National Theatre

Tuesday 22 July, 9:30am

CASTING NEWS:

DAVID STURZAKER WILL PLAY GARETH SOUTHGATE AND

STAGE AND SCREEN ACTRESS SAMANTHA WOMACK WILL PLAY

PIPPA GRANGE IN THE HIGHLY ANTICIPATED NATIONAL TOUR OF

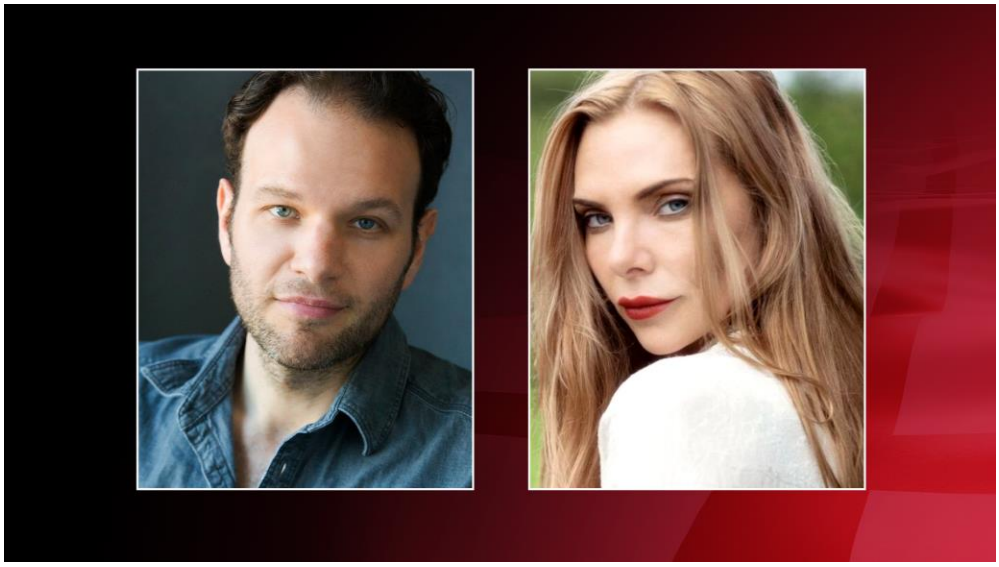
JAMES GRAHAM'S OLIVIER AWARD-WINNING PLAY

DEAR ENGLAND

PERFORMANCES KICK-OFF

15 SEPTEMBER 2025 AT THE THEATRE ROYAL PLYMOUTH, VISITING

16 VENUES ACROSS ENGLAND UNTIL MARCH 2026



The National Theatre today announces casting news for its highly anticipated national tour of ***Dear England***. Leading the cast in 'the decade's biggest theatrical triumph' (★★★★ Daily Telegraph) will be **David Sturzaker** as England manager Gareth Southgate, with *East Enders* and *Mount Pleasant* actress **Samantha Womack** playing the role of team psychologist Pippa Grange. Football and non-football fans alike will be brought to their feet for this inspiring, at times heartbreaking, and ultimately uplifting story of Gareth Southgate's revolutionary tenure as England manager.

The Olivier Award-winning Best New Play, which broke box office records during its West End run in 2023, will tour to 16 venues across England from **15 September 2025** until **14 March 2026** in a co-production with Josh Andrews and Stuart Galbraith for JAS Theatricals.

Dear England is written by the multi-award-winning stage and screen writer, **James Graham** (*Punch,* West End; *Sherwood*, BBC One), directed by the Almeida Theatre's Artistic Director **Rupert Goold** (*Patriots, Ink;* Almeida Theatre/West End/Broadway) with set design by **Es Devlin** (Beyonce's *Renaissance*, World Tour; *The Lehman Trilogy*, National Theatre).

David Sturzaker is best known for playing Simon Bond in BBC One's *Doctors*. Theatre credits include Captain Stanhope in *Journey's End* (West End), *To Kill a Mockingbird* (West End), *Charles II* (The Globe/West End) and Torvald Helmer in *A Doll's House* (Royal Exchange). Other screen credits include *Endeavour* (ITV)*, Da Vinci's Demons* (STARZ) and *Father Brown* (BBC One).

Samantha Womack is best known for playing Ronnie Mitchell in BBC One's *EastEnders*. She has also starred in *Game On* (BBC Two) and *Mount Pleasant* (Sky) on TV, represented the United Kingdom at the Eurovision Song Contest and performed leading stage roles in the West End and on tour. Theatre credits include Rachel in *The Girl on the Train* and *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* (West End and UK Tours), *42nd Street* and Morticia in *The Addams Family* (UK tours); *South Pacific* (Barbican/UK tour) and *Guys and Dolls* (West End). Other screen credits include

Silent Witness (BBC One), *The Marlow Murder Club* (UKTV) and film, *Kingsman: The Secret Service* (20th Century Studios).

