

National Theatre

Visual Story



by Michael Abbensetts
with additional material by Trish Cooke

Lyttelton Theatre



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**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Production photography by Marc Brenner.

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

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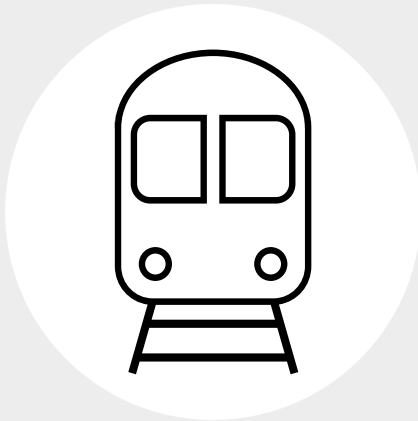
About the National Theatre

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



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

**[nationaltheatre.org.uk/
your-visit/getting-here/](https://nationaltheatre.org.uk/your-visit/getting-here/)**



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

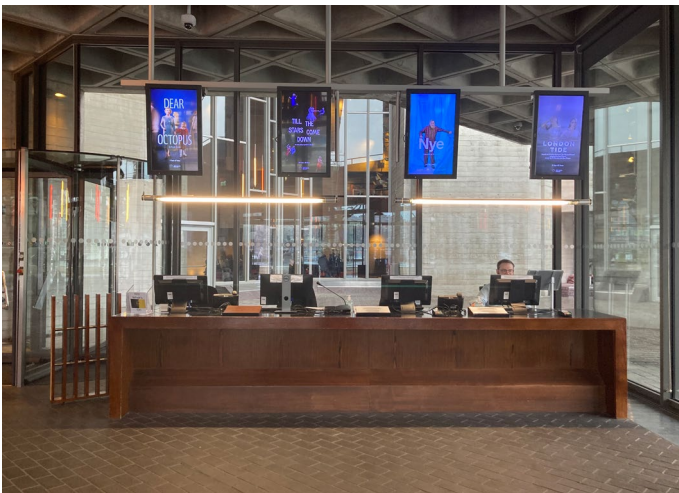
About the National Theatre

Who's who?

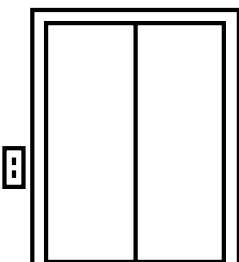


When you arrive through the main entrance, the **security team** will **check your bag**. You might need to queue for a short time.

The security team will not touch you.



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



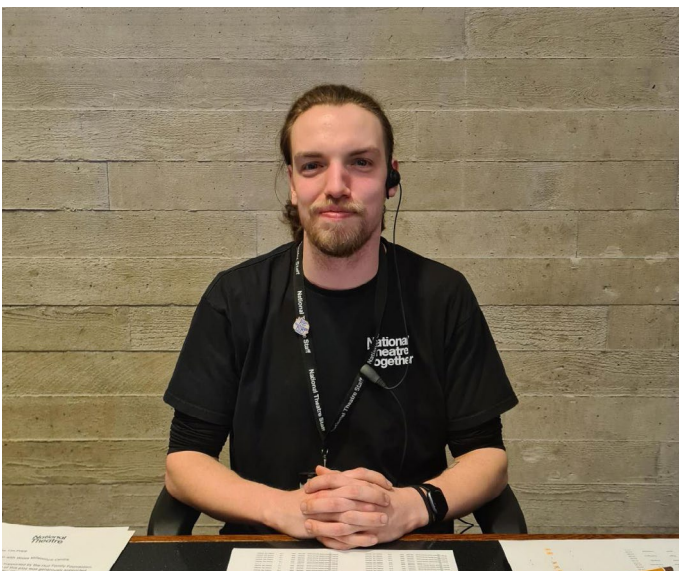
There is **step-free access** around the National Theatre and there are **accessible toilets** on the ground floor and circle level.

About the National Theatre Lyttelton Theatre



This production of *Alterations* will be performed in the **Lyttelton Theatre**.

