National Theatre

Visual Story



by Benedict Andrews
after Sophocles and Ingmar Bergman
Lyttelton Theatre

Production photography by Monika Rittershaus.
This production is supported by ME+EM and Laura Bickford & Stephen Graham.

Funded by UK Government

Supported using public funding by ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Contents

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

About the National Theatre

How to get here 3
Who's who? 6
Lyttelton Theatre 8

The Production

Electra/Persona 12
Content guidance 12
Sonic story 15

What Happens in the Play?

The set 16
The characters 17
Synopsis 20

Relaxed Performance

Access information 27
Upcoming performances 28

About the National Theatre

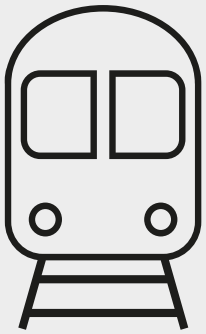
How to get here



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.** There are **lifts** in the car park to take you into the theatre.

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

nationaltheatre.org.uk/your-visit/getting-here/



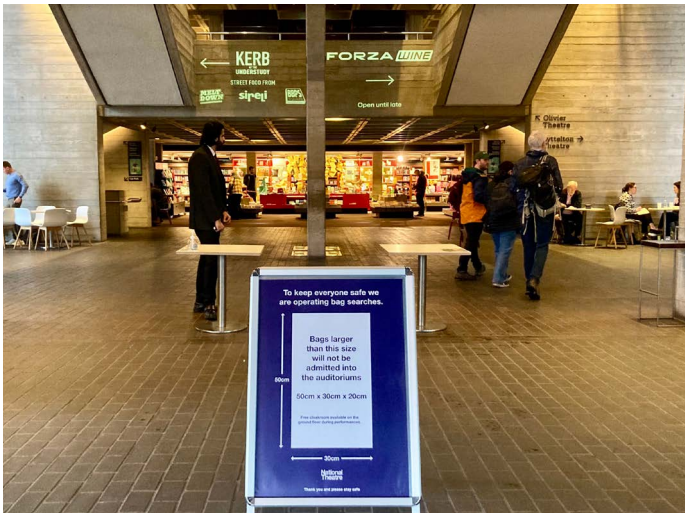
The **main entrance** to the National Theatre looks like this.



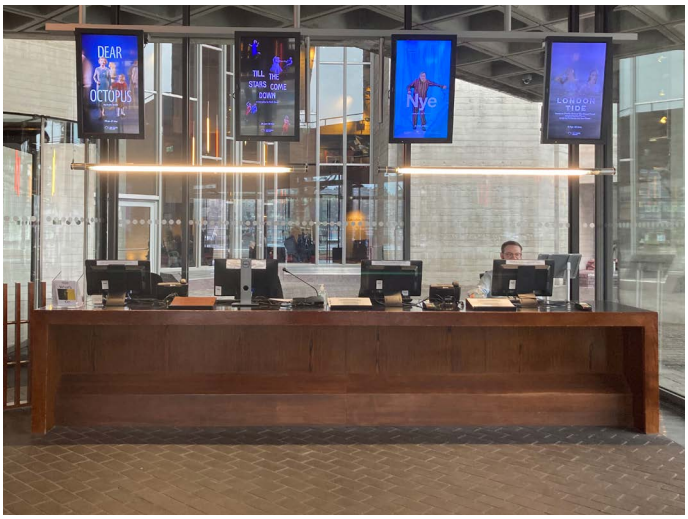
There is **step-free access** around the National Theatre.

About the National Theatre

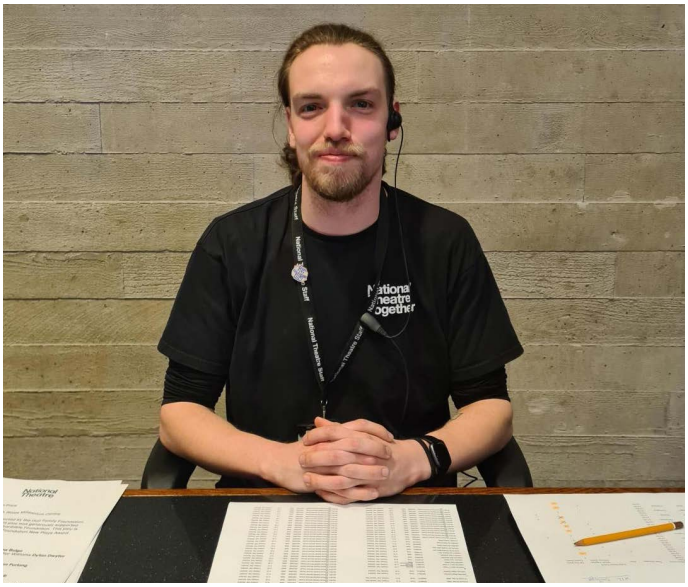
Who's who?



