National Theatre

FOR RELEASE: THURSDAY 31 JULY 2025

FURTHER CASTING ANNOUNCED FOR THE NATIONAL THEATRE'S WEST END TRANSFER OF *THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST*

CAST INCLUDES

OLLY ALEXANDER, NATHAN STEWART-JARRETT, HUGH DENNIS, SHOBNA GULATI, KITTY HAWTHORNE, JESSICA WHITEHURST, HAYLEY CARMICHAEL

AND

STEPHEN FRY

AT THE NOËL COWARD THEATRE FROM 18 SEPTEMBER IN A CO-PRODUCTION WITH SONIA FRIEDMAN PRODUCTIONS



The National Theatre announces today further casting for the West End transfer of its critically acclaimed production of ***The Importance of Being Earnest.*** Joining **Olly Alexander,** who plays the role of Algernon Moncrieff, is **Nathan Stewart-Jarrett** as Jack Worthing, **Hugh Dennis** as Rev. Canon Chasuble, **Shobna Gulati** as Miss Prism, **Kitty Hawthorne** as Gwendolen Fairfax, **Jessica Whitehurst** as Cecily Cardew**, Hayley Carmichael** as Merriman/Lane, and **Stephen Fry** as Lady Bracknell.

This 'bold and brash Wilde reboot' (★★★★ The Times) will run for a limited season at the Noël Coward Theatre, a Delfont Mackintosh Theatre, in a co-production with Sonia Friedman Productions, from 18 September 2025 until 10 January 2026.

This 'sparkling new production' (★★★★★ Daily Mail) directed by **Max Webster,** is a joyful and flamboyant reimagining of Oscar Wilde's most celebrated comedy.

Max Webster, director, said:

"Oscar Wilde was a master of elegance, rebellion, and razor-sharp wit. With this cast – led by the audacious brilliance of Olly Alexander, the hugely captivating Nathan Stewart-Jarrett and the legendary Stephen Fry as Lady Bracknell – we're embracing the play's subversive heart in a way that feels utterly now. I'd like to think Wilde would be delighted – and perhaps even a little scandalised – by this bold, joyful take on his most iconic comedy."

Stephen Fry said:

"*I was delighted to be asked by Max Webster to join his jubilant National Theatre production and play the formidable Lady Bracknell in the West End. Oscar Wilde has been a hugely important figure in my life and career and The Importance of Being Earnest is a play that changed my life when I first saw it aged 10. It made me understand what language can do and absolutely transported me. Wilde is a beacon to people who still believe in open thinking and adventuring with the mind and spirit.*"

Being sensible can be excessively boring. At least Jack thinks so.

While assuming the role of dutiful guardian in the country, he lets loose in town under a false identity. Meanwhile, his friend Algy takes on a similar facade.

Unfortunately, living a double life has its drawbacks, especially when it comes to love. Hoping to impress two eligible ladies, the gentlemen find themselves caught in a web of lies they must carefully navigate.

Max Webster is an award-winning theatre director, specialising in spectacular new work, opera and live music events. Recent acclaimed productions include *Macbeth* (Donmar Warehouse/West End), *Life of Pi* (Sheffield Theatres/West End/Broadway), *Henry V* (Donmar Warehouse) and *The Lorax* (Old Vic). He was Associate Director at the Old Vic from 2015 until 2019 and at the Donmar Warehouse from 2020 until 2024.

'This exuberant production' (★★★★ The i) also features the work of set and costume designer **Rae Smith**, lighting designer **Jon Clark**, sound designer **Nicola T. Chang**, movement director **Carrie-Anne Ingrouille,** composer **DJ Walde** and casting director **Alastair Coomer CDG.** They are joined by associate director **Aaliyah McKay**, associate set designer **Tim Blazdell,** associate costume designer **Johanna Coe**, associate lighting designer **Hector Murray** and associate sound designer **Chris Reid**. Completing the creative team are, physical comedy advisor **Joyce Henderson**, intimacy coordinator **Ingrid Mackinnon** and dialect coach **Hazel Holder.**

Webster's 'Wilde party of irresistible anarchic charm' (★★★★ The Guardian) was first performed in the Lyttelton Theatre from 21 November 2024 until 25 January 2025. Following a sold-out run at the National Theatre, it was subsequently released to cinemas worldwide through National Theatre Live. Over 165,000 people in the UK have watched 'this joyous production' (★★★★ The i). Over 20,000 tickets are available for under £30 across the upcoming West End run.

