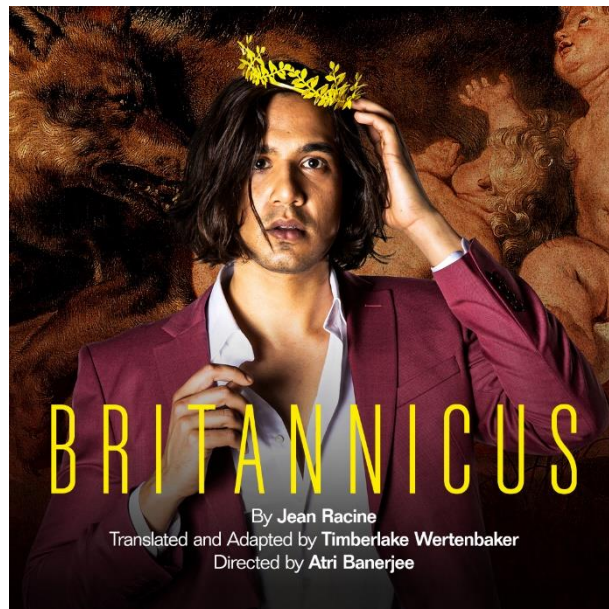




Press Release
Friday 22 April 2022
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FULL CASTING ANNOUNCED FOR POLITICAL THRILLER *BRITANNICUS*, ON FROM 26 MAY TO 25 JUNE



- *It's a Sin's* Nathaniel Curtis to star in the title role of Britannicus with William Robinson as Nero, Sirine Saba as Agrippina, Hanna Khogali as Albine, Helena Lymbery as Burrhus, Nigel Barrett as Narcissus and Shyvonne Ahmmad as Junia
- Jean Racine's Roman tragedy is translated and adapted by Timberlake Wertenbaker and directed by the award-winning Atri Banerjee
- *Britannicus* runs at the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre from 26 May to 25 June, with opening night on 01 June. Tickets at www.lyric.co.uk

Full casting is announced today for Jean Racine's Roman tragedy *Britannicus*, translated and adapted by **Timberlake Wertenbaker** and directed by award-winning director **Atri Banerjee**, in a thrilling, new production exploring monarchy, succession, dictatorship and depravity, set in modern day Rome. *Britannicus* runs at the **Lyric Hammersmith Theatre** from **26 May to 25 June 2022**, with opening night for press on **01 June**.

The production features **Shyvonne Ahmmad**, seen as Ash Majee in UKTV series *Annika*, as Junia; **Nigel Barrett**, from the award-winning Edinburgh Festival hit *Pops*, plays Narcissus; **Nathaniel Curtis**, best known for playing Ash Mukherjee in the hit Channel 4 series *It's A Sin*, in the title role of Britannicus; **Hanna Khogali**, seen in Paines Plough's *You Bury Me*, is Albine; **Helena Lymbery**, recently seen in *Measure for Measure* at Shakespeare's Globe, plays Burrhus; **Sirine Saba**, who was recently seen as the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet* at Shakespeare's Globe, plays their mother Agrippina; and **William Robinson**, direct from *Bacon* at Finborough Theatre, as Emperor Nero.

Jean Racine's tragedy is translated and adapted by **Timberlake Wertenbaker**, the Olivier and New York Drama Critics Award winning writer of *Our Country's Good*. This enthralling adaptation of *Britannicus* marks the first major London production in 10 years and is directed by **Atri Banerjee**, winner of The Stage Debut Award for Best Director and recently named in their list of top theatremakers to look out for in 2022.

Atri Banerjee, Director, said: *"I'm so thrilled to be directing this new production of Britannicus and to be working with brilliant collaborators across cast and creative team to bring Racine's epic political thriller to life. From antiquity to the present day, we've always felt the corrosive effects of unchecked authoritarianism. Right now, we feel them in war in Ukraine; election in France; parties in our very own seats of power as the country is ravaged by pandemic. Britannicus dramatises the point when a "good" leader turns bad and so has never felt more relevant. Racine drew upon the political landscape of 17th century France to tell a story of 1st century Rome: in it, we see 21st century Britain.*

Britannicus makes the political personal and the personal political. It's an honour to work with the legendary Timberlake Wertenbaker on her bold, muscular adaptation. I'm so excited by the vision and scope of our production, and I have no doubt that audiences will be gripped by what we have in store for them."

