

ROYAL COURT



PRESS RELEASE
25 March 2025

UNDER STRICT EMBARGO UNTIL TUESDAY 25 MARCH 2025 AT 12 NOON

ROYAL COURT THEATRE ANNOUNCES MAY - DECEMBER 2025 PROGRAMME



Artwork credited to Guy J. Sanders

Today the Royal Court Theatre announces six productions, running from May to December, to complete Artistic Director **David Byrne**'s 2025 programme. This includes four World Premieres and two touring productions, each featuring world-class artists and collectively showcasing the rich possibilities of what contemporary new writing can be.

The Royal Court also announces plans for the second iteration of our Open Submissions Festival later this year, an 18-month attachment for playwright Tife Kusoro and the opening of submissions for the inaugural Young Playwrights Award.

FOUR WORLD PREMIERES

- A deaf boy is killed in an occupied town and the next morning the whole population wakes up deaf in ***Deaf Republic***, an expansive production about solidarity and collective resistance from world-renowned theatre company **Dead Centre** and Sign Language Poet **Zoë McWhinney**, based on the multi-award-winning epic poems by Ukrainian-American poet, **Ilya Kaminsky** (Fri 29 Aug - Sat 13 Sep 2025).
- Made entirely with sound and no words, ***Cow | Deer*** is a one-of-a-kind collaboration between **Katie Mitchell**, **Nina Segal** and **Melanie Wilson**, which radically decentres humans in an exploration of our relationship to animals and the environment, in co-production with the **National Theatre of Greece** (Thu 4 Sep - Sat 11 Oct 2025).
- Time fractures in **Nick Payne's *The Unbelievers***, directed by **Marianne Elliott**, designed by **Bunny Christie** and starring **Nicola Walker** as a mother facing the disappearance of her son, in this co-production with **Playful Productions** about family, memory and hope. (Fri 10 Oct - Sat 29 Nov 2025).
- Studies show that women are statistically more likely to watch violent pornography than men. **Sophia Chetin-Leuner's *Porn Play*** explores women's relationship to porn through one academic's addiction, directed by **Josie Rourke** and starring **Ambika Mod** (Thu 6 Nov - Sat 13 Dec 2025).

TWO TOURING PRODUCTIONS

- Coming to London following its acclaimed national tour, **Breach's** new musical ***After the Act*** unpacks an act of oppression that sparked a generational riot. From 1988 to the present, the show remixes archival research and personal accounts of Section 28 as a turning point in LGBTQIA+ history. By **Billy Barrett** and **Ellice Stevens**, composed by **Frew** (Wed 21 May - Sat 14 Jun 2025).
- **Nassim Soleimanpour's** boundary-pushing ***ECHO***, a production about home and belonging, returns to the Royal Court following its debut in 2024, ahead of an extensive international tour. Directed by **Omar Elerian**, new performers taking to the stage without rehearsal include **Mel Giedroyc**, **Nish Kumar** and **Juliet Stevenson** (Fri 27 Jun - Sat 5 Jul 2025).

ALSO ANNOUNCED

- Now in its second iteration, the ***Open Submissions Festival*** will continue to provide brilliant new writing found through the Royal Court's open programmes with a professional platform (Tue 14 - Sat 18 Oct 2025).
- Playwright **Tife Kusoro** (G) will join the Royal Court on attachment for eighteen months, generously supported by **Peggy Ramsay's Playwrights '73 bursary**. As part of her attachment, Tife will write a new play, and will support the inaugural Young Playwrights Festival in July, inspiring the next generation of British playwrights.

