

Sardines

for amateur theatre... in-print, online, community

LOCKDOWN UPDATE no.10

PANTO.DEMIC

A LOCKDOWN MINI-PANTOMIME BY
TOM WHALLEY

FREE ZOOM POCKET PANTO

With ZOOM arguably keeping us all sane at the moment, you now have the chance to perform *PANTO.DEMIC* - a pocket pantomime to be performed and/or recorded on 'Zoom' (or any similar online multi-window video app)... **100% FREE.**

Bring your society back together virtually with this free-to-use, three-hand sketch for Dame, Comic and Villain with the option to add a full ensemble.

"Dame Fanny Facemask is hankering for a hunk to be locked down with though she's stuck with her hapless son 'Pee-Pee'. Sorting through their weekly shop (at a safe distance) they're interrupted by the dastardly pirate, Captain Covid..."

Offered by Tom Whalley Pantomimes, the use of this material is free though you are asked to credit 'TOM WHALLEY PANTOMIMES' and use any funds raised solely to support your theatre group or a charity of your choice.



THE FUTURE OF THEATRE

COMMENT:

With the easing of lockdown restrictions presenting more than the odd head-scratching moment for shops, schools and workplaces, it would appear that the hope and expectation of 'leisure' pursuits - which require the gathering of crowds (concerts, festivals, cinema, gyms... and THEATRE!) - also re-opening is still a far-off fantasy in many people's eyes.

Nobody really knows if and when a 'spike' or 'second wave' of Covid-19 will strike the UK, and with the highest related death-rate throughout the whole of Europe already hanging around our necks, the non-idiotic members of our society will be extremely cautious to throw any social-distancing measures to the wind. (unfortunately, there is a worryingly high number of people who have wasted no time in filling the beaches, parks and open spaces at the first signs of Summer.)

Social distancing will make the re-opening of theatres virtually impossible, with queues for the toilets alone possibly taking hours - and that's after the most enthusiastic customers (those who will actually buy tickets) have arrived even earlier to spend just as much time getting into the venue in the first place. Then, of course, there will be the need to safely spread the audience out - and, in doing so, vastly restricting the capacity to such an extent where it simply won't pay for theatres to open the doors in the first place... and this is just the audience!

What about the production itself? How will people rehearse? What if the play itself requires close interaction between the actors rather than social distancing? How will the backstage crew work efficiently and safely in restricted circumstances? Such activities would be under the closest public scrutiny from society, media and social media waiting to rip into the slightest slip-up.

This Lockdown Update no.10 is the first of the Summer, and comes out just five months before the professional panto season (usually the busiest time of the year) needs to open its shows, so how will the amateur/non-professional sector follow? Ironically, with most members of non-professional groups having outside careers and income streams, it is likely that a high percentage of the amateur sector would be able to survive. But what the 'new normal' will be like is another thing? Even the term 'new normal' sounds post-apocalyptic.

Could the future of theatre see the total collapse of the professional theatre industry? The government cannot and will not pay company wages forever and has already announced that August will see the second and 'final' payments for self-employed and freelancers. Such a collapse would signal a devastating time for the amateur sector; after all, who would we aspire to then? Would non-professional society memberships be flooded with ex-professionals looking to practise their first love? Our most esteemed drama schools would pretty much become obsolete in such a scenario.

Let us hope it doesn't come to that! Things eventually got back to normal after the horrendous death-toll from the post World War I pandemic, it just might take a generation to do it. So can we last until a vaccine is developed? Can Pantomime?

Give us your thoughts [HERE](#)

Theatres Trust Warning

Theatres Trust, the public advisory body for theatres, has warned that more theatre operators will go bankrupt without continued support from the government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

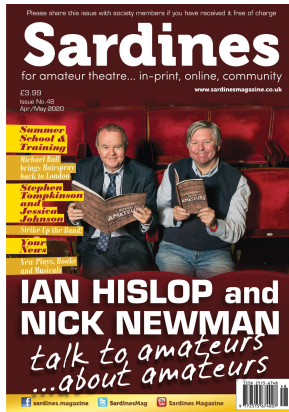
On Friday 29 May, the Chancellor announced that from August employers will be required to make increasing contributions until the scheme ends in October.

