National Theatre

Visual Story

by Noel Streatfeild
in a new version by Kendall Feaver

Olivier Theatre

Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

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Contents

This document is a visual guide to support your visit to the National Theatre. There are four sections:

About The National Theatre

How to get here 3
Who's who? 5
Olivier Theatre 6

The Production

Ballet Shoes 8
Content guidance 9

What Happens in the Play?

The set 10
The characters 11
Synopsis 12
Sonic story 20

Relaxed Performance

Access information 23
Upcoming performances 24

About the National Theatre

How to get here

The National Theatre is a large concrete building on the South Bank in London. It has three theatre spaces called the **Olivier**, **Lyttelton**, and **Dorfman**.

The address is:
Upper Ground, London, SE1 9PX.

The nearest **train** and **underground** stations are:

- **Waterloo**
- **London Blackfriars**
- **Embankment**

The **main entrance** to the National Theatre looks like this.

The National Theatre has an **underground car park**. There is **free parking available for Blue Badge holders**.

There are **lifts** in the car park to take you into the theatre.

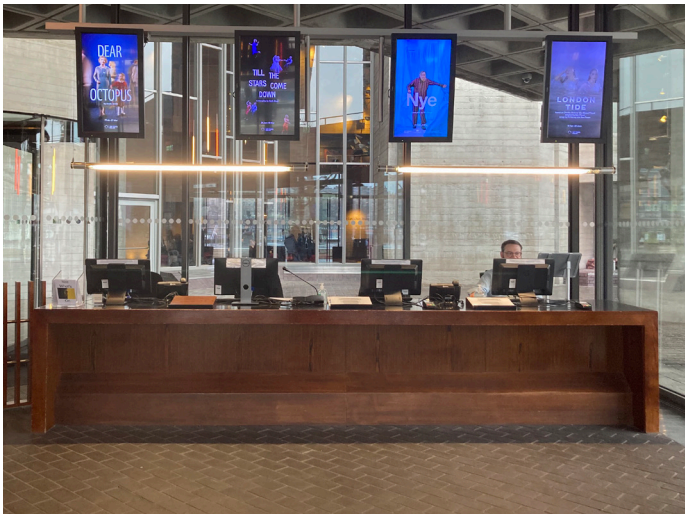
More information about getting here is **on our website:**

nationaltheatre.org.uk/your-visit/getting-here/

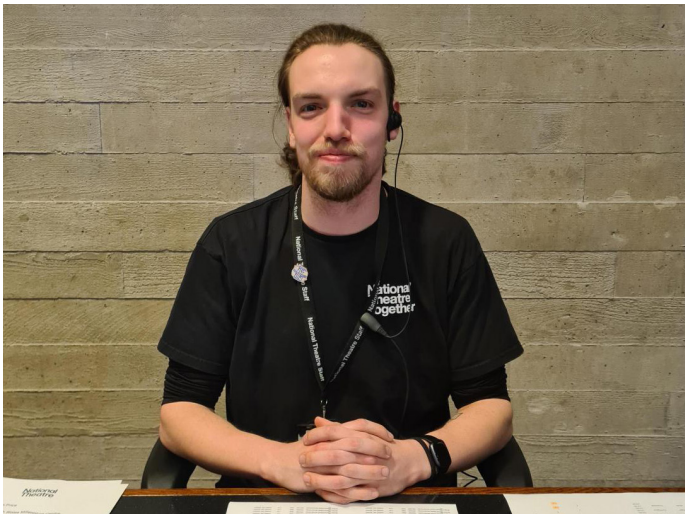
About the National Theatre

Who's who?

When you arrive through the main entrance, the **security team** will **check your bag**. You might need to queue for a short time. The security team will not touch you.



If you need help with your ticket, you can speak to the **box office team**. Their desk is near the entrance and looks like this.