David Byrne said, *“The best thing about being Artistic Director at the Royal Court is the opportunity to support playwrights working in every form and texture for the stage. This season is the full feast of what new writing for the contemporary stage looks like now. Every production in this season is an unmissable piece of theatre, each bringing together world-class artists to present electric new work to audiences. Come and join us.”*

This summer the Royal Court also continues its commitment to supporting the next generation of playwrights through the inaugural **Young Playwrights Award**, for which submissions open in tandem with this announcement. The Young Playwrights Award is a call-out for plays from 13 - 18 year olds living or studying in London, culminating in a **festival of professional performances** at the Royal Court in July 2025. Winners will also be published by award partner **Nick Hern Books**, with trophies presented at a **prize-giving event** on 12 July 2025. The deadline for competition entries is **Friday 2 May**.

Tickets for all newly announced productions go on sale to supporters from **12 noon on Tuesday 25 March**, to Friends and Good Friends at **12 noon on Thursday 27 March**, and to the general public at **12 noon on Monday 31 March**.

SHOW BY SHOW

Royal Court Theatre presents a Breach production commissioned by New Diorama

After the Act

By Billy Barrett and Ellice Stevens

Composed by Frew

Directed by Billy Barrett

Wednesday 21 May - Saturday 14 June 2025

Jerwood Theatre Downstairs

Press night: Friday 23 May 2025, 7pm

Abseiling lesbians! Queers in the classroom! Moral panic in the streets! And an act of oppression that inspired a generational riot.

In 1988, a law banned the ‘promotion’ of homosexuality in schools. Now, this electrifying new musical tells the story of Section 28 – and the teachers, pupils and activists who lived through it.

Exploring a defining moment in LGBTQ+ history, *After the Act* comes to the Royal Court following an acclaimed national tour. Created by multi-award-winning **Breach Theatre**, written by **Billy Barrett** and **Ellice Stevens**, with music composed by **Frew**.

Originally co-produced by Brighton Dome and Festival, HOME, New Diorama and Warwick Arts Centre.

Billy Barrett said, *“We’re delighted to be transferring After the Act to the Royal Court following its hugely successful UK tour. Since its original production, the show has been fine-tuned and scaled up, and sadly the story at its heart feels even more urgent - so we can’t wait to share it with a larger London audience.”*

Ellice Stevens said, *“To be transferring After the Act to the Royal Court feels incredible. This is a show which so many people have poured themselves into - from the performers in its various iterations, to the people we interviewed who gave us their stories. To now be given the platform to share it on the Royal Court stage feels like an immense privilege and an opportunity to be part of a wider conversation about LGBTQ+ rights. Since first performing the show in 2023, the relevance between Section 28 and today feels even more prominent. I feel so grateful this show continues to have a life at a time like now.”*

Royal Court Theatre and Nassim Soleimanpour Productions present

ECHO

By Nassim Soleimanpour

Directed by Omar Elerian

Friday 27 June - Saturday 5 July 2025

Jerwood Theatre Downstairs

A different performer takes to the stage for each show – with no rehearsal and no idea what’s going to happen next.

Adventuring across time and space, guided by Nassim from his flat in Berlin, performer and audience embark on a global journey of belonging, connection, and the meaning of home.

Nassim Soleimanpour’s (*White Rabbit Red Rabbit*) critically acclaimed, sold-out hit *ECHO* returns to the Royal Court before an international tour. Directed by **Omar Elerian** (*Rhinoceros*), performers include **Mel Giedroyc**, **Nish Kumar** and **Juliet Stevenson** (full line-up to be announced).

An NSP production, co-produced by LIFT (London) / The Royal Court Theatre (London), Staatstheater Mainz, Riksteatern (Sweden), Why Not Theatre (Toronto), Théâtre National Wallonie-Bruxelles (Brussels) / Le Lieu Unique, scène nationale de Nantes, Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg, Canberra Theatre Centre / Malthouse Theatre (Melbourne). In association with The Shed (New York City), a LIFT Concept Touring Commission.