There are signs on the walls around the building to help guide you to the theatre.



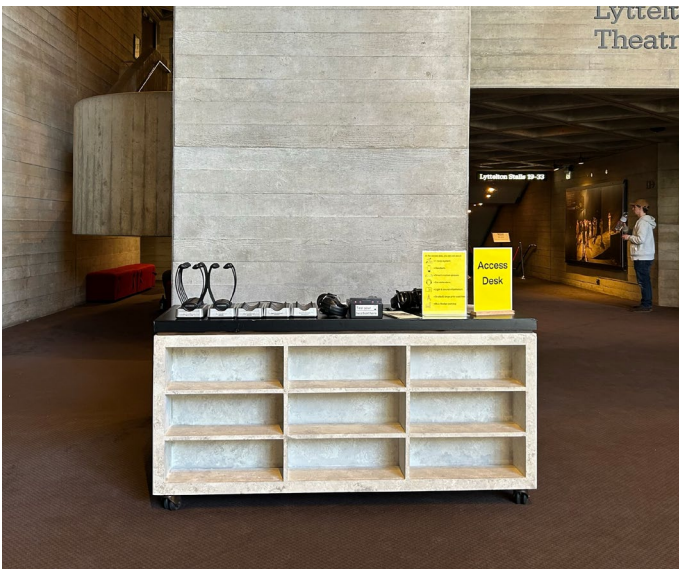
There are lots of staff available in the building if you have questions or if you would like directions to your seats. **National Theatre staff wear black t-shirts with white writing.**



The Lyttelton has two levels of audience seating: The **stalls** (lower level) or the **circle** (upper level).



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



The **access desk** is in the **Lyttelton ground floor foyer**. There are hearing enhancement headsets, ear defenders, fidget toys and large print cast lists available here.

The Production

Alterations

Alterations is a **play** by **Michael Abbensetts**. This production contains **additional material** by **Trish Cooke**.

Dates

Alterations will be performed in the Lyttelton Theatre until **Saturday 5 April**.

Length

Alterations is **1 hour and 55 minutes** long.
There is no interval.

Warning!

The following pages contain spoilers.

The Production

Content Guidance

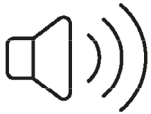
Alterations was written in **1978** and therefore contains historic language and themes that some people may find upsetting.



**Bright flashing
lights**



Loud music



**Sudden volume
changes**



**Strong and
offensive
language**



**Smoke
and haze**



**Discussions
of racism**

What Happens in the Play?

The set

Alterations is set in two spaces in an **alterations shop**, based in **London** and run by **Walker Holt**.



The shop is crowded with bags of trousers, sewing machines, and racks of colourful clothes. In some scenes, Walker imagines a bigger shop. Throughout the play, the characters bring on more and more bags full of trousers.

What Happens in the Play?

The characters



Walker



Buster



Darlene



Horace



Mr Nat



Courtney

There is also a small ensemble of characters who appear outside the shop. They appear as visions of the past, present and future.

What Happens in the Play?

The characters

Walker and **Darlene** emigrated from Guyana to England. They are married and have a daughter called **Janet** (Janet does not appear onstage).

Buster came to England on the same boat as Walker. He works with Walker in the shop as a tailor.

Courtney is a young van driver who works for Walker. He was born and raised in London

Horace is also a tailor from Guyana. He used to be good friends with Walker.

Mr Nat is a businessman who supplies work for Walker. He had to leave Europe many years earlier to find safety as a Jewish person.

What Happens in the Play?

Synopsis

Buster phones a maternity ward to find out if his wife has given birth to their baby yet. Buster is Walker's colleague and friend.

Walker explains to Buster and Courtney that they need to work late to finish a huge task. Businessman Mr Nat has asked Walker to alter hundreds of pairs of trousers. If Walker succeeds, he will earn enough money to buy the shop he is renting.



Walker hires Horace, who is a tailor, to help them complete the order. Buster reminds Walker that he and Horace do not work well together.