Further casting to be announced.

It's time to change the game. The country that gave the world football has since delivered a painful pattern of loss. The England men's team has the worst track record for penalties in the world, and manager Gareth Southgate knows he needs to open his mind and face up to the years of hurt to take team and country back to the promised land.

Dear England is 'gripping, moving and funny...as good as theatre gets' (★★★★ The Sunday Times). It will launch at **Theatre Royal Plymouth** (15 – 20 September), and then tour to **Nottingham Theatre Royal** (23 - 27 September), **The Marlowe, Canterbury** (7 – 18 October), **Sheffield Lyceum** (21 – 25 October), **Leeds Grand Theatre** (4 – 8 November), **Theatre Royal Newcastle** (11 – 15 November), **Chichester Festival Theatre** (20 – 29 November), **Mayflower Theatre, Southampton** (13 – 17 January), **Milton Keynes Theatre** (20 – 24 January), **New Theatre, Oxford** (27 – 31 January), **Norwich Theatre Royal** (3 – 7 February), **New Victoria Theatre, Woking** (10 – 14 February), **The Alhambra Theatre, Bradford** (17 – 21 February), **New Wimbledon Theatre** (24 – 28 February), **Liverpool Empire** (3 – 7 March) and **Birmingham Hippodrome** (10 – 14 March).

Actor **David Sturzaker** who will play the role of Gareth Southgate said:

"I'm thrilled to be taking on the role of Gareth Southgate. It's a great responsibility and an honour to be playing him. He's been an inspiring figurehead for many, rebuilding a team, and the country's self-belief at what is possible, on and off, the football pitch. This is one of the aspects of the play that resonates most for me - the ability of football, and sport in general, to extend its reach beyond the game, to unite us and inspire us in our lives beyond the sport itself. It's also hugely exciting to be involved in a production that has already been such a hit in London and Salford. I'm looking forward to taking **Dear England** *on tour across the country, giving many more people the opportunity to see this fantastic show."*

Actress, **Samantha Womack**, who will play the role of Pippa Grange said:

"*I am so excited to be returning to the stage to perform in* Dear England. *It's a wonderful piece of theatre - entertaining and thought-provoking as well as incredibly staged. I am also fascinated by Pippa Grange and her impact on England men's team during her term as Head of People and Team Development at the Football Association during Gareth Southgate's tenure. She fundamentally changed the culture and, in turn, the course of sporting history by teaching the squad to embrace their fears and she's an extremely inspiring role to take on. I can't wait to delve in and get back to touring around the country with this fantastic show.*"

The wider creative team for ***Dear England*** includes costume designer, **Evie Gurney**; lighting designer, **Jon Clark**; co-movement directors, **Ellen Kane** and **Hannes Langolf**; video designer, **Ash J Woodward**; co-sound designers, **Dan Balfour** and **Tom Gibbons** with additional music by **Max Perryment.**

They are joined by tour revival director **Connie Treves**, revival movement director **Tom Herron,** casting director **Bryony Jarvis-Taylor** CDG, associate lighting designer **Ben Jacobs**, associate video designer **Libby Ward**, associate sound designer **Johnny Edwards,** casting associate **Lilly Mackie** and resident director **Dan Hutton**.

The National Theatre will run a year-long schools engagement programme inspired by Gareth Southgate's 'Dear England' open letter that he wrote to England fans in 2021. This programme, which will prompt young people across the UK to reflect on their own place in history, just as the footballers in Southgate's squad were encouraged to do, is in response to this year being the 80th anniversary of the Second World War. It will be delivered in schools across England with assemblies and workshops using spoken word and sound design to support students to share the hopes and aspirations they have for themselves, and other young people, 80 years from now. The resulting sound archive will form a unique 2025–2026 time capsule. Students will also be invited to

see performances of ***Dear England*** during the tour. This year-long schools engagement programme is expected to reach over 10,000 young people.

Dear England was originally commissioned by the National Theatre and developed with the theatre's New Work department. Its world premiere was on 20 June 2023 in the Olivier theatre. Following a sold-out run, *Dear England* transferred to the Prince Edward Theatre, in London's West End, from 9 October 2023 to 13 January 2024, where it broke box office records. *Dear England* was subsequently released to cinemas through National Theatre Live on 24 January 2024 and has been screened almost 2,500 times across the UK. In February 2024, the BBC announced it had commissioned a four-part drama of *Dear England* based on the stage production for BBC One and BBC iPlayer and it won 'Best New Play' at the 2024 Olivier Awards later that year. ***Dear England*** returned to the National Theatre in spring 2025, updated to reflect the 2024 UEFA EURO tournament and Gareth Southgate's final chapter as England manager. The play had its regional premiere at the Lowry in Salford on 29 May followed by a 4-week run.