Nassim Soleimanpour said, *“We are thrilled to return to ECHO’s home before its long upcoming international tour. Come see it again—and perhaps multiple times! It’s refreshing to watch such talented performers interpret the same play in their own unique and brilliant ways.”*

Royal Court Theatre and Dead Centre in association with Dublin Theatre Festival and Complicité present

Deaf Republic

By Dead Centre and Zoë McWhinney

Adapted from the book by Ilya Kaminsky

Directed by Dead Centre

Friday 29 August - Saturday 13 September 2025

Jerwood Theatre Downstairs

Press night: Thursday 4 September 2025, 7pm

A gunshot in occupied territory. A deaf boy is killed for disobeying orders he couldn’t hear. The next day, the whole town wakes up deaf.

Adapted from the poems of Ukrainian-American author **Ilya Kaminsky**, *Deaf Republic* is an epic modern fable of war, humanity and collective resistance.

World-renowned theatre company **Dead Centre** make their Royal Court debut, collaborating with Sign Language Poet **Zoë McWhinney**. Told through a mix of spoken English, sign language, creative captioning and silence, *Deaf Republic* brings together an ensemble of deaf and hearing actors, aerial performers, puppetry, live cinema and poetry.

Royal Court Theatre and Dead Centre co-production, in association with Dublin Theatre Festival and Complicité. Funded by The Arts Council of Ireland/An Chomhairle Ealaíon with creative production support from field:arts and ZooCo. London performances supported by Culture Ireland.

Supported by the T.S. Eliot Foundation.

Ben Kidd said, *"We are truly so excited to be partnering with the Royal Court on this project. Ilya's book is remarkable, and we have been working on the adaptation for a couple of years. We think Downstairs at the Court is the perfect place for it to start its journey. We have an amazing team with us, and together we hope to create something new and exciting, which asks questions about solidarity, freedom and silence, and how we must not, as Ilya puts it, "pretend that history is something that happens elsewhere, a misfortune that befalls other people... History is lying there in the middle of the street. Showing us who we are"."*

Royal Court Theatre and National Theatre of Greece present

Cow | Deer

Co-created by Katie Mitchell, Nina Segal and Melanie Wilson

Thursday 4 September - Saturday 11 October 2025

Jerwood Theatre Upstairs

Press night: Wednesday 10 September 2025, 7pm

Wind in tall trees. White sky. Rain soon. Hooves on earth. Twigs. Snap. Wait. Listen.

A new experiment in performance from **Katie Mitchell**, **Nina Segal** and **Melanie Wilson**. Using only sound and no words, a quartet of performers and foley artists evoke the lives of two animals – a cow and a deer.

Cow | Deer is an invitation to enter the more-than-human world.

Co-created by Katie Mitchell (*Bluets*, *Anatomy of a Suicide*), Nina Segal (*Shooting Hedda Gabler*, *Big Guns*) and Melanie Wilson (*Oracle Song*, *Opera for the Unknown Woman*) in a major international co-production with the **National Theatre of Greece**.

Katie Mitchell, **Nina Segal** and **Melanie Wilson** said, *"Cow | Deer is an experiment in recalibration - away from speaking and towards listening; choosing collaboration over hierarchy; and looking beyond the purely-human into the more-than-human world."*

Royal Court Theatre and Playful Productions present

The Unbelievers

By Nick Payne

Directed by Marianne Elliott

Starring Nicola Walker
Friday 10 October - Saturday 29 November 2025
Jerwood Theatre Downstairs
Press night: Thursday 16 October 2025, 7pm

'I love my son. My son is alive.'

A teenager disappears. Time fractures. His mother will never give up hope.

The Unbelievers is a new play about the moments that shatter our world, and the ones that help us piece it back together.

Playwright **Nick Payne** (*Constellations*, *We Live in Time*) returns to the Royal Court with a startling portrait of motherhood, faith, family – and the lengths we go to for those we refuse to forget.

Directed by **Marianne Elliott** (*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, *Angels in America*), designed by **Bunny Christie** (*Company*, *People Places and Things*) and starring **Nicola Walker** (*Unforgotten*, *The Split*).