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 is near the entrance and looks like this.



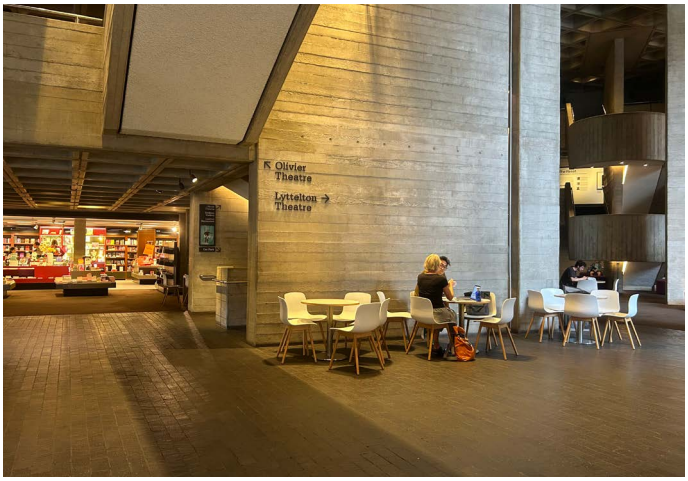
There are lots of staff available in the building if you have questions or if you would like directions to your seats. **National Theatre staff** wear **black t-shirts** with **white writing**.

About the National Theatre

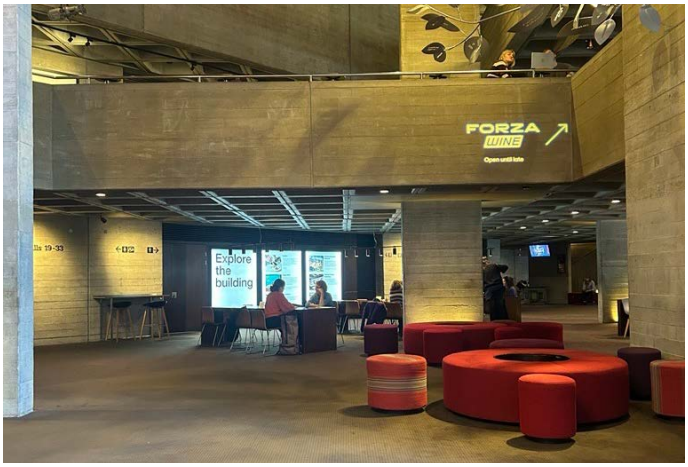
Lyttelton Theatre



This production of *Electra/Persona* will be performed in the **Lyttelton Theatre**. There are signs on the walls around the building to help guide you to the theatre.



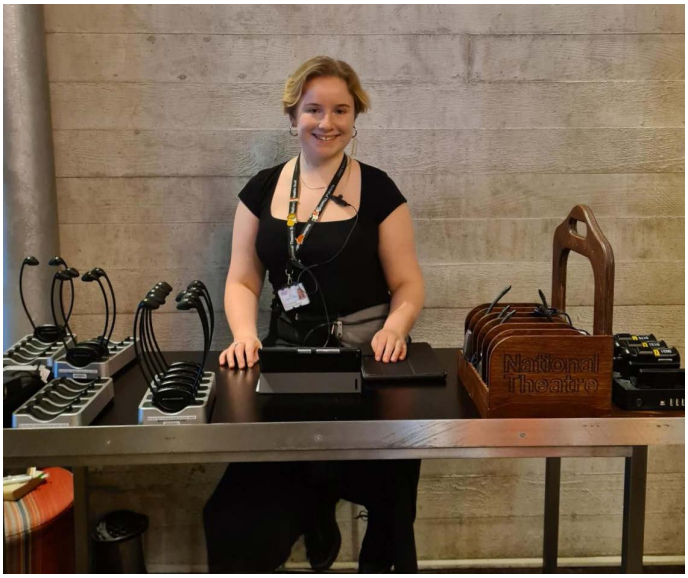
After the main entrance, there is a bookshop straight ahead and a cafe on the left. **Turn right here** to get to the **Lyttelton theatre foyers**.