The government scheme enabling employers to furlough staff has been a vital lifeline for theatre operators who lost their entire ticket revenue overnight when theatres closed in March. Organisations have been drawing on their limited reserves to meet operating costs as the lockdown continues but research by Theatres Trust shows that of the 581 theatres that are charities in the UK, 59% had less than three months operating costs in reserves and research by UK Theatre / SOLT identifies that 70% of theatres will run out of money by the end of 2020. The tapering of the Job Retention Scheme will only serve to accelerate these timetables and lead to further closures. The employer contributions will make redundancies throughout the sector inevitable and the ending of the scheme and resulting liabilities will close theatre businesses.

Theatres Trust Director Jon Morgan says "Four theatre operators have already gone in to administration since the lockdown began. Unfortunately, we expect this number to rise rapidly unless the government provides urgent support for the sector. While tapering of the furlough scheme makes sense in other parts of the economy as businesses reopen, theatres remain closed and the majority will be unable to operate viably with social distancing measures in place. We are calling on the government to extend the Job Retention Scheme in its full form to protect our nation's enviable theatres and the people who work in them, until such a time as theatres can reopen fully and safely."

Theatres Trust provides free advice and support to ALL types of theatre, professional and amateur, which has included advising theatres on adapting their business plans in light of the pandemic and how to maintain buildings safely during lockdown.





Our pre-lockdown issue FREE and delivered to your door!

On its own 100% FREE. No catches. No gimmicks [HERE!](#) (Please include your postal address)

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(Use code: isolationoffer)

Extra free issue by extending an existing 1 or 2-year subscription [HERE!](#)
(Use code: isolationextension)

All offers are inclusive of postage & packing.

All cards securely accepted including PayPal accounts.

NOTE: Subscriptions are NOT affected by the unavoidable break in production.

Our next issue (no.49) will simply be delayed - rather than cancelled) until theatres begin to open once more.

Meanwhile, please keep sending us news of how your society is staying connected and keeping positive [HERE](#)



Wilde Weekend in Teddington

Teddington Theatre Club to present a *Wilde Weekend* on its [YouTube channel](#)

The theatres may not be open for business, but Teddington Theatre Club is performing some of Oscar Wilde's greatest works for free during its *Wilde Weekend* on 27 & 28 June 2020.



Running non-stop from the afternoon of Saturday, 27 June until the afternoon of Sunday, 28 over 60 actors will take part in the reading of Oscar Wilde's rich canon of work which will include five of his best known plays including *An Ideal Husband*, *Lady Windermere's Fan* and *The Importance of Being Earnest* together with a selection of poems, letters and essays and his two unfinished plays, one of which has never been staged.

Lottie Walker, Artistic Director for Teddington Theatre Club said, "This is an ambitious endeavour and requires a huge team effort, but TTC has never shied away from a challenge! There will be something for everyone and we really hope the local community get behind this and support what will be a weekend of first class entertainment."

TTC will run *Wilde Weekend* via Zoom, but be broadcast live to the general public on TTC's [YouTube channel](#). Members will use their collective skills to act, direct and manage the *Wilde Weekend* and rehearsals are already underway.

Oscar Wilde belongs in the pantheon of the greatest writers ever to grace the English language. Last week marked 125 years since Oscar Wilde was convicted of gross indecency and sentenced to two years hard labour for the simple crime of being gay. Over the following two years, Wilde was imprisoned in three separate prisons, most notably Reading Gaol, which inspired his poem *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* which will be included in the schedule.

Landmark 25 Appeal

As part of TTC's own contribution to the **Landmark 25 Appeal**, the *Wilde Weekend* will consist of 25 hours of Oscar Wilde content and the full running schedule will be announced nearer the time.

New Franchisees!