Nick Payne said, *"I love the Royal Court with all my heart. Long live the Royal Court"*.

Marianne Elliott said, *"I am so thrilled to be returning to the Royal Court, where I started my London theatre career - as an Associate Director, under Ian Rickson. I am even more thrilled to be returning with this honest exploration of motherhood by Nick Payne - something we see quite rarely in my opinion. This continues my long association with designer Bunny Christie and actor Nicola Walker. I cannot wait to get started!"*

Porn Play

By Sophia Chetin-Leuner
Directed by Josie Rourke
Starring Ambika Mod
Thursday 6 November - Saturday 13 December 2025
Jerwood Theatre Upstairs
Press night: Thursday 13 November 2025, 7pm

'You can't fight it anymore. So, you give in to your temptation.'

Ani is a dazzling young academic with a secret addiction to violent pornography. As her career and relationships unravel in between lectures on *Paradise Lost*, can she confront her uncontrollable desires?

Funny, unsettling and honest, *Porn Play* marks the Royal Court debut of writer **Sophia Chetin-Leuner** (*This Might Not Be It*), in a world premiere directed by **Josie Rourke** (former Artistic Director of both the Donmar Warehouse and Bush Theatre) and starring **Ambika Mod** (*One Day*, *This Is Going to Hurt*).

Sophia Chetin-Leuner said, *"Ever since I was a teenager, going to see plays at the Royal Court has shaped my ideals and purpose of who I want to be as a writer - so it's a terrifying*

privilege to have Porn Play debuting here! I began writing this play to explore the effects of pornography on women, but it has evolved into something much more delicate and intricate over the years. And to have the support and championing of the incredible Josie Rourke has made me even more excited for the production - something I didn't think was possible!"

Josie Rourke said, *"It's full of meaning for me to return to The Royal Court to direct a play that sits so squarely in the tradition and purpose of The Theatre Upstairs. The Royal Court is where I learned how deeply British Theatre values its playwrights and I'm honoured to be directing Sophia Chetin-Leuner's exceptional play and thrilled to be working with the remarkable Ambika Mod."*

ENDS.

Press contacts:

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Images can be downloaded [here](#).

Biographies can be downloaded [here](#).

Upcoming press performances:

Tuesday 8 April 2025, 7pm	<i>Manhunt</i> by Robert Icke	Jerwood Theatre Downstairs
Wednesday 30 April 2025, 7pm	<i>Scenes from a Repatriation</i> by Joel Tan	Jerwood Theatre Upstairs
Friday 23 May 2025, 7pm	<i>After the Act</i> by Billy Barrett and Ellice Stevens, composed by Frew	Jerwood Theatre Downstairs
Wednesday 18 June 2025, 7pm	<i>4.48 Psychosis</i> by Sarah Kane	Jerwood Theatre Upstairs
Thursday 4 September 2025, 7pm	<i>Deaf Republic</i> by Dead Centre and Zoë McWhinney, adapted from the book by Ilya Kaminsky	Jerwood Theatre Downstairs
Wednesday 10 September 2025, 7pm	<i>Cow Deer</i> co-created by Katie Mitchell, Nina Segal and Melanie Wilson	Jerwood Theatre Upstairs

Thursday 16 October 2025, 7pm	<i>The Unbelievers</i> by Nick Payne	Jerwood Theatre Downstairs
Thursday 13 November 2025, 7pm	<i>Porn Play</i> by Sophia Chetin-Leuner	Jerwood Theatre Upstairs

Listings Information:

After the Act

By Billy Barrett and Ellice Stevens

Composed by Frew

Directed by Billy Barrett

Jerwood Theatre Downstairs, Royal Court Theatre, Sloane Square, SW1W 8AS

Wednesday 21 May - Saturday 14 June 2025

Press night: Friday 23 May 2025, 7pm

Monday - Friday, 7.30pm and 2.30pm

Saturday, 1.30pm and 6.30pm

Post show talk: 27 May 2025, 7:30pm

Chilled Performance: Saturday 31 May 2025, 1.30pm

Captioned Performance: Wednesday 4 June 2025, 7.30pm

Standard Tickets £15 - £64

Concessions*

Under 30s***

Access £19 (plus a companion at the same rate)