The shop phone rings. It's Liz, who is Walker's girlfriend. Buster asks Walker how his wife, Darlene, feels about Walker having a girlfriend.

Horace enters and turns off Walker's blues music. Walker can't pay Horace until the end of the month, so Horace demands an extra £100.

At lunch, Horace and Courtney watch horse racing on TV. Horace tells everyone that he is a filmmaker as well as a tailor now.



Darlene enters and tells Walker that she has lost her job, because she has been taking too much time off to look after their daughter, Janet. She asks Walker for financial support. Walker does not feel able to give Darlene any money, because he needs everything to buy the shop.



As Darlene leaves, Horace secretly gives her some money.

The team continue to work, but Horace has had enough and wants to leave. He has theatre tickets and is interested in acting. Walker tells Horace that he is kidding himself by wanting to be an actor. Horace is offended and leaves.

Horace goes to see Darlene. He loves her, and tells her that he would look after her if she left Walker, but Darlene is not sure if she is ready.



Back in the shop, Buster wants to leave to go and visit his wife in hospital. Walker asks him to stay and dreams about going to the cinema back in Guyana.

Darlene comes back to the shop. Walker again says he will not give her any money to support Janet. Darlene dreams about what her life could have been like if she had stayed in Guyana and opened a restaurant.

Mr Nat enters suddenly. He is furious. The trousers that have been returned to him have been sewn together by Horace. Walker tries to explain.



Mr Nat explains to Walker how hard he has worked to be successful and that he cannot take any risks with who he works with. Walker promises to fix the trousers. Darlene offers to help, but Walker shouts at her.

Darlene and Mr Nat have a drink together and discuss their marriages. Mr Nat then decides to give Walker another chance.



Walker asks to come home with Darlene, but she tells him to sleep alone.

Walker dreams of a bigger shop with more clients and staff. His vision appears around him and reminds him to keep working.

The next day, Courtney finds Walker in the shop. Walker worked overnight. Courtney tells him about the racism he faces on the estate where he lives



When Buster arrives, Walker explains what has happened with Horace's work.

As they continue working on the trousers, Walker tells Buster his dream for the shop: making suits for trendy, young and successful people.



Courtney brings in even more bags of trousers that need to be altered. Buster and Walker work frantically to complete the order. They need another person to help.

Courtney explains to Buster and Walker how hard it is to be young and black in Britain. Walker does not want to hear it. He tells Courtney that he would be happy if he did not come back to the shop.

Horace returns and asks to speak with Walker about Darlene, but they do not get a chance. Horace and Walker provoke each other and Buster has to calm them down.

As the team work on the final batch of trousers, Darlene enters. She tells Walker that Horace wants to marry her.



Horace and Walker fight, but Darlene is determined to leave Walker. She exits with Horace.

Mr Nat arrives with a cheque for Walker. Walker asks Mr Nat if all the work was worth it, if it cost him his family.



Buster starts to celebrate with Walker, but he needs to get to hospital to see his wife. Walker phones the hospital for him, and tells Buster that his wife has had a son. Buster celebrates and leaves.

Walker phones the estate agents to arrange to buy the shop.

What Happens in the Play?

Sonic Story

The graphic on the next page tells the **sonic story** of ***Alterations***. It highlights any particularly **loud or quiet** moments, or any moments when there are **sudden changes** to the sound.

Sound summary

Alterations is a play with some music.