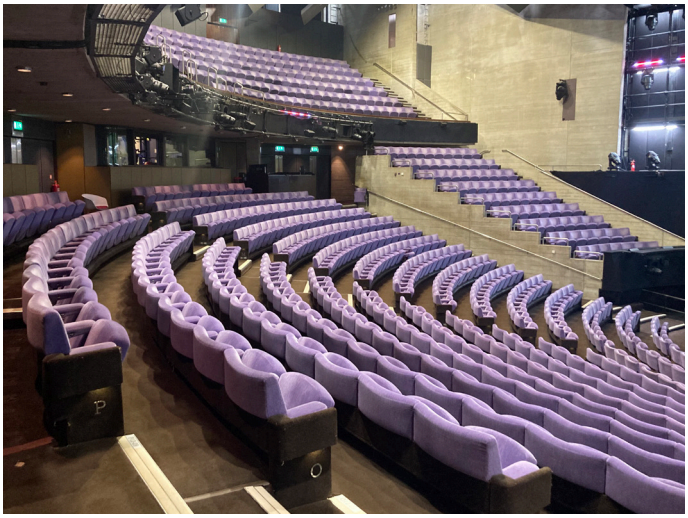


There are lots of staff available in the building if you have questions or if you would like directions to your seats. **National Theatre staff** wear **black t-shirts** with **white writing**.

About the National Theatre

Olivier Theatre

This production of *Ballet Shoes* will be performed in the **Olivier Theatre**. There are signs on the walls around the building to help guide you to the theatre.



The Olivier has two levels of audience seating:

- The **stalls** (lower level)
- The **circle** (upper level)

There are **foyer spaces** at the stalls level and circle level. These can be **busy and loud** before and after the performance.

The **access desk** is in the **Olivier stalls foyer**. There are hearing enhancement headsets, ear defenders, fidget items and large print cast lists available here.

There is **step-free access** around the National Theatre. There are **accessible toilets** on every level.

Bathrooms in the areas near the Olivier Theatre will have **hand towels instead of hand dryers**.

The Production

Ballet Shoes

Ballet Shoes is a **play** based on a **book**. The book was written by Noel Streatfeild and the play is a new version by Kendall Feaver.

Dates

Ballet Shoes will be performed in the Olivier Theatre until **Saturday 22 February**.

Length

Ballet Shoes is **2 hours and 40 minutes** long.
This includes one **20-minute** interval.

Warning!

The following pages contain spoilers.

The Production
Content Guidance

Ballet Shoes contains:

Screaming/ Shouting

Loud music

Bright flashing lights

Themes of adoption

Themes of death

Loud sound effects

What happens in the play?

The set

The story of Ballet Shoes takes place in many different locations, like a theatre school, a film set, and on great adventures across the world.

All these scenes happen against the backdrop of Great Uncle Matthew's huge London house, which is full of fossils, statues and artefacts from his travels.

Different parts of the house light up throughout the play.

Doors, beds, baths, sails, mirrors and ballet barres come on and off the stage in different scenes.

What happens in the play?

The characters

The Fossil Household

employs

adopts

Great Uncle Matthew
(also known as **GUM**)

adopts

Miss Guthridge
(also known as **Nana**)

Sylvia Rose Brown
(also known as **Garnie**)

Pauline Fossil

Petrova Fossil

Posy Fossil

The Lodgers

Doctor Jakes
(mentors Pauline)

Jai Saran
(mentors Petrova)

Theo Dane
(mentors Posy)

What Happens in the Play?
Synopsis

1919

Great Uncle Matthew (known as GUM), a ‘palaeontologist-extraordinaire’ (fossil expert) gives a lecture on dinosaurs and explains that they are related to chickens.

A young Sylvia arrives. Miss Guthridge, GUM’s housekeeper, explains that as GUM is Sylvia’s only living relative, he needs to adopt her.

Sylvia paints a picture of a dinosaur with chicken feathers.

Inspired by Sylvia’s picture, GUM begins an adventure to prove that dinosaurs had feathers. GUM spends many years away on adventures.

1920–1924

On a boat to New York, GUM finds a baby in need of home. Miss Guthridge (known as Nana) names the baby Pauline.

On GUM's next adventure to Russia, he finds another baby needing a home. Nana names the baby Petrova.

GUM doesn't return home, but sends a final baby to Sylvia and Nana by messenger. He sends a letter telling them that this baby's name is Posy.

1934

Sylvia and Nana have raised the girls. GUM has still not returned from his travels.

Pauline, now 14, starts a fight at school. Pauline, Petrova (now 12) and Posy (now 10) are expelled.

Sylvia explains that they need money, so lodgers will be moving into the house.

The first lodger to move in is Theo Dane, a dancer. Posy asks Theo to teach her how to dance.