***ID required. All discounts subject to availability.**

ECHO

By Nassim Soleimanpour

Directed by Omar Elerian

Jerwood Theatre Downstairs, Royal Court Theatre, Sloane Square, SW1W 8AS

Friday 27 June - Saturday 5 July 2025

Monday - Friday, 7.30pm and 2.30pm

Saturday, 1.30pm and 6.30pm

Post show talk: Tuesday 1 July, 7:30pm

Chilled Performance: Saturday 5 July 2025, 1.30pm

Captioned Performance: Thursday 3 July 2025, 2.30pm

Standard Tickets £15 - £64

Concessions*

Under 30s***

Access £19 (plus a companion at the same rate)

***ID required. All discounts subject to availability.**

Deaf Republic

By Dead Centre and Zoë McWhinney

Adapted from the book by Ilya Kaminsky

Jerwood Theatre Downstairs, Royal Court Theatre, Sloane Square, SW1W 8AS

Friday 29 August - Saturday 13 September 2025

Press night: Thursday 4 September 2025, 7pm

Monday - Friday, 7.30pm and 2.30pm

Saturday, 1.30pm and 6.30pm

Post show talk: Tuesday 9 September, 7:30pm
Chilled performance: Thursday 11 September, 7.30pm
Captioned Performance: Friday 12 September 2025, 7.30pm
BSL-interpreted Performance: Saturday 13 September 2025, 1.30pm
Audio-Described Performance: Saturday 13 September 2025, 1.30pm
Standard Tickets £15 - £64
Concessions*
Under 30s***
Access £19 (plus a companion at the same rate)

*ID required. All discounts subject to availability.

Cow | Deer

Co-created by Katie Mitchell, Nina Segal and Melanie Wilson
Jerwood Theatre Upstairs, Royal Court Theatre, Sloane Square, SW1W 8AS
Thursday 4 September - Saturday 11 October 2025
Press night: Wednesday 10 September 2025, 7pm
Monday - Friday, 7.45pm and 3pm
Saturday, 6.45pm and 2pm
Post show talk: Tuesday 16 September 2025, 7:45pm
Chilled Performance: Saturday 4 October 2025, 2pm
Captioned Performance: Tuesday 7 October 2025, 7.45pm
Audio-Described Performance: Saturday 27 September 2025, 2pm, with a touch tour 12:30pm
Babes in Arms Performance: Tuesday 30 September 2025, 3pm
Age UK Performance: Tuesday 7 October 2025, 3pm
Standard Tickets £15 - £30
Concessions*
Under 30s***
Access £19 (plus a companion at the same rate)

*ID required. All discounts subject to availability.

The Unbelievers

By Nick Payne
Directed by Marianne Elliott
Starring Nicola Walker
Jerwood Theatre Downstairs, Royal Court Theatre, Sloane Square, SW1W 8AS
Friday 10 October - Saturday 29 November 2025
Press night: Thursday 16 October 2025, 7pm
Monday - Friday, 7.30pm and 2.30pm
Saturday, 1.30pm and 6.30pm

Post show talk: Tuesday 21 October 2025, 7:30pm
Chilled Performance: Saturday 29 November 2025, 1.30pm
Captioned Performance: Saturday 8 November 2025, 1.30pm
BSL-interpreted Performance: Tuesday 4 November 2025, 7.30pm
Audio-Described Performance: Saturday 15 November 2025, 1.30pm with a touch tour at 12pm
Standard Tickets £15 - £64
Concessions*
Under 30s***
Access £19 (plus a companion at the same rate)

*ID required. All discounts subject to availability.

