

# National Theatre

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## The Next Chapter for the National Theatre:

### Bringing the world to the National Theatre, taking the National Theatre to the world

- National Theatre Director Indhu Rubasingham unveils new programme of work for audiences
- Opening her first season: Indhu Rubasingham to direct *Bacchae*, by Nima Taleghani, the first ever playwriting debut on the National Theatre's Olivier stage
- In the Lyttelton, Deputy Artistic Director Robert Hastie to direct *Hamlet*, a play that has defined key moments in the National Theatre's history, with Hiran Abeysekera as Hamlet
- Award-winning actor Paul Mescal to make his National Theatre debut leading a company of actors as part of a repertory season in two complementary plays, *A Whistle in the Dark* and *Death of a Salesman*
- A new adaptation of *The Jungle Book* by Anupama Chandrasekhar, directed by Indhu Rubasingham, brings Rudyard Kipling's timeless family tale to life
- A new collaboration with multi-Brit Award-winning artist Stormzy on a world premiere production to be staged at the National Theatre
- P&P Productions presents *PRIDE* with the National Theatre, a brand-new musical based on the award-winning film
- In a new move to bring the main stage programme directly into schools, *Bacchae* will tour secondary schools and colleges around the country
- For the first time the National Theatre and Unicorn Theatre co-produce a touring production, *The Last Wild* directed by Rachel Bagshaw, supercharging primary school engagement
- Marking 60 years of the National Theatre in New York, the National Theatre begins with two new collaborations with stellar performing arts centres The Shed and BAM
- A new programme of National Theatre Resident Theatre Companies kickstarts later this year with LUNG and Middle Child
- With the expansion of the National Theatre Skills Centre, in partnership with Lead Partner Bank of America, there will be paid production placements on every National Theatre show

- Casting across the season includes **Monica Barbaro, Nicola Coughlan, Éanna Hardwicke, Paul Mescal, Marty Rea, Ukweli Roach, Aidan Turner and Letitia Wright, all making their National Theatre debuts, with Hiran Abeysekera, Ben Daniels, Lesley Manville, James McArdle, Siobhán McSweeney and Clare Perkins returning to the National Theatre**
- Directors include **Dominic Cooke, Miranda Cromwell, Clint Dyer, Marianne Elliott, Rebecca Frecknall, Robert Hastie, Anthony Lau, Caitriona McLaughlin, Indhu Rubasingham, Katy Rudd and Matthew Warchus**
- Plays by contemporary writers including **Stephen Beresford, Anupama Chandrasekhar, Caryl Churchill, Kendall Feaver, Christopher Hampton, Winsome Pinnock, Carmen Nasr, Nima Taleghani and Tracey Scott Wilson**

Today, Co-Chief Executives **Indhu Rubasingham** and **Kate Varah** announce the National Theatre's next chapter, offering the widest access to the highest quality theatre in the world. Inspired by the National Theatre's rich past and excited by its bright future, they lay out their plans to achieve Indhu's artistic vision to bring the world to the National Theatre and take the National Theatre to the world.

At the heart of their plans is a commitment to welcoming audiences wherever they are in the world, earning their trust by telling big stories in bold ways. The National Theatre will ensure that the most compelling stories are brought to life by the world's leading artists on the National Theatre's stages, across the UK, and in classrooms, homes, and cinemas around the world.

Indhu's first programme sets the stage for this exciting next chapter, where reimagined classic stories meet fresh, contemporary voices. With 16 brand new productions, this exciting programme includes nine world premieres, two tours for schools and a return to repertory theatre for the first time since 2020. Central to the work is a celebration of writers sharing stories that reflect our nation and the wider world, and the international spirit of the programme will transport audiences across continents offering new perspectives that resonate with global audiences.