***Dragons' Den*-backed theatre school franchise announces a number of new franchisees who have completed their training and are ready to open their**

own theatre school.

Even through a global pandemic, new Razzamataz franchisees have come on board despite COVID-19 and the uncertainty that surrounds it.

Like all schools across the UK, Razzamataz has been working tirelessly to prepare for a COVID-secure reopening when it is permitted to do so.

Founder and MD Denise Hutton-Gosney, along with her Head Office team, have been working closely with the Children's Activities Association and other franchise networks in the sector to collaborate and have a clear policy for a secure re-opening. For now, all the schools have taken their high standards of performing arts training online together with multiple opportunities for students via workshops with professional performers from West End shows.

For the new schools in the network, they will of course be following the same stringent re-opening procedures as well as providing online classes until it is safe to return to the venues. There are new schools in **Oxford, Wolverhampton** and **Wakefield** as well as new Principals in **Wimbledon** and **Penrith**.

For the first time ever, the week-long franchise training was conducted remotely via Zoom, allowing new franchisees the opportunity to learn every aspect of running a theatre school from the comfort and safety of their own home.

Razzamataz has invested thousands of pounds in creating an online platform, which has enabled the schools to continue to offer an excellent standard in performing arts training. This well-considered and researched strategy has provided students with high quality, teacher-led sessions that offers continuity in their training and a lifeline to Principals who can continue to trade, learn new skills and reach out to many more young people in their communities.

[Click For More](#)

Aina Gomez Piza, Principal Razzamataz Oxford:

"The training was very comprehensive with a lot of information and actionable instructions too."

Danielle Campbell, Principal Razzamataz Wolverhampton:

"The training we received was of a really high quality and was really informative. All bases were covered and if anything wasn't, I was more than confident to ask and knew it would be covered until I had a full understanding. I can already see the amazing network and support system that Razzamataz prides itself on and I'm really excited to be a part of that."

Helen Mayes, Principal Razzamataz Wakefield:

"I finished the week raring to go, filled with excitement for the future and feeling so proud to be joining the Razzamataz family. The week was fantastic; great training, great presentation and I enjoyed it so much. I am so proud to be joining such a fantastic organisation and I can't wait to get started."

Asha Richardson, Principal Razzamataz Penrith:

"I feel fully equipped and ready to launch my own Razzamataz School now. The training days

were packed full of information, we've been give so many resources and everyone was so knowledgeable. It was a wonderful four days and I'm so thankful I could tune in from the comfort of my own home while having my little boy Lennox at home too."

Heather Hurd Sinclair, Principal Razzamataz Wimbledon:

"Charlotte at Head Office was amazing. She made everyone feel comfortable and able to ask anything and she would always know the answer too!"



Join the Big Sing

Do you want to break free?! Join Music in Offices' Virtual Big Sing in support of The Lord Mayor's Appeal for the ultimate lockdown release!

They are looking for as many singers as possible to belt out the Queen classic *I Want to Break Free* with them and they'll be combining all the recordings for a brilliant final virtual performance.



Here's how it works:

Download the score from their website and learn your part.

Record your part (they'll provide support here if needed)

Upload your part by Friday 19 June

Join the online Viewing Party of the final performance on Thursday. 25 June at 7pm

Everyone welcome - don't worry about not sounding good enough on your own – remember your voice will be blended with many others. Your best is definitely good enough. Freddie Mercury style high heels, wig and Hoover optional!

For further information on how to take part please head [HERE](#)

The Benefits of Lockdown

by Jacquee Storzynski-Toll

This lockdown seems to be going on and on, despite the announcement of easing. However, apart from getting a tan in the garden it has given me time to write. I have decided to jump on the bandwagon and write a short film screenplay. Before lockdown, half of the local actors were busy making shorts, and entering them into film festivals, so I thought I would join them. Of course I'm not in the Sundance Festival league yet, nor ever will be. At least it is a project to work on.