There is a **ground floor foyer** and an **upper foyer** with lots of seating. Both areas can be **busy and loud** before the performance.



Bathrooms can be found at **both sides** of the Lyttelton theatre stalls and circle foyers. The signs look like this.



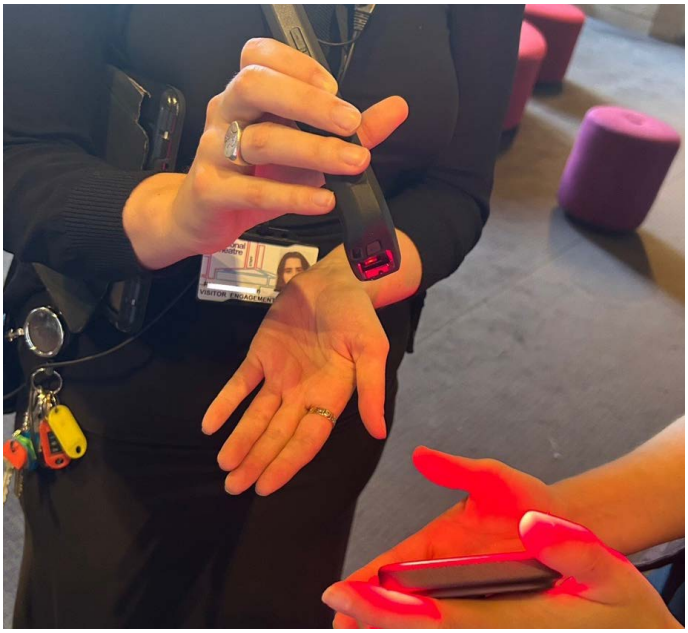
The access desk is in the **Lyttelton ground floor foyer**. There are hearing enhancement headsets, ear defenders, fidget toys and large print cast lists available here.



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



There might be a **short queue** to wait in to enter the auditorium. The queues are busiest in the 10 minutes before the performance begins.



As you enter the auditorium, **staff will scan your ticket**. You can show your ticket on your phone. If you need a paper ticket, the box office team at the main entrance can print this for you.



The Lyttelton seats are arranged in **long rows**, with aisles on the right and left hand side.
If your seat is in the middle of the row, you might need to squeeze past other audience members.



You can fit a small bag underneath your seat. Any **big bags will need to be left in our cloakroom**. This costs £1.50 per item. There is no cost to leave access equipment and medical supplies in the cloakroom.

The Production

Electra/Persona

Electra/Persona is a **play** by Benedict Andrews. This play is a new version of the film by Ingmar Bergman, which was based on the classic play by Sophocles.

Dates

Electra/Persona will be performed in the Lyttelton Theatre until **Saturday 10 October**.

Length

Electra/Persona is **2 hours** long. **There is no interval**. If you have concerns about readmittance, please email us on **access@nationaltheatre.org.uk**.

Warning!

The following pages contain **spoilers.**

The Production
Content Guidance

Narrative



Strong language and swearing



Depictions of violence and murder



References to suicide



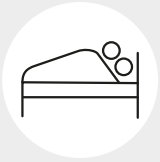
References to still birth



References to abortion



Depictions of alcohol



Sexual references



Depictions of blood and injury

The Production
Content Guidance

Sensory


Loud music


Flashing lights


Haze


Loud sounds


Total blackout


Actors in the audience


Glass smashing


Strobe lighting


High pitched sounds

What Happens in the Play?
Sonic story

The graphic on the next two pages tells the **sonic story** of ***Electra/Persona***. It highlights any particularly **loud or quiet** moments, or any moments when there are **sudden changes** to the sound.

Sound summary

Electra/Persona is a play.