This 2025/2026 national tour of ***Dear England*** is a co-production between National Theatre Productions and JAS Theatricals. It has been supported by 'Incentivising Touring: Repayable Grants for Theatre and Dance', a pilot scheme developed by Arts Council England to support larger-scale productions to tour to regional venues. ***Dear England*** was amongst the first to receive a share of over £2million as part of the first round of the scheme, which creates the opportunity for more people to see high-quality shows close to where they live.

Assisted performances are available throughout the run at each venue. Check individual venue websites for information and booking details.

Raymond James and Charles Stanley are proud to support the national tour of ***Dear England***.

ENDS

For further information, please contact **Clare McCormack** via

CMcCormack@nationaltheatre.org.uk

Notes to Editors

FURTHER PRESS MATERIALS

- Images from previous productions by Marc Brenner are available **here**
- Headshot images are available **here** & bios are available **here**

LISTINGS

Dates: Performances from 15 September 2025 – 14 March 2026 (full tour schedule below)

National Press Performance: Wednesday 24 September at 730pm at the Nottingham Theatre Royal

Assisted Performances: Check individual venue websites for information and booking details

Age Recommendation: 10+

Social Platforms:

Follow on **Instagram** @dearenglandplay
X @dearenglandplay
Facebook Dear England Play
#DearEnglandOnStage

TOUR SCHEDULE FOR 2025-2026

Theatre Royal Plymouth **theatreroyal.com**	15 – 20 September
Nottingham Theatre Royal **trch.co.uk**	23 – 27 September

Marlowe Theatre Canterbury marlowetheatre.com/	7 – 18 October
Sheffield Lyceum sheffieldtheatres.co.uk/lyceum	21 – 25 October
Leeds Grand Theatre leedsheritagetheatres.com	4 – 8 November
Newcastle Theatre Royal theatreroyal.co.uk	11 – 15 November
Chichester Festival Theatre cft.org.uk	20 – 29 November
Mayflower Theatre, Southampton mayflower.org.uk	13 – 17 January 2026
Milton Keynes Theatre atgtickets.com/milton-keynes-theatre	20 – 24 January
New Theatre Oxford atgtickets.com/new-theatre-oxford	27 – 31 January
Norwich Theatre Royal norwichtheatre.org	3 – 7 February
New Victoria Theatre, Woking atgtickets.com/new-victoria-theatre	10 – 14 February

The Alhambra Theatre, Bradford **bradford-theatres.co.uk/alhambra-theatre**	17 – 21 February
New Wimbledon Theatre **atgtickets.com/new-wimbledon-theatre**	24 - 28 February
Liverpool Empire **atgtickets.com/liverpool-empire**	3 – 7 March
Birmingham Hippodrome **birminghamhippodrome.com**	10 – 14 March

With Thanks

The commissioning of this work was supported by the Sir Peter Shaffer Charitable Foundation. The original production at the National Theatre was generously supported by the *Dear England* Team of Production Champions.

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 every local authority in the UK. A registered charity with a 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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About JAS Theatricals

Jas Theatricals was established by Joshua Andrews and Stuart Galbraith to produce and general manage shows. Previous work as producers or co-producers includes *9 to 5* at the Savoy; *Muriel's Wedding* in Australia; *On Your Feet* at London Coliseum; *Noises Off* at the Garrick; *Frankie and Johnny, Grey House* and *Hadestown* on Broadway; *Life of Pi* at Wyndham's; UK tours of Agatha Christie's *The Mirror Crack'd*, *Cluedo* and *Cluedo 2* and *Pretty Woman* West End, US and UK Tour. Current projects include *Hadestown* in the West End and *Birdsong* on UK Tour. Stuart Galbraith is the CEO of KMJ Entertainment Group, whose group of companies produce and promote music concerts, festivals, theatre, comedy and spoken word. Joshua Andrews has produced *A Streetcar Named Desire*, starring Gillian Anderson, with the Young Vic; *An American in Paris* at the Dominion; and Kay Mellor's *Fat Friends – The Musical*. Other stage adaptations include the franchise of seven stage plays of Peter James' *GRACE* novels, *The Girl on the Train* and two stage plays based on other Kay Mellor hit TV series, *Band of Gold* and *The Syndicate*, which toured in 2024. Danni Powell, former Vice President of Production and General Manager at The Really Useful Group, has recently joined JAS as Head of Business Development and General Management.

About Arts Council England

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. Our vision, set out in our strategy *Let's Create*, is that by 2030, we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish, and where every one of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. Between 2023 and 2026 we will have invested over £467 million of public money from Government, alongside an estimated £250 million each year from The National Lottery, to help ensure that people in every part of the country have access to culture and creativity in the places where they live. More information on Incentivising Touring: Repayable Grants for Theatre and Dance can be found here.