The other advantage is we now have all the theatre transmissions from NT Live, The Globe, and various other theatres, as well as musicals. Although, I have been disappointed that some of the latter are TV productions not stage shows. It does mean that I have seen shows that I'd missed before, some I wanted to see again, and plays that I probably would never have bothered to go and see at all. As a result, I've seen some marvellous things, in particular, *This House* by James Graham. I'm not interested in politics per se, but thought it might be an interesting watch, and I was blown away. It was such a cleverly constructed play, set in the seventies, when there was a hung parliament. It was based on real events, although the interaction between Labour and Conservative MPs was fictionalised. It also sent me off to investigate what really happened, and to find out something about the Government Whips, played by Phil Daniels, Reece Dinsdale and Charles Edwards.

I was also looking forward to the production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* with Gillian Anderson. However, although she gave an excellent performance as Blanche Du Bois, I found her affected Deep South accent was unnecessarily too strong. When arguments started with her sister and her brother in law, it became a screeching match, and irritated me so much, that I turned it off. Although, there was a nice, understated performance by Vanessa Kirby as the sister, Stella, and an interesting modern revolving stage.

Not only have I seen some excellent professional productions, my amateur drama group, Lindisfarne, has been able to transmit some of our own on YouTube. It was quite straight forward when we uploaded our *Romeo and Juliet* or *The Miser* as they are out of copyright, but it became more difficult with plays by playwrights such as Joe Orton, Peter Whelan and Alan Bennett as there are legal repercussions. As I've mentioned previously, Ray Cooney is the group's patron, and he gave permission for his plays to be transmitted, but we are on unsure ground with the others.

However, thanks to Samuel French (now known as Concord Theatricals), who has given permission for some of them to be transmitted for a fee, I can look forward to seeing again, plays that I directed. The first one being *The Accrington Pals*, which we performed in 2014, when everyone was commemorating the start of WWI. There were some brilliant performances in it, and strange as it may seem, I was so happy at the end when the audience left in tears. Even the leading actress stood in tears at the curtain call. I did have a slight argument with the sound man, who wanted to play cheery WWI songs as the audience left, but I won the argument playing Michael Ball singing *Run*, which wasn't that well known at the time.

Following on there will be my production of *Loot* and also Lindisfarne's production of *The History Boys*, which swept the board at the Thurrock Drama Festival. We're also hoping to set up a Zoom read through of *One Man, Two Guvvners* which we hope to do next year, that is if I haven't thrown my iPad up the garden as it won't log on and crashes out.

As our local theatres are still closed and look as though they will be for some time, it appears that

2020 will be a dead year for professional and amateur productions. Even Jethro Tull, whom I interviewed before lockdown was scheduled to appear locally, but has cancelled his tour, and our amateur spring production has been rescheduled for the autumn. However, it is still not certain it will take place as the theatre cannot confirm when, or if, it will open this year. Meanwhile, my production of *The Taming of the Shrew* has been cancelled, and is unlikely to go ahead next year, especially as most of the actors were unhappy that it wasn't politically correct.

It definitely is an unhappy time for actors, particularly young, professional ones that thought their big moment had come. Especially if they were scheduled to appear in a West End show or touring, and are now out of work. Cameron Macintosh has just announced that the tour of *Love Never Dies* is definitely off, and it will probably be the first of many. Some big theatres may also be folding. The Globe has already announced that they're in dire straits. However, it would be an excellent thing if some of the big stars with their vast earnings salted away, actually coughed up. They're quick to get publicity by sticking up videos asking us all to support this or that, by donating money, but it would be good to see more of them doing it themselves. I know Cameron donated £5 for each purchase of the download of the concert performance of *Les Mis*, but he could have donated the whole amount. Additionally, he could have paid his staff whilst the theatres are closed, with his millions it would have been a drop in the ocean. Rant over.



Free Online Storytime Series

**TARA ARTS PRESENTS TARA TALES CELEBRATING MAGICAL STORIES
FROM THE PANCHATANTRA IN A FREE ONLINE STORYTIME SERIES FOR
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**



Tara Arts, the award-winning multicultural theatre arts organisation, has announced *Tara Tales*, a new series of online storytime, bringing to life famous Indian fables from *The Panchatantra* performed by **Nitin Ganatra** (*EastEnders*), **Medhavi Patel** (*Kidulthood*), and **Sita Thomas** (Channel 5's *Milkshake!*).