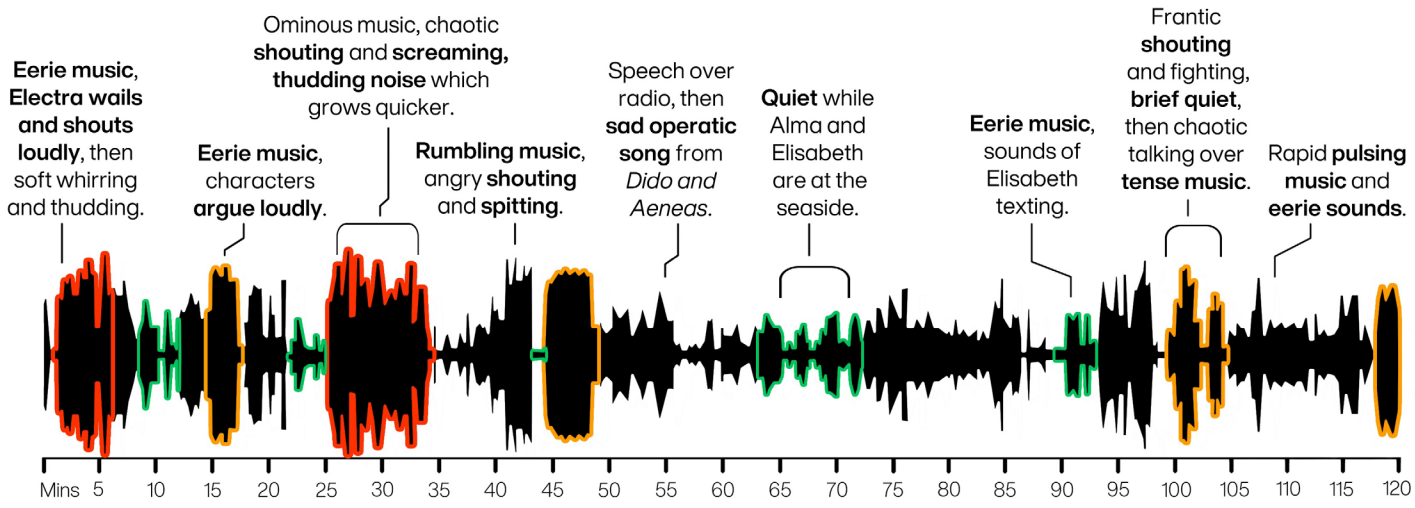
- There is **loud rumbling, thunder, and drone sounds** in many scenes
- Some dialogue has **loud background music** and **very high pitched tones**



Electra/Persona

- Very loud
- Loud
- Quiet

In Electra/Persona, a coin is flipped at the start of the show to decide which roles each actor will play. This means that some sounds you hear may be different to what is described in this sonic story.



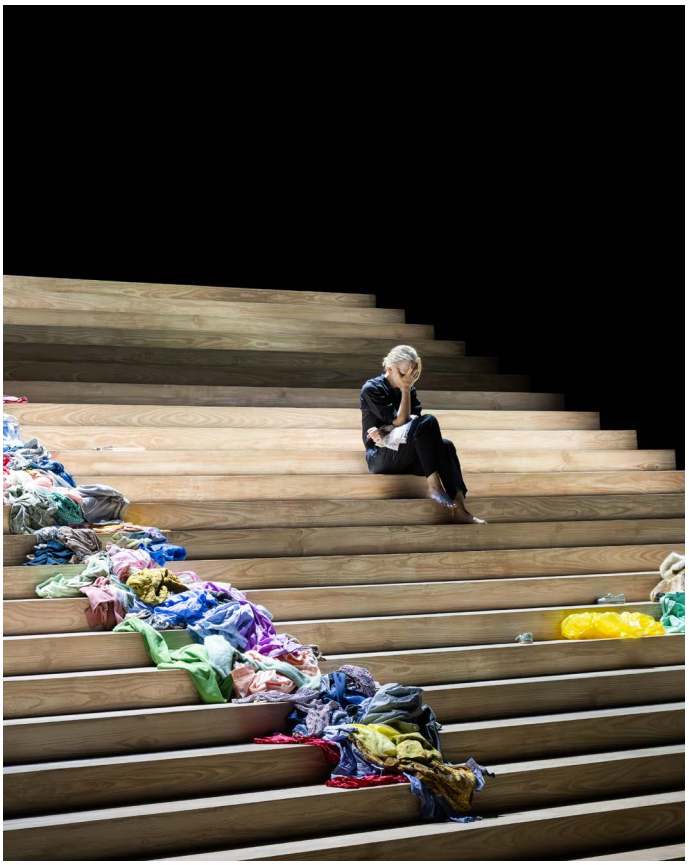
Sonic story designed by Touretteshero CIC, 2026

What Happens in the Play?

The set

The set of *Electra/ Persona* is **a large wooden staircase** across the whole stage.

The characters move around the stairs, and **two characters sometimes sit in the front row of the audience** during the play.



In the second part of the play, there is **a large screen** which displays **live feed from a camera** held by the characters. This is usually a close-up image of Elisabeth's face.



What Happens in the Play?
The characters

In Electra/Persona, **every actor plays two characters**.