Music plays a vital role across the programme, investing in theatre that places music of all kinds at its core, and recognising its power to elevate storytelling and create unforgettable live experiences. This first season features a brand-new musical based on an award-winning film, world premiere scores by leading composers and, in a thrilling collaboration, it is announced

today that **Stormzy** and **Indhu** are working on an upcoming production to premiere at the National Theatre. Speaking about the collaboration Stormzy said, *'I've always been drawn to theatre and over the past few years I've loved going to all kinds of plays and musicals. It's such a unique space where storytelling, music and performance all come together in the most powerful way and there's something about experiencing theatre that's always stayed with me. When I went to see Indhu at the National Theatre, we properly hit it off and I'm excited to go on this creative journey with her.'* More details to be announced in the future.

**Speaking about the launch of her inaugural programme, Director and Co-Chief Executive of the National Theatre, Indhu Rubasingham, said:**

*"The National Theatre is a very special place at the heart of our national discourse, and I am incredibly proud to be its seventh Director. I am so excited about everything to come, and the wealth of projects and artists announced today. The National Theatre is a beacon of creativity, humanity and possibilities. It holds the stories of so many people who have made this place mean so much to so many. This is just the beginning, a flavour of what's to come, the start of the next chapter."*

**Executive Director and Co-Chief Executive of the National Theatre, Kate Varah, said:**

*"This next chapter for the National Theatre is a moment of excitement and promise which has collaboration at the centre of it all. Indhu's artistic vision has attracted stellar artists, all poised to create unforgettable stories for audiences locally, nationally and globally. Our vision for the National Theatre is to offer the widest access to high quality theatre in the world, in theatres, cinemas, homes and schools. We are passionate about theatre and what theatre can do to transform lives. Our promise together is to champion theatre's vital role in creating a thriving society and nurture it for the next generation."*

## **Productions announced today**

The first programme is inspired by the National Theatre's rich past and shaking up its future. Classics that boldly collide with contemporary voices, offering audiences a rich range of experiences and a taste of what's to come.

Two plays kickstart this spirit of reinvention, ancient stories in modern voices, both with strong links to the National Theatre's history.

Opening in September is the first ever debut play on the Olivier stage, ***Bacchae*** by **Nima Taleghani**. Directed by **Indhu Rubasingham** this story from the birth of Western drama, celebrating the God of theatre, is infused with anarchic energy. Fuelled by spoken word and rhyme, audiences are set for a riot of lyricism, music and movement. Cast includes **James McArdle, Clare Perkins** and **Ukweli Roach**. Designed by **Robert Jones**, choreographed by **Kate Prince** and with an original score by **DJ Walde**, the amphitheatre of the Olivier is the perfect setting for this modern retelling of an ancient Greek story. A teaser for *Bacchae* can be found [here](#).

In an exciting move to bring the main stage programme directly into schools, the following year, ***Bacchae*** will be adapted by Taleghani to tour secondary schools and colleges around the country, directed by **Hannah Hauer-King**. This forms part of the National Theatre's ambition to reach and impact every schoolchild in the UK before they leave school.

The first play of the season to open in the Lyttelton is one that has defined key moments in the National Theatre's history, ***Hamlet***. The play inaugurated the National Theatre company at the Old Vic in 1963 and was the first produced on the South Bank in 1976. *Hamlet* has always been an opportunity to hand the classical baton to a new generation of leading actors. With **Hiran Abeysekera** in the eponymous role, directed by **Robert Hastie**, the National Theatre's Deputy Artistic Director, this production follows firmly in those footsteps. A teaser for *Hamlet* can be found [here](#).

*Bacchae* will be filmed for future streaming release on **National Theatre at Home**, giving global audiences in 184 countries the opportunity to see this world premiere. *Hamlet* will be filmed for future **National Theatre Live** release to cinemas around the world.

A play as central to Irish theatre as *Hamlet* is for the UK, ***The Playboy of the Western World*** follows in the Lyttelton. **John Millington Synge's** Irish classic honours the rich heritage and influence of Irish drama on British theatre. Directed by **Caitríona McLaughlin**, Artistic Director of the Abbey Theatre, the National Theatre of Ireland, casting includes **Nicola Coughlan, Éanna Hardwicke, Siobhán McSweeney** and **Marty Rea**. This is the first of two productions announced today directed by McLaughlin.