Timberlake Wertenbaker, Translator and Adaptor, said: *"I was actually translating Racine's Phedre when I caught a production of Britannicus in Paris. I hadn't known the play well before and I was stunned by its analysis of ambition and the corruption of power. I was intrigued by the complex and changeable relationships between the characters, something Racine does brilliantly. It's a very political play and seems to speak to times of political turmoil."*

Rachel O'Riordan, Artistic Director of the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre, said: *"I'm delighted to welcome Atri Banerjee to direct on our main stage at the Lyric as part of our continuing 2022 season. His extraordinary vision and talent will no doubt elevate another essential work from the always impressive Timberlake Wertenbaker. Britannicus is a historical story of political power and self-interest yet proves ever more poignant today."*

'Tyranny always promises good things.' Power and succession are in the very bones of Rome. Agrippina – desperate to cling onto power – has ensured her son, Nero, is the Roman Emperor, in place of his half-brother and the rightful heir, Britannicus. But the corridors of power and Nero's own obsession turn a once virtuous ruler into an oppressive tyrant. This noble tragedy explores monarchy, dictatorship and depravity.

Britannicus is written by **Jean Racine**, translated and adapted by **Timberlake Wertenbaker**, directed by **Atri Banerjee**, set and costume design by **Rosanna Vize**, lighting design by **Lee Curran**, composition and sound design by **Jasmin Kent Rodgman**, movement direction by **Jennifer Jackson** and casting by **Nadine Rennie CDG**.

Biographies

Cast

Shyvonne Ahmmad - Junia

Over the summer of 2021 Shyvonne Ahmmad understudied the leading role of Marianne in the West End revival of *Constellations* (Donmar Warehouse). Prior to that, Shyvonne played Ash Majee in UKTV original series *Annika*. During her training at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Shyvonne played Sol in Tim Crouch's play *Total Immediate Collective Imminent Terrestrial Salvation*. Other theatre includes: *Interference* (National Theatre of Scotland).

Nigel Barrett - Narcissus

Nigel Barrett received a Stage Award at the Edinburgh Festival for his performance in *Pops* (Jake Orr Productions) and The Samuel Beckett Theatre Award for his performance in *The Body* at the Barbican. He recently worked on *The Living Newspaper* playing King George III and Boris Johnson for the Royal Court. Other theatre includes: *Contains Violence* (Lyric Hammersmith Theatre); *Richard III, Kingdom Come* (RSC); *Get Stuff Break Free* (National Theatre); *Attack Of The Wolfdogs, The Show In Which Hopefully Nothing Happens, Baddies* (Unicorn Theatre); *There Has Possibly Been An Incident, The Mysteries* (Manchester Royal Exchange); *Pericles* (Regents Park). Television includes: *Doctors, Coast, Casualty, Crimewatch* (BBC); *Bald Man In A Boat* (Boat Productions); *Dawson's Creek* (Channel 4). Film includes: *Robin Hood* (Squint Opera); *Better Than Life* (Coney /Telecaster); *Cycles* (Toynbee Films); *The Gospel Of Us* (Welsh Film Council). Radio includes: *A Song For Edmond Shakespeare, The Influence, How To Survive The Roman Empire, Richard Tyrone Jones' Big Heart* (BBC Radio 4).

Nathaniel Curtis - Britannicus

Nathaniel Curtis is best known for playing Ash Mukherjee in the Channel 4 hit series *It's A Sin*. He will also star in the upcoming Netflix series *The Witcher: Blood Origin*. Theatre includes: *The Tempest, Romeo in Romeo and Juliet* for which he received an Offie nomination (UK Tour, Open Bar Theatre); *Pride and Prejudice* (Regent's Park Open Air Theatre).