Doctor Jakes is the next lodger to arrive. She doesn't like dancing or living with children.

Theo suggests that Posy joins an academy for stage training. Sylvia doesn't like the idea, but Nana convinces her to send all three girls there.

Pauline and Petrova reluctantly attend the school. Posy tries to impress Madame Fidolia, the head of the academy.

Petrova finds a car parked outside their house. The driver, Jai Saran, asks to rent the final room in the house.

Pauline practises Shakespeare outside Doctor Jakes' door. Doctor Jakes teaches Pauline how to read Shakespeare properly.

Pauline explains how she chose the last name Fossil.

Madame Fidolia mentors Posy. Fidolia tells Posy the story of Katerina Federovsky, a prima ballerina. Katerina was mentored by a French dancer, Juliette Manoff.

Pauline auditions for the role of Alice in *Alice in Wonderland*. She is given the role, and her school friend Winifred is cast as her understudy.

Jai teaches Petrova how to fix cars, and promises to teach her how to drive.

Pauline and Winifred get into a fight. The director gives Winifred the role of Alice and makes Pauline the understudy.

On stage, Winifred forgets a line. Pauline helps her.

The Fossil household celebrates Christmas. A letter has arrived from GUM, which Sylvia reads. GUM credits Sylvia for a scientific discovery that her paintings helped to find. The letter was written in 1927 – 7 years earlier.

Interval

Posy studies with Madame Fidolia. Fidolia arranges a ballet school audition for her.

The girls rehearse for a futuristic production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Petrova struggles with her lines. Doctor Jakes helps her.

Petrova teaches Jai a dance in exchange for driving lessons.

The actors in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are in 'flying' harnesses, but fall upside down. Petrova flies instead and delivers her lines perfectly.

A hole appears in the roof of the house, but there is no money left to fix it.

Pauline is offered a role in a film, and a further 5 films for the next 3 years.

Madame Fidolia promises Posy that she will take her to her audition the next day. As Posy leaves, Fidolia recalls her past as Katerina Federovsky. When Posy arrives the next day for the audition, Madame Fidolia has died.

The girls argue with Sylvia, and Posy tries to run away.

Petrova and Pauline try to stop Posy from jumping out a window. Theo Dane gives Posy a parcel that had been left in Madame Fidolia's office, containing the pointe shoes which Posy's mother had left her.

Posy convinces Theo to take her to find Juliette Manoff. Petrova volunteers to drive.

Jai invites Sylvia to go out dancing. Jai shows Sylvia the silly dance which Petrova taught him.

They find a letter from the girls, explaining that they have gone to find Juliette Manoff. They go to find them.

Posy breaks into Manoff's rehearsal and insists upon dancing for her. As she dances, Sylvia arrives with Jai, Nana and Doctor Jakes.

Pauline offers to pay for Posy's training.

The house is sold. As the family pack up their final things, GUM suddenly arrives, searching for Sylvia. He meets the full Fossil family and promises to take Petrova under his wing.

GUM drives Petrova to her new life in Croydon. They are going there because there is an aerodrome nearby.