The Panchatantra is an ancient collection of Indian animal fables, believed to have originated more than 2,500 years ago, written in Sanskrit by **Vishnu Sharma** to educate and entertain the children of the Indian Royal family. Tara Tales presents stories from the collection which have been newly adapted by emerging young and award-winning writer Carmen Gaur. The readings have been performed and filmed during lockdown for audiences in the UK and are also accessible worldwide. These are: ***The Monkey King and the Mangoes*** performed by **Medhavi Patel**, ***The Donkey and the Rooster*** performed by **Nitin Ganatra** and ***The Loyal Mongoose*** performed by **Sita Thomas**. Each of the stories uses animal characters to explore moral themes, including of friendship and courage, love and loyalty, kindness and wisdom.

Tara Tales is suitable for everyone aged 6 years and over and can be seen [HERE](#).

The Monkey King and the Mangoes and *The Donkey and the Rooster* are now available and *The Loyal Mongoose* will be released in addition on 12 June. Further tales will be announced in due course.



Virtual Concert Tomorrow!

**AARON LEE LAMBERT, AIMIE ATKINSON, LUCIE JONES & JAMES BOURNE
FORM PART OF THE LINE UP FOR A VIRTUAL CELEBRATION OF THE
LOSERVILLE COMPOSER ELLIOT DAVIS**



The Barn Theatre has announced that Busted and Son of Dork co-founder James Bourne will join an all-star West End line up for their third virtual concert, *The Barn Theatre Presents: The Music of Elliot Davis*, which will celebrate the work of *Loserville* composer Elliot Davis.

The concert, which will be hosted by Barn Theatre producer Jamie Chapman Dixon, is the third edition of the Barn Theatre in Cirencester's virtual concert series, The Barn Presents, which celebrates the work of British musical theatre composers.

The virtual celebration will feature performances of songs from many of Elliot Davis' musicals including the Olivier Award nominated musical *Loserville*, *Out There* and *Best Friends and Butterflies*.

The concert line up consists of: Olivier Award-nominee **Aimie Atkinson** (*Six*, *Pretty Woman*), **Luke Bayer** (*Everybody's Talking About Jamie*, *Soho Cinders*), **Tsemaye Bob-Egbe** (*Tina*, *Beautiful*), Busted and Son of Dork singer **James Bourne** (co-writer of *Loserville* and *Out There*), *The X Factor* and *Eurovision* star **Lucie Jones** (*Waitress*, *Les Misérables*), **Aaron Lee Lambert** (*Hamilton*, *Sunset Boulevard*), **Sam Lupton** (*Avenue Q*, *Wicked*), 2020 musical theatre graduate **Jordan McMahon** (*Bard From The Barn*), **Jamie Muscato** (*Heathers*, *Spring Awakening*), **Aaron Sidwell** (*EastEnders*, *Wicked*) and **Jos Slovick** (*1917*, *Spring Awakening*).

The concert, which is released on the Barn Theatre's **Facebook** and **YouTube** channels on Saturday, 6 June 2020 at 7:30pm BST, will see Elliot Davis chat with Barn Theatre producer Jamie Chapman Dixon about his career so far, the creation process behind his songs and special appearances from some of the performers to discuss their experience rehearsing and recording from home.

THE MADNESS OF GEORGE III

THE NATIONAL THEATRE ANNOUNCES the Nottingham Playhouse production of *THE MADNESS OF GEORGE III* TO BE STREAMED ON YOUTUBE AS PART OF NATIONAL THEATRE AT HOME



Alan Bennett's epic multi award winning drama *The Madness of George III*, will be streamed on 11 June via the National Theatre's [YouTube](#) channel as part of **National Theatre at Home**. The 2018 broadcast from Nottingham Playhouse marked the first collaboration between the two organisations, and is the first production from outside of London to be streamed as part of the National Theatre at Home series. The production will be available to watch on demand for seven days. More productions for National Theatre at Home will be announced at a later date.