**Kendall Feaver's** acclaimed adaptation of Noel Streatfeild's beloved novel ***Ballet Shoes***, directed by **Katy Rudd**, returns to the Olivier this festive season. This hit show returns as a celebration of the National Theatre's commitment to family shows produced at scale, bringing to life stories for everyone to enjoy.

This tradition is followed next Christmas by **Anupama Chandrasekhar's** new adaptation of ***The Jungle Book***. Audiences will be transported into the jungle as the Olivier is transformed for this timeless classic tale of family, courage and loyalty. Directed by **Indhu Rubasingham** and with puppetry by **Finn Caldwell** and **Nick Barnes**, this retelling of the stories of Rudyard Kipling will be framed through a contemporary lens, exploring the enduring theme of nature versus nurture.

*The Jungle Book* and *Hamlet* spotlight extraordinary Asian talent in reimagined stories. The productions mark a new partnership between the National Theatre and the **Bagri Foundation** who share a vision of global storytelling in the UK.

The British premiere of ***The Story*** by leading American playwright **Tracey Scott Wilson** in the Olivier platforms the story of an ambitious black reporter who defies her editor to pursue an incendiary lead, choosing to go to any length to get 'the story'. **Letitia Wright** makes her National Theatre debut in this examination of racial politics and journalistic ethics, inspired by real events, directed by National Theatre Artistic Associate, **Clint Dyer**.

Returning to the National Theatre after nine years, **Marianne Elliott** directs a major revival of ***Les Liaisons Dangereuses*** with **Monica Barbaro**, **Lesley Manville** and **Aidan Turner**. Adapted by **Christopher Hampton**, this is the first time Pierre Choderlos de Laclos' epistolary novel has been staged at the National Theatre.

In 2027, the Lyttelton will return to repertory for the first time since 2020, celebrating the capabilities of a theatre designed to stage multiple shows concurrently and offering audiences an exciting season of complementary productions. **Paul Mescal** will make his National Theatre debut in two 20th century classics, **Tom Murphy's *A Whistle in the Dark*** in a co-production with the **Abbey Theatre**, directed by **Caitriona McLaughlin** and **Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman***, directed by **Rebecca Frecknall**. Despite their different settings and cultural backgrounds both plays focus on dysfunctional family relationships, the struggle for identity, and the crushing weight of societal and familial expectations. *A Whistle in the Dark* will subsequently transfer to the Abbey Theatre. A second pair of productions, to run in repertory in the Lyttelton, will be announced at a later date.

Multi-award-winning playwright **Caryl Churchill** returns to the National Theatre for the first time since 2019 with her landmark play ***Cloud 9***, which explores sexual politics, colonialism, and gender roles. Director **Dominic Cooke** reunites with Churchill to direct the play which examines the complexities of identity and change.

The Dorfman season features two world premiere plays, a reimagined classic and a brand-new musical based on a much-loved film, which focus on the themes of identity and authenticity.

**P&P Productions** presents ***PRIDE*** with the National Theatre, a brand-new musical based on the award-winning film. Reuniting filmmakers **Matthew Warchus** (Direction and Development) and **Stephen Beresford** (Book and Lyrics), the inspiring true story of how a group of lesbian and gay activists joined the miners' strike campaign of 1984 is brought to life on the Dorfman stage following performances at the **Sherman Theatre** in Cardiff. With original music by **Christopher Nightingale**, **Josh Cohen** and **DJ Walde**, this is a true story of how two oppressed, but startlingly different communities united in their hour of need.

***The Authenticator*** is a new play by award-winning playwright **Winsome Pinnock**, marking the first time one of her plays has premiered at the National Theatre. In a crumbling stately home, a valuable discovery reveals a family's complex past and sparks a quest to unearth the house's hidden secrets. Directed by National Theatre Artistic Associate **Miranda Cromwell**, *The Authenticator* is a political, theatrical and darkly funny exploration of what happens when the past refuses to stay buried.

