collaboration, brilliance and pride of those who bring the magic to the

building, both on stage and off. There's nowhere like it, and it will be a joy to be a part of this iconic building's next chapter, leading the company alongside Kate. I am thrilled to be following in the footsteps of Rufus, and I look forward to working closely with him from next year as I plan my first season'

Sir Damon Buffini, Chair of the National Theatre Board said: 'The Board are thrilled to appoint Indhu as the National Theatre's next Director and Joint Chief Executive. Having run Kiln Theatre for over a decade Indhu has a proven record of strong leadership and artistic success, alongside a commitment to bringing theatre to diverse audiences and broadening access to creative education. Throughout the recruitment process Indhu demonstrated to the panel her clear vision for the National Theatre's next chapter, displaying her passion and commitment to bring the world to the National Theatre and to take the National Theatre to the world.

On behalf of my panel Co-Chair, fellow Trustee Simon Warshaw, I'd like to offer my thanks to the Board and the succession panel for their dedication and support during this recruitment process. We were extremely lucky to meet with an exceptionally impressive field of candidates who were all strong contenders for the role. Throughout the thorough process it was clear to us all that Indhu possesses the skills and vision, alongside those of our brilliant Executive Director and joint CEO Kate, to confidently lead the National Theatre into our next chapter.'

Executive Director **Kate Varah** said, 'I am thrilled that Indhu will be the National Theatre's next Director, someone I deeply admire as an artist and as a leader. Importantly, I believe we share the same values and aspirations for this incomparable theatre. I look forward to starting a new chapter leading together, working with the best artists and colleagues to make theatre that entertains and inspires audiences across the world.'

Director and Chief Executive **Rufus Norris** said, 'Indhu is an exceptional artist who I respect and admire hugely, and I am so pleased that she will become the next Director when I step down in 2025. She has run Kiln Theatre expertly for over a decade and I know this experience will be invaluable as she moves to the NT – a place she knows well, having directed successfully in each of the three theatres. Together with Kate and the brilliant, dedicated team here, I know that the National will continue to thrive and remain at the heart of British cultural life. I look forward to working closely with Indhu over my last year as Director.'

The recruitment process began earlier this year following Rufus's decision to step down as Director in Spring 2025 at the end of his second term. The National worked with external recruitment consultants Saxton Bampfylde as well as appointing a succession panel which included members of the National Theatre Board and independent, leading creative professionals.

Sir Damon Buffini and NT Board member Simon Warshaw co-chaired the succession panel which included: Sheila Atim, Dominic Cooke, Vikki Heywood, Vicki Mortimer and Farrah Storr. Neil Darlison (Arts Council England) observed the process.

Ends

For further information please contact Director of Communications Ruth Greenwood on rgreenwood@nationaltheatre.org.uk / 02074523945

Notes to Editors

Indhu Rubasingham Biography

Indhu Rubasingham is a theatre director based in London, and is currently the Artistic Director of Kiln Theatre. Born in Sheffield of Sri-Lankan Tamil parents, she graduated from Hull University with a BA Hons in Drama.

Appointed Artistic Director of Kiln Theatre in 2012, she repositioned the company's mission to bring unheard voices into the mainstream. The mainstay of her programming consists of both world and British premieres. During her tenure, she oversaw a £9 million major capital refurbishment, future proofing the theatre for the next generation of theatre-makers, reopening in 2018 as Kiln Theatre. Rubasingham also spearheaded a major expansion of creative engagement work, putting the company's commitment to the local community and emerging artists at the very core of the theatre's output. In recognition of this work, and their post-covid reopening season, Kiln Theatre won The Stage 2021 Award for London Theatre of the Year.

Her inaugural production as Artistic Director of Kiln Theatre was the multi-award-winning *Red Velvet* by Lolita Chakrabarti (Evening Standard Award and Critics' Circle Award), which later transferred to St Ann's Warehouse in New York, and to the Garrick Theatre as part of Kenneth Branagh's season. Her production of *Handbagged* by Moira Buffini won an Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in an Affiliate Theatre, before transferring to the West End and Washington DC and embarking on a subsequent UK tour in 2015. Her production of *The Invisible Hand* was nominated for an Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in an Affiliate Theatre in both 2017 and 2021. Indhu directed best-selling author Zadie Smith's debut play *The Wife of Willesden* at Kiln Theatre in 2021 to critical acclaim—it became the highest ever grossing show in the theatre's history, and returned to the Kiln in 2022 before transferring to Boston's ART and New York's BAM in 2023. Other highlights include producing Florian Zeller triptych of plays *The Father*, *The Mother* and *The Son*, with both *The Father* and *The Son* receiving West End transfers; *Blues In The Night* and more recently *Retrograde* and the musical *Two Strangers*. She has recently announced her final season for the company – including two world premieres, and a collaboration with the RSC.

In 2017, Rubasingham was awarded an MBE for services to theatre in the New Year's Honours List and an honorary doctorate from the University of Hull. She has previously held Associate Director positions at the Gate Theatre, Birmingham Rep and the Young Vic. In 2001, she was awarded the Carlton Multi- Cultural Achievement Award for Performing Arts; and AWA for the Arts in 2012.

Succession panel

Members of the succession panel are listed below. The panel led the interview process for the role of Director and Chief Executive, making recommendations to the NT Board, who formally made the appointment.

Sir Damon Buffini (Co-Chair of the Panel)

Damon Buffini is Chair of the National Theatre. He was a founding partner of Permira and was Chairman and Managing Partner from 1997 – 2010. Damon is currently Deputy Chair of the BBC and Chair of the BBC's Commercial Board. He was Chair of the £2bn Culture Recovery Fund from 2020 – 2022.

Simon Warshaw (Co-Chair of the Panel)

Simon Warshaw is a member of the National Theatre Board and Chair of the Nominations Committee. He was Chair of the National Theatre's Corporate Development Board between 2017 and 2023. Simon is a founding partner of Robey Warshaw LLP, a boutique investment bank based in London.

Sheila Atim MBE

Sheila Atim is an Olivier award-winning actress, singer, composer and writer with a wealth of experience across theatre, film and television. Sheila is currently a member of the Board of Trustees of The Old Vic.

Dominic Cooke CBE

Dominic Cooke is an award-winning director and actor, currently an Associate Director at the National Theatre. Dominic was Artistic Director and Chief Executive of the Royal Court Theatre from 2006 – 2013 and has directed numerous productions for the National Theatre, including *The Corn is Green* and *Follies*.

Dame Vikki Heywood DBE

Vikki Heywood is a member of the National Theatre Board and Chair of National Theatre Productions Ltd (the subsidiary Board with oversight for tours and transfers). Vikki has a wealth of sector experience including Chair of the Mountview School of Music and Drama, Chair of the Royal Society of Arts, 14-18 NOW and UNBOXED, Executive Director of the RSC, Joint Chief Executive of the Royal Court Theatre and executive producer in the West End and on Broadway.

Vicki Mortimer

Vicki Mortimer is a member of the National Theatre Board. An acclaimed freelance designer who works in opera, theatre and ballet, Vicki has designed more than 25 productions for the National Theatre is an Honorary Fellow at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and is on the Steering Committee for the Birkbeck MFA Theatre Directing.

Farrah Storr

Farrah Storr is a member of the National Theatre Board and the National Theatre's Nominations Committee. An award-winning journalist and editor, Farrah is Head of European Writer Partnerships for the publishing platform, Substack as well as having been the former editor-in-chief of ELLE UK and Cosmopolitan.

Neil Darlison, Director of Theatre, Arts Council England is an observer to the process.

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