Hanna Khogali – Albine

Hanna Khogali recently performed at Hull Truck, originating the role of Beatrice in Richard Bean's *71 Coltman Street*. Other theatre includes: *Brief Encounter* (Watermill Theatre); *You Bury Me* (Plaines Plough); *Once* (UK Tour, Adam Spiegel Productions); *Swallows and Amazons* (York Theatre Royal); *Rags* (UK Premiere, Aria Entertainment); *Broken Wings* (The Other Palace); *Moll Flanders* (Mercury Theatre); *Good Fit* (Southwark Playhouse).

Helena Lymbery - Burrhus

Helena Lymbery recently appeared on stage as the Duke in Blanche McIntyre's *Measure for Measure* (Shakespeare's Globe). Other roles include as Mrs Walters in BBC One series *Doctor Foster* and in the original West End company of *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*. Other theatre includes: *Watership Down, The Magic Carpet* (Lyric Hammersmith Theatre); *Run Sister Run* (Soho/Sheffield/Paines Plough); *Queen Margaret* (Royal Exchange); *Pity* (Royal Court); *Mr Gum and the Dancing Bear, Treasure Island, Attempts On Her Life, This House, The Cat in the Hat, Iphigenia At Aulis* (National Theatre); *The Wolves Are Coming For You* (Pentabus). TV includes: *Father Brown Mysteries, Oliver Twist*. Film includes: *London Road* (Cuba Pictures).

William Robinson - Nero

William Robinson most recently appeared on stage in *Bacon* at the Finborough Theatre and also starred in the Apple TV series *Masters of the Air*. Other theatre includes: *Romeo and Juliet* (Young Shakespeare Company); *A Rabbit Climbed A Ladder To The Moon* (Trah and Chips); *Target Man* (Sliding Tackle/King's Head Theatre). Television includes: *Cuffs* (Tiger Aspect/BBC). Film includes: *Femme* (Agile Films Production); *Queens* (Orange Door Productions); *Final Reflections* (Studio4Films).

Sirine Saba - Agrippina

Sirine Saba has worked extensively in theatre and television with notable recent stage roles including the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet* (Shakespeare's Globe) and Clarice Orsini in *Botticelli In The Fire* (Hampstead). Other theatre includes: *The Winter's Tale*, *King Lear* (Shakespeare's Globe); *Wife* (Kiln), *Goats*, *Fireworks* (Royal Court); *The Haystack*, *iHo*, (Hampstead Theatre); *Why It's Kicking Off Everywhere* (Young Vic); *Another World*, *Nation*, *Sparkleshark* (National Theatre); *The Invisible* (Bush); *Twelfth Night*, *The Taming Of The Shrew* (Regents Park); *Baghdad Wedding* (Soho), *Midnight's Children*, *The Tempest*, *Tales From Ovid*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (RSC). She recently narrated *Slime: A Natural History* for Book Of The Week on Radio 4. Her TV credits include *Midsommer Murders*, *Cleaning Up*, *Unforgotten Series 2* (ITV); *Doctor Who*, *Holby City*, *EastEnders* (BBC). Film credits include the leading role of Maggie in *The Black Forest* (Urban Fox, Nominated for Michael Powell Award).