Porn Play

By Sophia Chetin-Leuner

Directed by Josie Rourke

Starring Ambika Mod

Jerwood Theatre Upstairs, Royal Court Theatre, Sloane Square, SW1W 8AS

Thursday 6 November - Saturday 13 December 2025

Press night: Thursday 13 November 2025, 7pm

Monday - Friday, 7.45pm and 3pm

Saturday, 6.45pm and 2pm

Post show talk: Tuesday 18 November 2025, 7:45pm

Chilled Performance: Saturday 29 November 2025, 2pm

Captioned Performance: Tuesday 9 December 2025, 7.45pm

Standard Tickets £15 - £30

Concessions*

Under 30s***

Access £19 (plus a companion at the same rate)

***ID required. All discounts subject to availability.**

PARTNERS

Breach Theatre

Breach is an award-winning theatre company led by Billy Barrett, Ellice Stevens and Dorothy Allen-Pickard, with producer Sally Cowling. They uncover captivating stories - from a 1970's experiment into teaching dolphins English, to a rape trial in Renaissance Rome, combining forensic documentary research with playfulness and passion. Shows include *The Beanfield* (2015) - Total Theatre Award winner; *TANK* (2016) - Scotsman Fringe First Winner; *It's True, It's True, It's True* (2018) - UNTAPPED Award, Scotsman Fringe First, The Stage Edinburgh Award winner and their previous musical collaboration with Frew, *Joan of Leeds* at New Diorama Theatre in 2019.

@breach_theatre | #AfterTheAct | www.breachtheatre.com

Dead Centre

Dead Centre is an award winning theatre company based in Dublin in 2012. They are Artistic Directors Ben Kidd and Bush Moukarzel, and Producer Tilly Taylor.

Their projects include *Illness as Metaphor* (2024), *To Be Machine (Version 2.0)* (2023), *Good Sex* (2022), *To Be a Machine (Version 1.0)* (2020), *Beckett's Room* (2019), *Hamnet* (2017), *Chekhov's First Play* (2015), and *LIPPY* (2013).

Their work has toured extensively around the world, including to Young Vic and Battersea Arts Centre (London), Schaubühne (Berlin), Dramaten (Stockholm), BAM (New York), Théâtre de Liège, Hong Kong Festival, and Seoul Performing Arts Festival.

They have also created new work at Schauspiel Stuttgart (The Education of Rudolf Steiner, 2024) Burgtheater, Vienna (The Interpretation of Dreams, 2020, Alles, was der Fall ist, 2021), Göteborgs Stadsteater (The Silence, 2021), and Schaubühne, Berlin (Shakespeare's Last Play, 2018).

Playful Productions

Founded by Matthew Byam Shaw, Nia Janis and Nick Salmon in 2010, Playful Productions is one of the most eminent independent theatre producers and full-service general management companies in the West End.

As Producer productions include Macbeth (Harold Pinter); Dr. Strangelove (Noël Coward and Bord Gáis, Dublin); The Artist (Theatre Royal Plymouth); The Unfriend (Criterion and Wyndham's); The House of Bernarda Alba (as Producer – National Theatre); Accidental Death of an Anarchist (Sheffield, Lyric Hammersmith and Theatre Royal Haymarket); A Little Life (as Producer – Richmond, Harold Pinter and Savoy); Charlie and the Chocolate Factory – The Musical (UK & Ireland Tour); Good (Harold Pinter) and Get Up Stand Up! The Bob Marley Musical (Lyric).

As General Manager productions include Wicked (Apollo Victoria, UK & Ireland Tours and International Tour); Moulin Rouge! The Musical (also Executive Producer - Piccadilly); MJ (also Executive Producer - Prince Edward); Wild Rose (also Executive Producer - Edinburgh Lyceum, March 2025); Next To Normal (Wyndham's) and Come From Away (Abbey Theatre, Dublin and Phoenix).