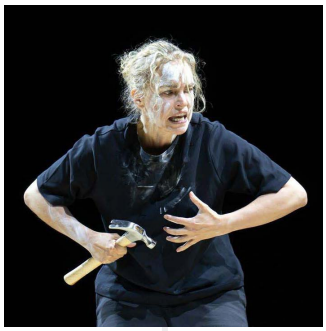
- The actor who plays **Electra** in the first part of the play will play **Elisabeth** in the second part of the play.
- The actor who plays **Clytemnestra** in the first part of the play will play **Alma** in the second part of the play.
- The actor who plays **Chrysothemis** in the first part of the play will play **Anna** in the second part of the play.
- The actor who plays **Aegisthus** in the first part of the play will play **Husband** in the second part of the play.

Two of the actors toss a coin at each performance to decide who will play each character. The actor who wins the coin toss will choose if they will play **Electra and Elisabeth** *or* **Clytemnestra and Alma**.

What Happens in the Play?
The characters



Cate Blanchett as **Electra**



Nina Hoss as **Electra**



Cate Blanchett as **Clytemnestra**
Nina Hoss as **Electra**



Nina Hoss as **Clytemnestra**
Cate Blanchett as **Electra**



Aegisthus



Chrysothemis

What Happens in the Play?
The characters



Nina Hoss as **Elisabeth**
Cate Blanchett as **Alma**



Cate Blanchett as **Elisabeth**
Nina Hoss as **Alma**



Husband



Doctor Anna

The actors who play **Chrysothemis/Anna** and **Aegisthus/Husband** do **not** swap with each other.

What Happens in the Play?

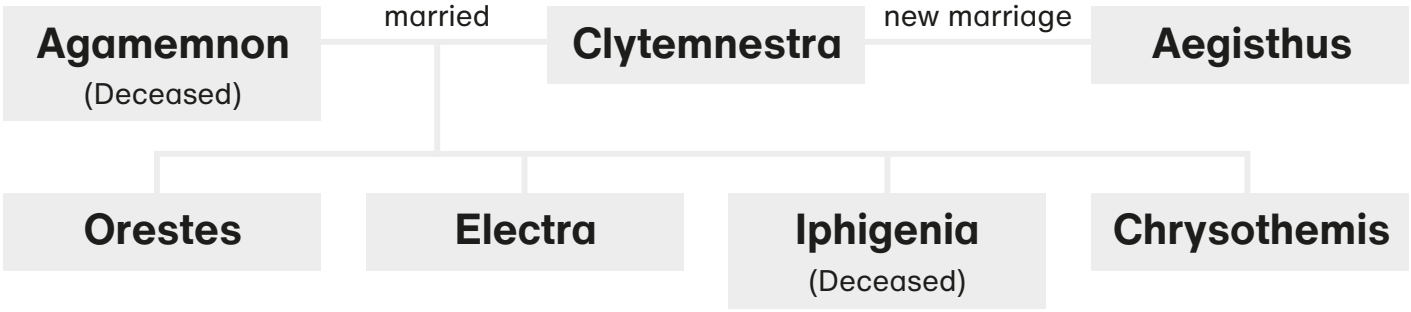
Synopsis

Summary

Electra/Persona is **two stories** presented as **one play.**

The first part is *Electra*.

In ***Electra***, Electra is grieving her dead father. She will not eat or leave her room. Her sister Chrysothemis, and mother Clytemnestra, try to help her recover. Electra wants to kill Aegisthus, her stepfather.



The second part is ***Persona***.
In ***Persona***, an actress called Elisabeth is refusing to speak. A nurse called Alma looks after her, and tells Elisabeth all about her life, trying to encourage her to speak again.

Between the two parts of the play, there is no interval.
The stage management team enter the stage to clean up the blood and the props from Electra, and a screen is lowered into the centre of the stairs.

Scene-by-scene Synopsis

Electra is angry and grieving. Her father (Agamemnon) and one of her sisters (Iphigenia) are dead. When Agamemnon was at war, the gods told him to sacrifice Iphigenia. Agamemnon killed his daughter, so Clytemnestra killed Agamemnon when he returned home. Clytemnestra has a new husband (Aegisthus), who Electra hates.



Electra wants to kill Clytemnestra and Aegisthus as revenge for her father.

Chrysothemis tries to comfort Electra and clean her up.

Clytemnestra tells Electra off for acting like a child. Electra refuses to speak to Clytemnestra.

Clytemnestra makes Electra and Chrysothemis act out the moment when Agamemnon decided to sacrifice Iphigenia to the gods. Chrysothemis stops the act.