Directed by Nottingham Playhouse's Artistic Director Adam Penford, the cast includes Olivier award-winners **Mark Gatiss** (*Dracula*, *The League of Gentlemen*, *Doctor Who*) and **Adrian Scarborough** (*Gavin and Stacey*, *Upstairs Downstairs*, *After the Dance*), alongside **Debra Gillett** (*Call the Midwife*, *Doctor Who*).

It's 1788 and George III is one of the most powerful men in the world, but his behaviour is becoming increasingly erratic as his mind unravels at a dramatic pace. As the Queen and Prime Minister attempt to hide the king's illness, ambitious politicians and a scheming prince begin a power struggle, endangering the stability of the crown.

THE GREAT GATSBY RE-OPENING

**PRODUCERS TO TRIAL RE-OPENING OF THE GREAT GATSBY THIS AUTUMN
WITH GATSBY'S PARTY RE-IMAGINED AS A 1920s MASQUERADE BALL
ENABLING AUDIENCES TO WEAR MASKS AND GLOVES WITH TEMPERATURE
CHECKS AND REDUCED CAPACITY TO ENABLE SOCIAL DISTANCING**

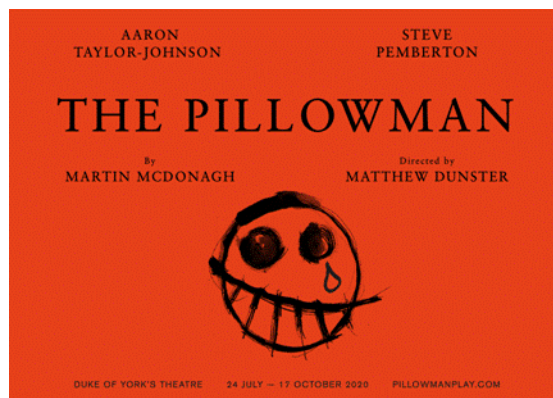


The Guild of Misrule and Immersive Everywhere's critically acclaimed *THE GREAT GATSBY*, created and directed by Alexander Wright- which had previously set a record as the UK's longest running immersive production - is planning to re-open at West End venue IMMERSIVE | LDN on THURSDAY, 1 OCTOBER 2020. As with all UK theatres and productions, the show was forced to close down in March, due to the coronavirus pandemic and subsequent UK shutdown.

More info & tickets [HERE](#)

THE PILLOWMAN DELAYED

The Pillowman, written by the multi Olivier, BAFTA and Academy Award-winning playwright and screen-writer Martin McDonagh, which was due to make it West End premiere this Summer, is to be delayed.