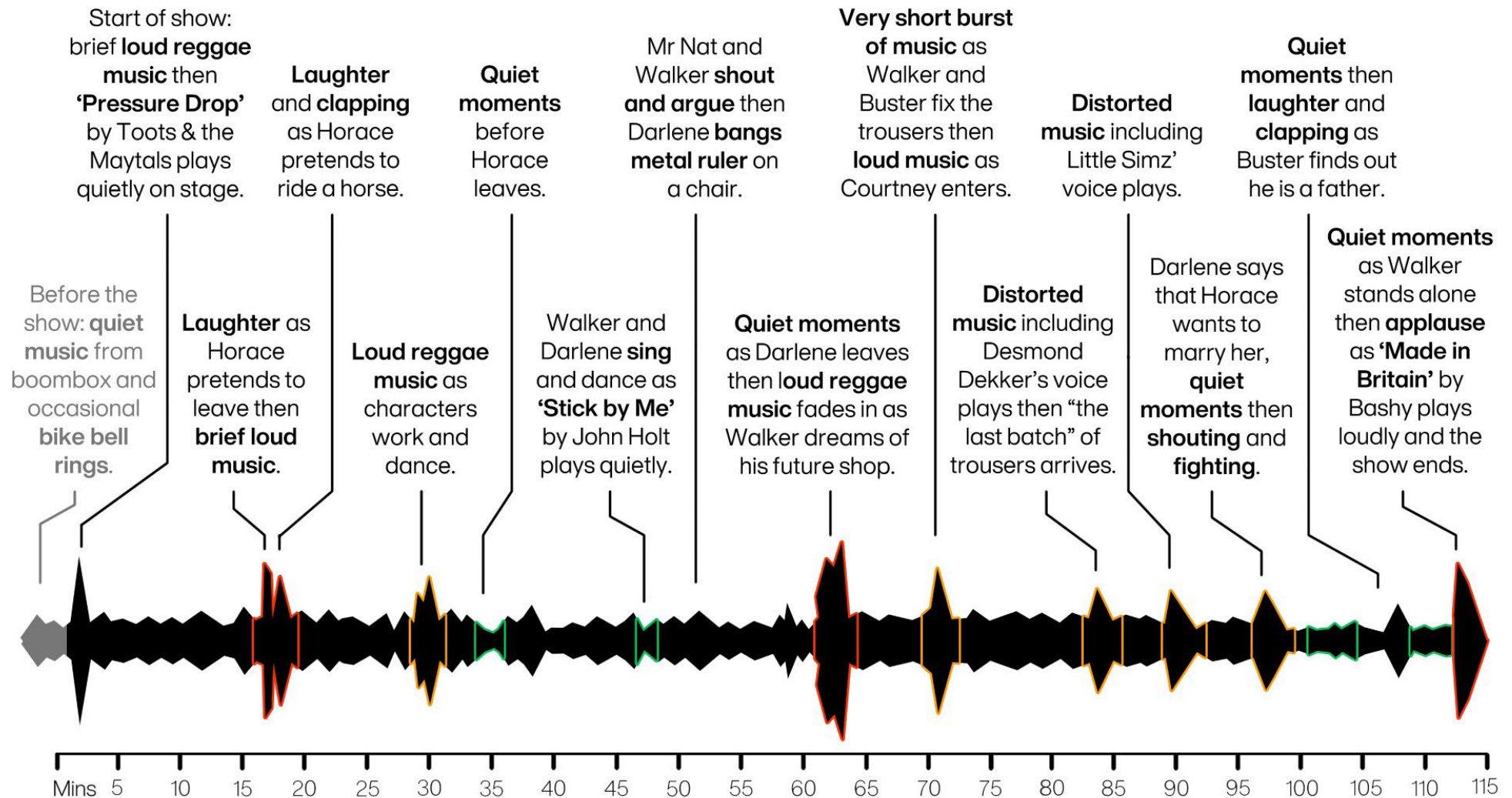
- There are sudden volume changes throughout the play
- Loud music plays in the foyers and auditorium before and after the performance
- There are sudden volume changes throughout the play
- Characters sometimes shout or speak over each other.



Alterations

Sonic Story

Very loud ●
Loud ●
Quiet ●



Sonic story
designed by
Touretteshero
CIC, 2025



Relaxed Performance

Access information

There is a relaxed performance of ***Alterations*** on **Monday 24 March** at **7.30pm**.

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

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.

Nye

Monday 4 August at 7.30pm

Michael Sheen reprises his role as Nye Bevan in this 'valiant and valuable affirmation of the NHS' (Telegraph). Written by Tim Price and directed by Rufus Norris.

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