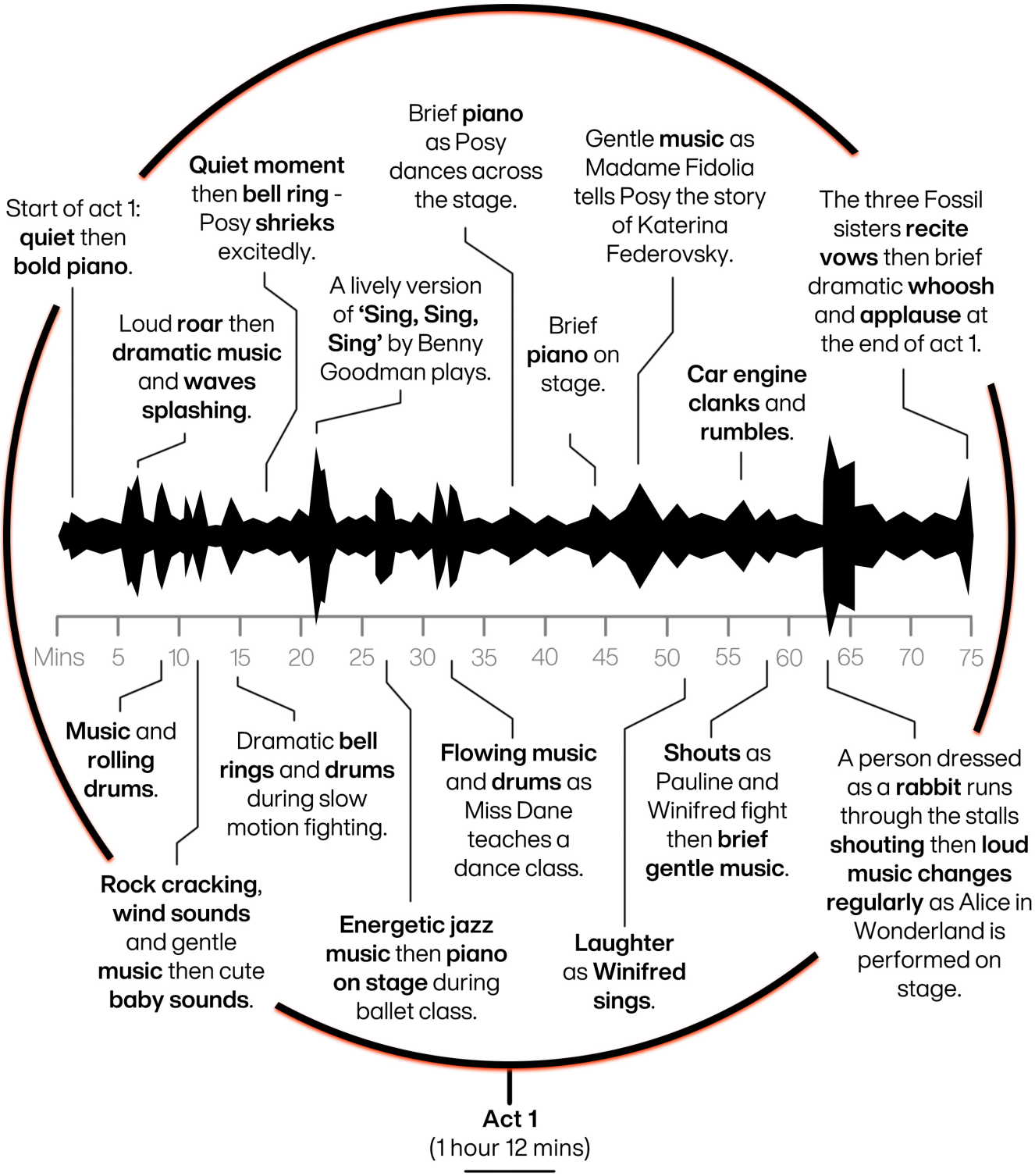
What Happens in the Play?
Sonic Story

This graphic tells the sonic story of ***Ballet Shoes***. It highlights any particularly loud or quiet moments, or any moments when there are sudden changes to the sound.