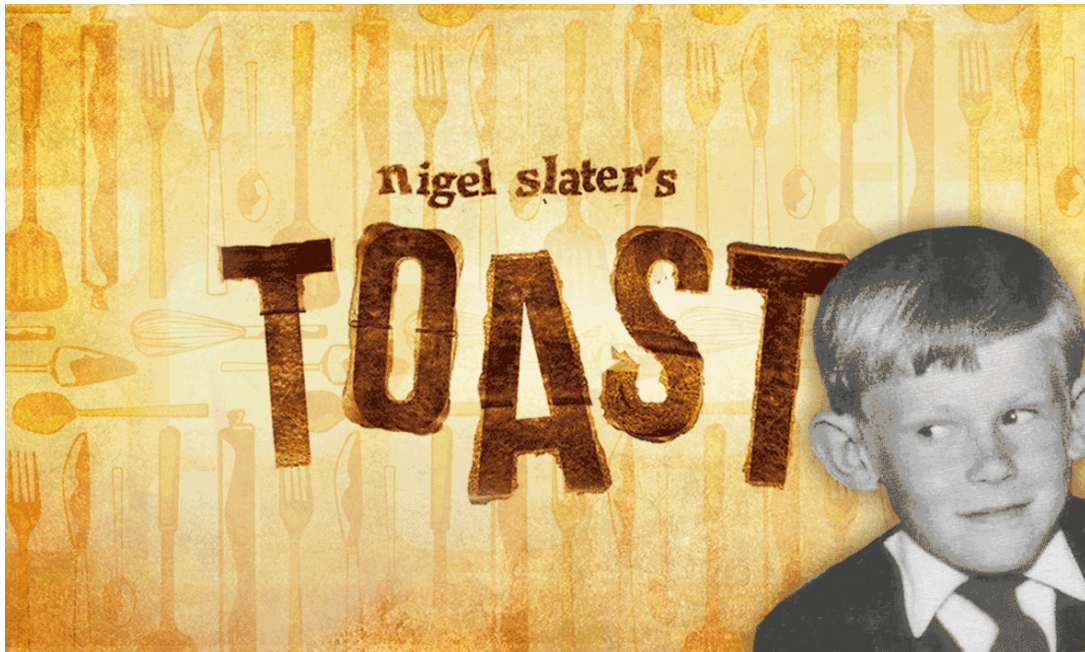
The Pillowman was due to begin performances at the Duke of York's Theatre on Friday, 24 July, for a 12-week season. Due to the current global situation, the production is now postponed and new season details and all further information will be announced at a later date.

Ticket holders do not need to do anything, the point of purchase will be in touch with ticket holders soon.

More [HERE](#)

A Slice of TOAST at Home

Following its hugely successful 2019 West End run and national tour, *Nigel Slater's Toast* returns to the Lawrence Batley Theatre as a brand-new online play for audiences to enjoy from the comfort of their own home.



Available to listen to, or watch as an animated film, all ticketholders will receive a recipe card from Nigel Slater enabling them to immerse themselves in this sensory and heart-warming play where Nigel's flavour and stories come to life.

Featuring the original West End cast of *Toast*, **Giles Cooper**, a close friend of Nigel himself who will be recording his lines in his London home where Nigel lived in when he began writing his book, will be reprising his role at **Nigel Slater**. The cast also includes **Lizzie Muncey** (*Twelfth Night*, National Theatre) as Mum and **Stephen Ventura** (*The 39 Steps*, West End) playing Dad. Joan will be played by **Marie Lawrence** (*Murder in Successville*, BBC3) with **Jake Ferretti** (*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, Apollo Theatre/National) as Josh.

More [HERE](#)

Hackney Talk

Hackney Empire is producing new online content to connect with its community and attempt to process what is happening in the world.

Alongside free online workshops and masterclasses is a new video series titled *Yamin Choudury: In Conversation With...*



Throughout lockdown, Hackney Empire’s Artistic Director Yamin Choudury will be regularly joined by a new guest from the creative industries to have a frank, open discussion about how the global pandemic is reshaping how we make art, the purpose of art at time like this and what it means to be an artist or creative right now. These conversations, dealing with the physical, emotional and mental realities of the Covid-19 crisis and offering practical advice for when a “new normal” emerges, are streamed for free online.

Guests so far have included songwriter, composer and producer Renell Shaw; Haydn Corrodus from career progression, mentoring and coaching company WeAreStripes; poet, academic and writer of the Royal Court’s Poet in Da Corner Debris Stevenson and her collaborator, MC and record producer, Jammz; founder of the Hackney-based charity Safe House London Bisola Popoola and founder of creative recruitment agency LEVILE Ola Christian. New videos are released on Hackney Empire’s Instagram and YouTube channel regularly, with more guests to come in future weeks.

In Conversation With... has been created as part of Hackney Empire’s Creative Futures programme. Hackney Empire’s Creative Futures programme is designed to nurture and provide support for free, fuelling the next generation of artists, activists and creative entrepreneurs. Regardless of background or ability, Hackney Empire’s Creative Futures programme offers young people a chance to have their voice heard.

Watch [HERE](#)



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