Originally commissioned by Kiln Theatre, ***Samira*** by **Carmen Nasr** will mark Nasr's National Theatre debut. Inspired by real events, the play explores themes of authenticity, political upheaval and identity, focusing on a young Syrian blogger who is not all that she seems.

Approaching 50 years since the death of writer **Terence Rattigan**, ***Man and Boy*** will be performed in the Dorfman theatre in 2026, with director **Anthony Lau** making his National Theatre debut, and **Ben Daniels** leading the cast. A gripping drama about power, deception, and the complex bond between a father and son, the play is a compelling exploration of greed, morality, and the devastating cost of ambition. Programming this classic text in the Dorfman theatre provides an opportunity to invite fresh perspectives on established narratives in this versatile and dynamic space.

Celebrating the 25th anniversary of groundbreaking immersive company **Punchdrunk** the National Theatre have commissioned a new piece of work which will be seen in the Dorfman in 2027.

Together, the overarching themes of the programme are of celebration and reinvention as we ask the question: in a rapidly changing world, what do we build on and what do we shake up?

### **Partnerships supporting the sector's ecosystem**

In a new commitment to amplifying the work of theatre companies, the National Theatre will host a group of regionally based companies on a two-year cycle as **National Theatre Resident Companies**. By championing these innovative, groundbreaking companies this scheme not only aims to give these exciting theatre-makers the platform to grow and expand, but also for them to influence and inspire the National Theatre.

The first companies in residence will be **LUNG** and **Middle Child**. Founded in Barnsley in 2014, LUNG is a campaign led arts charity, working UK-wide to make hidden voices heard. They develop critically acclaimed verbatim productions that tour from theatres to school halls to the Houses of Parliament. Middle Child is a bold and ambitious new writing company rooted in Hull. They share the profound belief with the National Theatre that by making work that speaks to the world we live in and responding to the challenges of our time, we can change who makes and experiences theatre.

With the country, and the creative sector in particular, facing an urgent skills shortage, this next chapter will be defined by a focus on education and skills.

A new partnership with **Bank of America** and the **National Theatre Skills Centre** will accelerate the nationwide expansion of skills development, career support, and entry-level to mid-career training programmes, reaching 15,000 individuals over the next three years. The partnership will unlock a series of new initiatives, including a flagship programme of paid production placements on every South Bank show starting in September 2025, providing individuals from backgrounds, which are often underrepresented within the theatre industry, the unique opportunity to work alongside the National Theatre's world-class creative teams and in-house technical experts.

Celebrating 60 years of sharing its productions in New York, the National Theatre today announces new multi-year collaborations with **The Shed** and **BAM** in New York. The creative exchange with **The Shed** brings together one of New York City's newest and most significant arts centres with the National Theatre and represents an alliance that is rooted in a shared vision to produce innovative theatrical experiences that welcome a wide range of audiences. This builds on an association that started with the North American premiere of the National Theatre's *The Effect* in March 2024 (in association with the Jamie Lloyd Company), followed by Sondheim's *Here We Are*, now receiving its London premiere at the National Theatre.

A new partnership with BAM (Brooklyn Academy of Music), America's oldest performing arts centre, will bring classic National Theatre shows to BAM's Harvey Theater, on screen at BAM's



Rose Cinemas and in schools across Brooklyn, to inspire learning within the classroom – with productions and more details to be announced in the autumn.

A new partnership with **CHANEL Culture Fund** places global storytelling at the centre of a studio programme that champions creativity. Through these International Artist Residencies at the National Theatre Studio, recipients will be offered long-term placements, providing the time, space and resources needed to develop ambitious, innovative work that shapes and engages with culture worldwide.

### **Young People and Learning**

As part of Indhu and Kate's bold vision, the National Theatre is deepening its work with young people with an ambition to reach every schoolchild in the UK before they leave school. Key to this vision is establishing meaningful partnerships with valued collaborators across the UK and around the world, fostering innovation and championing the role of theatre in contemporary society.