A **National Theatre** production co-produced with **Sonia Friedman Productions**.

In association with **No Guarantees**, **Playing Field** and **Winkler & Smalberg**.

ENDS

For further information, please contact **Clare McCormack,** Head of Press and Communications via CMcCormack@nationaltheatre.org.uk

FURTHER PRESS MATERIALS

- Marketing image available here, Headshots are available here and Bios are available here

LISTINGS INFORMATION

Dates: Thursday 18 September 2025 – Saturday 10 January 2026

Press Night: Tuesday 30 September 2025 at 7pm

Website: www.EarnestOnStage.com

Address: Noël Coward Theatre, St Martin's Lane, London, WC2N 4AU

Performance Schedule: Monday – Saturday, 7pm evening performance with 2pm matinee performances on Thursdays and Saturdays

*schedule may differ during previews and holidays, please see website for details

Assisted Performances:

Captioned Performances: Tuesday 18 November 2025 at 7pm & Saturday 3 January 2026 at 2pm

Audio Described Performances: Thursday 27 November 2025 at 7pm & Saturday 13 December 2025 at 2pm

BSL Performances: Saturday 22 November 2025 at 2pm & Thursday 11 December at 7pm

Tickets: from £25

Box Office: delfontmackintosh.co.uk / 0344 482 5151

Access booking on 0344 482 5137

(lines open Monday to Saturday 10am - 7.30pm)

nationaltheatre.org.uk / 0203 989 5455

(lines open Monday to Friday 9:30am – 6pm, and Saturdays 10am – 6pm)

Running Time: 2hours 45mins

Social platforms: Facebook & Instagram @earnestonstage

WITH THANKS

The original production of ***The Importance of Being Earnest*** at the National Theatre was supported by the Huo Family Foundation.

NOTES TO EDITORS

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

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About Sonia Friedman Productions

Sonia Friedman Productions (SFP) is one of the most prolific and influential theatre companies in the world. Since beginning in 2002, SFP has developed, initiated and produced over 270 productions worldwide, winning 63 Olivier Awards, 61 Tony Awards and 3 BAFTAs.

Led by Sonia Friedman CBE, who this year was named one of Vogue's 25 most influential women working today and previously included in TIME's 100 Most Influential People in the World, SFP has developed and delivered an unparalleled body of work across the West End, Broadway and beyond, helping to redefine the theatrical landscape.

Around established long-running shows *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* (West End, Broadway and worldwide), *The Book of Mormon* (West End, UK and international tour) and *Stranger Things: The First Shadow* (West End, Broadway), SFP has forged a reputation for world-class theatre spanning new plays, major revivals and original musicals, in collaboration with leading artists, writers and directors.

A remarkable run of modern classics include Tom Stoppard's *Leopoldstadt*, Katori Hall's *The Mountaintop*, Eline Arbo's *The Years*, and *Jerusalem* by Jez Butterworth. Other successes include *Chimerica*, *King Charles III*, *The Jungle*, *The Inheritance* and *Shifters*, alongside long-term collaborations with Butterworth (*The Ferryman* and *The Hills of California*) and Stoppard (*Arcadia, Rock 'n' Roll* and *Travesties*). SFP's revelatory revivals of *La Cage Aux Folles*, *Funny Girl* and *Dreamgirls* have restored the reputations of vintage musical classics, while original musicals include *Sunny Afternoon* (based on The Kinks' back catalogue) and *Stereophonic*, which is currently playing in London's West End. Continuing the trend of ground-breaking theatrical techniques and stories to resonate throughout generations, the company is bringing *Paddington The Musical* to the West End this autumn.

SFP played a pivotal role in the return of live theatre after the pandemic, with Sonia Friedman launching the Re:Emerge Season (*Anna X, Walden* and *J'Ouvert*), a bold West End initiative that spotlighted new voices and reignited London's cultural landscape.

Leading directors Ian Rickson (*Uncle Vanya*, *The Seagull*) Rupert Goold (*Patriots*), Robert Icke (*The Oresteia*, *1984, Oedipus*), Rebecca Frecknall (*Summer and Smoke*) have all won acclaim with SFP.

Beyond the stage, SFP's work extends to film and television, including *Wolf Hall*, *Uncle Vanya*, *The Dresser* and the BAFTA-winning *Together*. Several SFP productions have been released globally via NT Live and major streaming platforms.