Electra makes Chrysothemis and Clytemnestra act out the moment when Agamemnon returned home, and Clytemnestra chose to kill him. Clytemnestra explains what happened.

Clytemnestra wants to send Electra to a clinic, but Chrysothemis does not want Electra to go. They want Orestes, their brother, to come home.

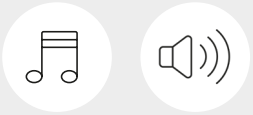
Electra sees a moth, and believes it is Orestes' soul. Electra puts on Orestes' jacket, and pretends to be him. Electra promises Orestes that she will kill Aegisthus.

Aegisthus appears on the stairs. Still dressed as Orestes, Electra kills Aegisthus with her hammer. She screams that this is revenge for the Agamemnon's murder.




Clytemnestra sees Aegisthus' dead body. She tries to speak to Electra, but Electra will not respond unless Clytemnestra refers to Orestes.

Electra, as Orestes, suddenly stops. She leaves the scene. The actors all sit up. The stage crew clean the stairs, take away the Electra props, and place a camera for the actors to use. The audience see themselves on screen for a moment. **There is loud music and heavy bass in this scene.**



Throughout Persona, Elisabeth holds a camera, which records a close up of her face that the audience watches on the central screen on the stairs.

A Doctor, Anna, talks about her relationship with her mother. Anna interviews a nurse called Alma.

Anna wants Alma to look after an actress called Elisabeth, who walked offstage during a performance of ‘Electra’, and has not spoken since.

Alma is not sure that she is the right person to look after Elisabeth, but accepts the job.

Alma talks to Elisabeth about art, work, and her life. Elisabeth never speaks, but is always listening while Alma reveals everything about her own life.

Anna sends Elisabeth and Alma to stay in a summer house by the sea, to help Elisabeth recover. Anna believes that Elisabeth is silent because she needs a new role to play.

When Alma tells Elisabeth about her career and exam results, there is a storm. There is **strobe lighting in this scene.**



Alma tells Elisabeth a detailed story about a time when she and a friend had sex with two strangers they met on a beach. Alma tells Elisabeth about the time she had an abortion.



Alma thinks she and Elisabeth are similar people. As Alma falls asleep, Elisabeth speaks: she tells Alma to go to bed. When Alma wakes up, she asks Elisabeth if she spoke. Elisabeth shakes her head ‘no’.

Alma sees Elisabeth texting someone. Alma steals Elisabeth’s phone and finds out that Elisabeth has been telling Doctor Anna everything that Alma has been saying. Alma leaves some broken glass on the floor, knowing Elisabeth will step on it. Alma begs Elisabeth to speak.



Elisabeth hits Alma and makes her nose bleed. Alma threatens to hit Elisabeth with a hammer. Elisabeth screams ‘stop it’. Elisabeth runs away from Alma.



Elisabeth’s husband searches for her. He speaks to Alma as if he is speaking to Elisabeth. Alma tells him she loves him. There is flashing light as Elisabeth’s husband leaves the stage.



Elisabeth hides a photo of her daughter. Alma sees the photo, and explains that Elisabeth is afraid of her daughter. She repeats the speech twice.



Alma tells Elisabeth to say nothing. Elisabeth says ‘nothing’. Doctor Anna narrates: Elisabeth returns home and returns to the stage. Alma explains that she likes people, and loves her partner.



Relaxed Performance
Access information

There is a relaxed performance of ***Electra/Persona*** on **Wednesday 7 October** at **7pm**.

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 items** available to use. Just ask a member of staff who will direct you to the **access desk**
- There is a **quiet room** and a **chill-out space** available. You can ask any member of staff to direct you to them

Relaxed Performance
Upcoming performances

The Story
Gripping and adrenaline-fuelled, Tracey Scott Wilson's seminal newsroom thriller is directed by Clint Dyer with a cast including Letitia Wright, Ashley Thomas, Lorraine Toussaint, and Wilf Scolding.

Saturday 17 October at **2.30pm**

Some Woman
What happens when an ordinary woman refuses to be quiet? Anne-Marie Duff features in this provocative new play by Helen Edmundson, directed by Blanche McIntyre.

Thrusday 19 November at **7.30pm**

Cloud 9
What happens when identity, power and desire collide across time? Caryl Churchill's daring classic is reimagined by Dominic Cooke in a bold new production.

Monday 14 December at **7.30pm**

More information about our future relaxed performances can be found on our website:

nationaltheatre.org.uk/whats-on/?accessibility=relaxed-performance