The National Theatre's partnership with the **Unicorn Theatre**, the UK's leading theatre for young audiences, exemplifies this dedication to entertain and inspire young people through daring and imaginative work. Developing from a collaboration on the National Theatre Collection for primary schools, for the first time the venues will be co-producing a touring production, widening their reach for primary school audiences. ***The Last Wild***, in a new version for primary school audiences, adapted by **Jude Christian** from the award-winning novel by **Piers Torday**, will be directed by the Unicorn Theatre's Artistic Director and former Peter Hall Associate at the National Theatre, **Rachel Bagshaw**. Opening at the Unicorn Theatre in February 2027, the production will tour to venues and schools in areas across England, doubling the reach of previous National Theatre primary tours.

The National Theatre, **Department for Culture, Media and Sport** and **Imperial War Museums** come together to mark the 80th anniversary of VE Day. A new film produced by the National

Theatre and written by Olivier Award winner **James Graham** focuses on the hopes, dreams and ambitions of young people after the Second World War and asks what this means for young people today. ***The Next Morning***, featuring **Julian Glover**, **Siân Phillips** and **Joseph Mydell**, is released nationwide on 8 May. As part of the National Theatre's nationwide tour of Graham's ***Dear England***, inspired by Gareth Southgate's open letter to England fans in 2021, a year-long schools engagement programme responding to the events of VE and VJ Day will collect and share the hopes that young people have for themselves and for young people in 2105, 80 years from now.

Simultaneously, the National Theatre is expanding its US and global education programmes, with the **National Theatre Collection** now available for free to stream in all UK state-funded primary and secondary schools as well as over 200 New York schools, bringing its renowned approach to inspired learning to an even broader international audience of young people. This is planned to expand to schools across the US over the next three years. New titles will be added to the **National Theatre Collection** in September 2025, in partnership with Bloomsbury Publishing and available on their digital platform Drama Online. These titles will include *Blues from an Alabama Sky*, *The Boy with Two Hearts*, *Ballet Shoes* and *Kin*, with more to be announced.

Tickets for ***Bacchae***, ***Hamlet*** and ***The Playboy of the Western World*** will be on general sale from **15 May**.

Tickets for ***Ballet Shoes*** now on sale.

Further information and on sale dates for the rest of the programme to be announced.

For more information visit [nationaltheatre.org.uk](https://nationaltheatre.org.uk)

**ENDS**

For images, click [here](#).

For National Theatre Live and National Theatre at Home contact:

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For National Theatre Learning and National Partnerships, including the Skills Centre contact:

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For individual productions:

Production	Theatre	Dates	Press Night	Press Contact
<i>Bacchae</i>	Olivier Theatre	13 September – 1 November 2025	Wednesday 24 September 2025, 7pm.	<a href="#">James Lever</a> and <a href="#">Anoushka Chakrapani</a>
<i>Hamlet</i>	Lyttelton Theatre	25 September – 22 November 2025	Thursday 2 October 2025, 7pm.	<a href="#">Emily Ritchie</a>
<i>Ballet Shoes</i>	Olivier Theatre	17 November 2025 – 21 February 2026	Tuesday 25 November 2025, 7pm.	<a href="#">Emily Ritchie</a>
<i>The Playboy of the Western World</i>	Lyttelton Theatre	4 December 2025 – 28 February 2026	Thursday 11 December 2025, 7pm.	<a href="#">James Lever</a>

For all other productions announced contact [press@nationaltheatre.org.uk](mailto:press@nationaltheatre.org.uk)

### **With thanks**

#### ***Bacchae***

This production is supported by Dasha A. Epstein and Marcia B. Whitaker.

#### ***Bacchae Schools Tour***

Secondary Schools Touring is supported by The Mohn Westlake Foundation, Delta Air Lines, The Ingram Trust, The Constance Travis Charitable Trust, Susan Miller & Byron Grote, The Anthony and Elizabeth Mellows Charitable Settlement, The Britford Bridge Trust, The Dow Clewer Foundation, and Mike Staunton.