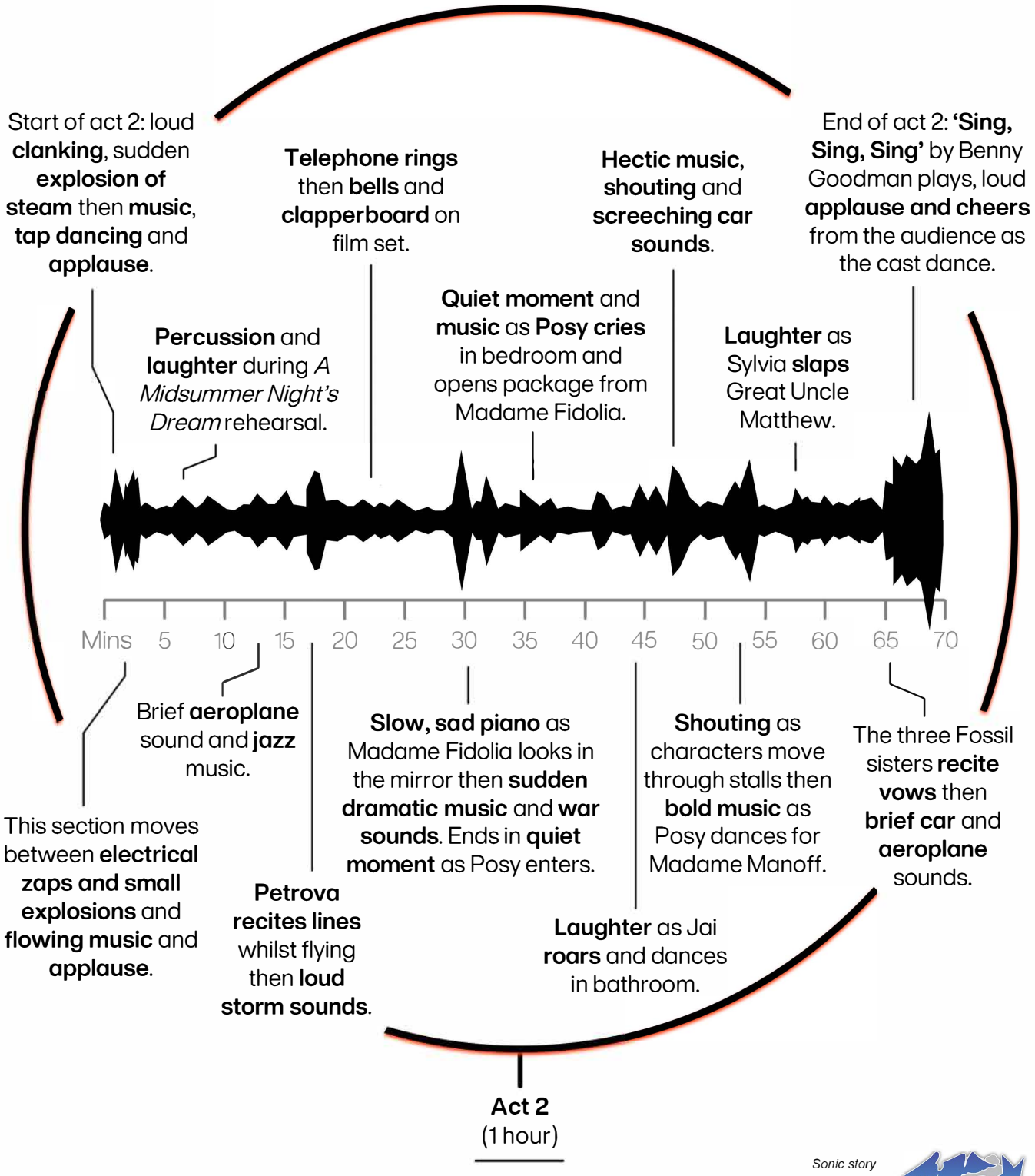
Sound summary

- *Ballet Shoes* is a play with music and dancing
- Lots of scenes and transitions include loud, upbeat music
- There are loud sound effects including thunderclaps
- Characters often shout or talk all at once

Ballet Shoes
Sonic Story



Ballet Shoes
Sonic Story



Sonic story designed by Touretteshero CIC, 2024

Relaxed Performance
Access information

There is a relaxed performance of ***Ballet Shoes*** on **Wednesday 15 January** at **7pm**.

This performance will take place in a **relaxed environment**. This means:

- Some of the **lighting** and **sound effects** have been adjusted to be **less sudden or intense**
- The **auditorium lights** will remain on during the show at a **low level**
- You are welcome to **leave and re-enter** the auditorium if you need to
- You are welcome to **move around** or **make noise**
- We have **ear defenders** and **fidget toys** available to use. Just ask a member of staff who will direct you to the **access desk**
- There is a **quiet room** and **chill-out space** available, which staff can direct you to

Relaxed Performance
Upcoming performances

Alterations
Monday 24 March at 7.30pm
This seminal comedy by Michael Abbensetts, with additional material by Trish Cooke, illuminates the experience of the Windrush generation in 1970s London.

Dear England
Tuesday 15 April at 7.30pm
James Graham's Olivier-Award winning smash-hit returns to the National Theatre, directed by Rupert Goold.

Here We Are
Tuesday 10 June at 7.30pm
Tony Award-winner Joe Mantello directs Stephen Sondheim's final musical with a book by David Ives.

All the information about our future relaxed performances, and **how to book**, can be found on our website:
nationaltheatre.org.uk/whats-on/?accessibility=relaxed-performance