

National Theatre

NATIONAL THEATRE AT HOME ANNOUNCES WORLDWIDE ONLINE PREMIERE OF *THE FIFTH STEP*

JACK LOWDEN AND MARTIN FREEMAN LEAD IN DAVID IRELAND'S ACCLAIMED NEW PLAY, STREAMING LIVE ON NATIONAL THEATRE AT HOME, FROM THURSDAY 1 OCTOBER AT 7PM BST



[Watch the Fifth Step trailer here](#)

30 September 2026

National Theatre today announces the worldwide online premiere of ***The Fifth Step***, streaming live on **National Theatre at Home** on **Thursday 1 October at 7pm BST**. **Olivier Award-winner Jack Lowden** (*Slow Horses*, *Dunkirk*) is joined by **BAFTA-winner Martin Freeman** (*The Hobbit*, *The Responder*) in **David Ireland's** critically acclaimed and subversively funny new play.

After years in the 12-step programme of Alcoholics Anonymous, James becomes a sponsor to newcomer Luka. The pair bond over black coffee, trade stories and build a fragile friendship out of their shared experiences. But as Luka approaches Step Five, the moment of confession, dangerous truths emerge, threatening the trust on which both of their recoveries depend.

Martin Freeman said: “***The Fifth Step*** was one of the real pleasures of my career thus far. There is nothing like working on a fantastic play - surprising, moving and very funny - with a director who steers beautifully, knows where the good stuff is and lets you play.

Jack (Lowden) is just wonderful; my idea of an ideal cast-mate. Fearless and inventive.

I can't wait for it to reach a new and wider audience through **National Theatre at Home**."

Jack Lowden added: "I'm incredibly proud of ***The Fifth Step***. Working with **David (Ireland)**, **Finn (den Hertog)** and the whole team was a gift. And to go on stage each night opposite **Martin (Freeman)**- one of the most gifted and precise stage actors around - was bliss. It's a mad fast, quick-witted beautiful piece and I'm so glad it's now having its global premiere on **National Theatre at Home**."

Finn den Hertog directs the provocative and entertaining production, filmed live at the intimate, in the round, **@sohoplace** Theatre on London's West End. Originally presented in Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow in 2024 by **National Theatre of Scotland**, ***The Fifth Step*** transferred to a sold-out West End run and was captured for the successful cinema release with **National Theatre Live** in November 2025, ahead of its digital premiere on **National Theatre at Home**. The production is from **Neal Street Productions**, **Playful Productions** and **National Theatre of Scotland**, in association with **Nica Burns**.

Matt Risley, Chief Digital Officer, **National Theatre** said: "Premiering ***The Fifth Step*** live on **National Theatre at Home** is exactly what digital-first theatre should feel like. It takes a sold-out West End hit, with two extraordinary performances from **Jack Lowden** and **Martin Freeman** beyond the stage and to a global audience. It's a great opportunity to introduce this incredible production to swathes of new audiences, and for existing fans to re-watch at their convenience, too."

A live premiere event

Audiences can join the **National Theatre at Home** community to share their thoughts with fellow theatre lovers in real time as the premiere streams live. New subscribers can watch via a free trial; returning audiences can subscribe or purchase one-off access to the premiere.

Captioned, BSL-interpreted and audio-described versions of the production are also available on the night. Rental options for these versions go live at 6:30pm BST on Thursday 1 October, 30 minutes ahead of the premiere.

This production contains strong language, comments on religion and sexual themes. Running time: 90 minutes (no interval).

About National Theatre at Home

Launched in 2020, National Theatre at Home offers access to over 100 productions, with new titles added monthly. All titles include captions, and over 90% are available with Audio Description.

National Theatre at Home is supported by **Bloomberg Philanthropies**.

For more information or to subscribe, visit **ntathome.com**.

- **ENDS** -

For further information please contact: Gail Davidson – gail@gaildavidsonpr.co.uk

Images

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Production photography by **Johan Persson** , including portraits of **Jack Lowden** and **Martin Freeman** v. Please credit **Johan Persson** on use.

[Click here to download *The Fifth Step* trailer](#)

The Fifth Step is also screening in cinemas worldwide with **National Theatre Live**. Screenings available at thefifthstep.ntlive.com.

Notes to Editors

About National Theatre at Home

Launched in 2020, **National Theatre at Home** offers access to over 100 productions, with new titles added monthly. All titles include captions, over 90% are available with Audio Description, and a selection are available in British Sign Language (BSL).

National Theatre at Home's reaches theatre lovers across the globe, streamed in over 184 countries, with the majority of audiences having never visited the **National Theatre's** South Bank home.

Research earlier this year showed that 99% of **National Theatre at Home's** audiences are outside the Capital. Over 60% said filmed theatre options support wider discoverability and increased overall experiences of theatre.

About the National Theatre

The **National Theatre** offers the widest access to high-quality theatre in the world. This year, we will produce 18 plays, following over a thousand shows that have shaped British theatre since 1963.

Our productions transfer from our home in London to the West End, Broadway and beyond, winning awards on both sides of the Atlantic. We champion bold storytelling that inspires, challenges and entertains, bringing the world to the National Theatre, and taking the best of British theatre to the world. Through our online streaming service NT at Home; our education platform, the NT Collection in schools; and in cinemas with NT Live, we reach audiences digitally in almost every country worldwide, 184 out of 195 and counting.

We operate as a registered charity with a deep social purpose and a nationwide footprint. We partner with regional theatres to tour our shows, are active in more than 90% of state secondary schools, and our Skills Centre trains 5,000 people each year.

