

# National Theatre

CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED *THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST*  
WITH NCUTI GATWA TO BE STREAMED FOR FREE BY NATIONAL  
THEATRE AT HOME



**UNDER EMBARGO 10:00AM GMT 19 FEBRUARY 2026**

Today, the National Theatre announces the return of **Take Your Seats** – the special weeklong streaming initiative from [National Theatre at Home](#) allowing anyone, anywhere, to access world-class theatre for free. This year, the National Theatre production of ***The Importance of Being Earnest*** by Oscar Wilde, directed by **Max Webster** (*Life of Pi*) will be available to stream worldwide on YouTube from **12 March**. Audiences can tune in for a **digital watch-along YouTube premiere at 7pm GMT** with the opportunity to interact through a chat function and engage in polls during the show. Captioned, audio described, and BSL options will also be available. The play will be available for free on YouTube until **18 March** and will release to National Theatre at Home for subscribers on 19 March.

Three-time Olivier Award-winner, **Sharon D Clarke** (*Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*; *Doctor Who*) was joined by **Ncuti Gatwa** (*Doctor Who*, *Sex Education*), **Ronke Adékọlúéjọ** (*Rain Dogs*, *Blues for an Alabama Sky*), **Eliza Scanlen** (*Little Women*, *Sharp Objects*), and **Hugh Skinner** (*Fleabag*, *Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again*) in this joyful reimagining captured live from its National Theatre run in winter 2024/2025. The 'sparkling new production' (★★★★★ *Daily Mail*) was then released in cinemas around the world with [National Theatre Live](#) reaching over 175,000 people.

Max Webster's 'exuberant, joyous and celebratory' (*Financial Times*) production has since transferred to the Noel Coward Theatre in London's West End with cast including Olly Alexander, Nathan Stewart-Jarrett, Hugh Dennis, Shobna Gulati, Kitty Hawthorne, Jessica Whitehurst, Hayley Carmichael and Stephen Fry, in a co-production with Sonia Friedman Productions, where it played to critical acclaim and packed houses from 18 September 2025 until 10 January 2026.

**Take Your Seats** launched in 2023 with previous free streams including National Theatre productions of [Othello](#) (directed by Clint Dyer, 2022) and [Nye](#) (directed by Rufus Norris, 2024). To date, over 345,000 people have watched Take Your Seats, made possible by NT at Home's partnership with **Bloomberg Philanthropies**, supporting the NT's mission of entertaining and inspiring global audiences with world class theatre.

Launched in 2020, National Theatre at Home offers access to over 110 productions, with new titles added every single month. Subscriptions are available for £9.99/month or £99.99 annually. All titles on National Theatre at Home include captions, and over 85% are available with Audio Description.

Bloomberg Philanthropies is Headline Sponsor of National Theatre at Home.

National Theatre at Home is also supported by The Linbury Trust.

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

For more information or to subscribe, visit [ntathome.com](https://ntathome.com).

**ENDS**

**Notes to Editors**

For further information please contact Zara Jayant at National Theatre  
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Images [HERE](#).

### **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 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](http://nationaltheatre.org.uk)

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