### ***Hamlet***

This production is supported by Bagri Foundation, Marcia B. Whitaker and The Polonsky Foundation.

### ***Ballet Shoes***

This is an Edgerton New Plays Commission. New Play Commissions are also supported by the Pritzker Pucker Family Foundation.

### ***The Jungle Book***

This production is supported by Bagri Foundation.

### ***Les Liaisons Dangereuses***

This production is supported by Leila Maw Straus.

### **About American Express Experiences®**

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### **National Theatre Skills Centre**

National Theatre Skills Centre in partnership with Bank of America. The National Theatre Skills Centre is also supported by CHK Foundation, The Maurice Hatter Foundation and The Clothworkers' Company.

### **Nationwide Learning**

The Mohn Westlake Foundation supports nationwide Learning programmes for young people. Nationwide Learning is also supported by Buffini Chao Foundation, Clore Duffield Foundation, Tina Alexandrou, Crevan O'Grady & Jane McClenahan, MFPA Trust Fund for the Training of Disabled Children in the Arts, The Kartik Foundation, The Alchemy Foundation, and Behrens Foundation. The Hearn Foundation is the Principal Funder of the Primary Schools Programme.

### **National Theatre Collection**

Lead philanthropic support from Richard and Kara Gnodde. National Theatre Collection is made possible in primary schools by the Hearn Foundation, as the Principal Funder of the Primary Schools Programme. National Theatre Collection is also supported by The Attwood Education Foundation, Delta Air Lines, Mike Staunton, and The Michael Marks Charitable Trust. National Theatre Collection in New York City is supported by Penny and Bill Bardel.

The National Theatre Collection is presented in partnership with Bloomsbury Publishing and available on their digital platform Drama Online.

### **New Work Department**

The National Theatre's New Work programme is supported by the Edgerton Foundation, Sir Peter Shaffer Charitable Foundation, The Pritzker Pucker Family Foundation, Lawton W Fitt & James I McLaren Foundation, Red Butterfly Foundation, Genesis Foundation and the Daniel Howard Foundation.

International Artist Residencies at the National Theatre Studio are made possible by CHANEL Culture Fund.

### **Stories Start Here fundraising campaign**

Thanks to the lead supporters of our Stories Start Here campaign: The Mohn Westlake Foundation, Christine and Stephen A. Schwarzman, American Express, Bloomberg, Bank of America, Stephanie & Carter McClelland, Sir Deryck and Lady Va Maughan, Mitsubishi Estate London, Sky Arts, Foyle Foundation, Buffini Chao Foundation, Mark & Sarah Crosbie, Mark Pigott KBE, KStJ, Leila Maw Straus, the Thompson Family Charitable Trust, Marcia B. Whitaker and 1 anonymous donor.

### **About the National Theatre**

The National Theatre makes theatre that entertains and inspires using its creativity, expertise and unique reach. We tell big stories in bold ways, offering the widest access to high quality theatre to millions of audience members across the UK and around the world – on our own stages, on tour, in schools, on cinema screens and streaming at home.

We bring the world to the National Theatre and take the National Theatre to the world through reimagined classic stories meeting fresh, contemporary voices. As part of our mission to celebrate and platform bold voices in British theatre, the National Theatre proudly hosts a dynamic group of Resident Companies, offering a platform for collaboration, growth, and innovation.

Through touring our work to local theatres, schools and through our nationwide education and community programmes, we are active in every local authority in the UK. We invest in talent and innovation on stage and off, taking seriously our role as the nation's theatre. We work with hundreds of schools and communities across the UK to fire imagination and inspire creativity. The National Theatre Skills Centre supports thousands of young people every year to develop skills and pathways for careers in theatre.

For more information, please visit [nationaltheatre.org.uk](https://nationaltheatre.org.uk)