Our dedicated NT Studio champions new writing, and we are central London's 'biggest factory' with workshops that craft every aspect of our productions. We host the world's most extensive theatre archive, and our Green Store houses more than 150,000 reusable props and costumes as part of our sustainability commitments.

For more information, please visit nationaltheatre.org.uk

About National Theatre of Scotland (www.nationaltheatrescotland.com)

The **National Theatre of Scotland** is dedicated to playing the great stages, arts centres, village halls, schools and site-specific locations of Scotland, the UK and internationally. As well as creating ground-breaking productions and working with the most talented theatre-makers, the **National Theatre of Scotland** produces significant community engagement projects, innovates digitally, and works constantly to develop new talent. Central to this is finding pioneering ways to reach current and new audiences and to encourage people's full participation in the Company's work. With no performance building of its own, the Company works with existing and new venues and companies to create and tour theatre of the highest quality. Founded in 2006, the Company, in its short life, has become a globally significant theatrical player, with an extensive repertoire of award-winning work. The **National Theatre of Scotland** is supported by the **Scottish Government**.

About Neal Street Productions (nealstreetproductions.com)

Neal Street is one of the UK's most respected production companies, producing film, television and theatre. Founded 2003 by **Sam Mendes**, **Pippa Harris** and **Caro Newling**, it makes distinctive, popular award-winning projects on both sides of the Atlantic.

TV includes the upcoming ***Call the Midwife*** prequel; ***Sisters in Arms***, ***Call the Midwife***, ***The Franchise***, ***Britannia***, ***Penny Dreadful***, ***The Hollow Crown***.

Films include ***Hamnet*** and ***The Magic Faraway Tree*** together with titles by **Sam Mendes**: ***Empire of Light***, ***1917***, ***Revolutionary Road***. Currently in production, his next project is ***The Beatles***, with four distinct feature films about the greatest band in history.

Theatre originated by **Neal Street** includes ***The Lehman Trilogy***, ***The Motive and the Cue***, ***The Hills of California***, ***Hamnet***, ***Local Hero***, ***The Ferryman***, ***Shrek the Musical***, ***Charlie and the Chocolate Factory***, ***The Bridge Project 2010 - 2012***, ***Three Days of Rain***, ***The Vertical Hour***.

West End transfers include ***The Fifth Step***, ***Walking with Ghosts***, ***The Moderate Soprano***, ***This House***, ***The Painkiller***, ***Merrily We Roll Along***, ***South Downs/The Browning Version***, ***Red***, ***Enron***, ***Sunday in the Park with George***, ***Mary Stuart***.

The theatre slate is overseen by **Newling** together with producer, **Georgia Gatti**.

Neal Street is a **Banijay Entertainment** company.

About Playful Productions (playfuluk.com)

Founded by **Matthew Byam Shaw**, **Nia Janis** and **Nick Salmon** in 2010, **Playful Productions** is one of the most eminent independent theatre producers in the West End. Alongside its producing work, **Playful** is also a full-service executive producer and general management company.

As Producer and General Manager productions include ***Inter Alia*** (Wyndham's); ***Born With Teeth*** (Wyndham's); ***The Fifth Step*** (@sohoplac); ***Dr. Strangelove*** (Noël Coward and Bord Gáis, Dublin); ***Macbeth*** (Harold Pinter); ***MJ*** (Prince Edward); ***The Artist*** (Theatre Royal Plymouth); ***The Unfriend*** (Chichester Festival Theatre, Criterion and Wyndham's); ***Accidental Death of an Anarchist*** (Sheffield, Lyric Hammersmith and Theatre Royal Haymarket); ***Charlie and the Chocolate Factory – The Musical*** (UK & Ireland Tour); ***Good***

(Harold Pinter); *Get Up Stand Up! The Bob Marley Musical* (Lyric); *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up The Bodies* (Aldwych) and *The Audience* (Gielgud and Apollo).

As Producer productions include *All My Sons* (Wyndham's); *The Unbelievers* (Royal Court); *Make It Happen* (Dundee Rep and Edinburgh International Festival); *Buena Vista Social Club* (Broadway); *Groundhog Day* (The Old Vic and Princess Theatre, Melbourne); *MJ* (Broadway); *The House of Bernarda Alba* (National Theatre); *A Little Life* (Richmond, Harold Pinter and Savoy); *Wolf Hall: Parts 1 & 2* (Broadway) and *The Audience* (Broadway).

Current and recent Executive Producer work includes *Wicked* (Apollo Victoria); *Moulin Rouge! The Musical* (Piccadilly); *MJ* (Prince Edward) and *Wild Rose* (Royal Lyceum, Edinburgh); additionally, Executive Producer on the multi-E Emmy-award-winning Netflix TV series *The Crown* based on *The Audience*.

As General Manager productions include *Wicked* (Apollo Victoria, UK & Ireland Tours and International Tour); *Moulin Rouge! The Musical* (Piccadilly); *Wild Rose* (Royal Lyceum, Edinburgh) and *Come From Away* (Abbey Theatre, Dublin and Phoenix).

About Bloomberg Philanthropies

Bloomberg Philanthropies invests in 700 cities and 150 countries around the world to ensure better, longer lives for the greatest number of people. The organization focuses on creating lasting change in five key areas: the Arts, Education, Environment, Government Innovation, and Public Health. **Bloomberg Philanthropies** encompasses all of **Michael R. Bloomberg's** giving, including his foundation, corporate, and personal philanthropy as well as **Bloomberg Associates**, a philanthropic consultancy that advises cities around the world. In 2025, **Bloomberg Philanthropies** distributed \$4.3 billion. For more information, please visit bloomberg.org, sign up for our [newsletter](#), or follow us on [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [YouTube](#), [Threads](#), [Facebook](#), and [X](#).