Creative Team

Atri Banerjee – Director

Atri Banerjee was recently named in *The Stage* 25 list of theatremakers to look out for in 2022 and beyond. This year, his work will be seen across the UK in three different productions; earlier this spring, he directed *Kes* in a co-production between Octagon Theatre Bolton and Theatre by the Lake Keswick, and following *Britannicus* this summer, he will direct *The Glass Menagerie* at Manchester's Royal Exchange Theatre. In 2019, he won *The Stage* Debut Award for Best Director and was nominated for the UK Theatre Award for Best Director for his production of *Hobson's Choice* at the Royal Exchange. Atri trained at Birkbeck and on the National Theatre Directors' Course. He was previously Trainee Director at the Royal Exchange and a Resident Director at the Almeida Theatre. Other directing credits include *Harm* (Bush Theatre), *ERROR ERROR ERROR* (Marlowe Theatre/RSC), *Hidden Fires* and *Name, Place, Animal, Thing* (both Almeida), *Europe* (LAMDA) and *Utopia* (Royal Exchange). Film directing credits include *Harm* for the BBC *Lights Up* season on BBC Four with the Bush Theatre. Assistant/Associate Director credits at the Royal Exchange include *West Side Story*, *The Mysteries* (also tour), *Happy Days*, *The Almighty Sometimes*, *Jubilee* (also Lyric Hammersmith Theatre) and *Our Town*. Other Assistant/Associate Director credits include *The Nico Project* (Manchester International Festival/Melbourne International Arts Festival) and *The Son* (Kiln Theatre).

Timberlake Wertenbaker – Translator and Adaptor

Timberlake Wertenbaker grew up in the Basque country and lives in London. She is one of the UK's leading playwrights and her work is performed worldwide. She is the recipient of numerous awards including an Olivier Award and the New York Drama Critics Award for *Our Country's Good* and a Writers' Guild Award for *Three Birds Alighting on a Field*. *Jefferson's Garden* won the 2016 Writer's Guild Award for Best Play and opened in Washington in January 2018.

Other plays include: *Winter Hill*, *My Father*, *Odysseus*, *Magna Carta Plays*, *We Sell Right*, *Walking the Tightrope*, *The Ant and the Cicada*, *The Love of the Nightingale*, *Our Ajax*, *The*

Line, Galileo's Daughter, Credible Witness, The Break of the Day, Three Birds Alighting On A Field, The Grace Of Mary Traverse, Abel's Sister, Ash Girl and After Darwin.

Translations include: *Britannicus, Antigone, Elektra, Hecuba, Wild Orchids, Jenufa, The Thebans and Mephisto*. Timberlake has undertaken many adaptations for radio including *War and Peace* and Elena Ferrante's Neopolitan quartet. Timberlake is currently working on new commissions for the Royal Shakespeare Company and Pitlochry Festival Theatre.

Rosanna Vize – Set and Costume Designer

Theatre credits include: *Gulliver's Travels* (Unicorn Theatre); *Camp Siegfried* (Old Vic); *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (Curve Theatre, Leicester, English Touring Theatre); *Two Character Play, The Phlebotomist, Yous Two and No One Told Me How to Start a Revolution* (Hampstead Theatre); *Shedding a Skin and Girls* (Soho Theatre); *Harm, Leave Taking* (Bush Theatre); *Hedda Gabler* (Sherman Theatre), *Incantata* and *The Rise and Shine of Comrade Fiasco* (Gate Theatre, Dublin); *Hang* (Sheffield Theatre); *The Audience* (Nuffield Theatre); *Cougar* and *Low Level Panic* (Orange Tree Theatre); *Don Carlos* (Exeter Northcott, Nuffield Theatre, Rose Theatre); *The Almighty Sometimes* (Royal Exchange); *King Lear* (Globe Theatre).

TV & Film includes: *Harm* (BBC broadcast); 'Wake Me Up' (Foals music video).

Opera credits include: *Mavra and Pierrot Lunaire* (Royal Opera House, Covent Garden); *Don Carlos* (Hampstead Garden Opera); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Garsington Opera).

Lee Curran - Lighting Designer

Theatre includes: *Constellations* (West End/Broadway/Royal Court); *Summer and Smoke* (Almeida/West End); *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Regent's Park Open Air Theatre/Barbican); *The Welkin, Mr. Gum and the Dancing Bear – The Musical* (National Theatre); *Henry V, Berberian Sound Studio* (Donmar) *The Song Project, Gundog, Road, Nuclear War, X* (Royal Court); *Nora* (Young Vic/Citizens); *The Two Character Play* (Hampstead); *Dance Nation* (Almeida); *Harm* (Bush); *West Side Story, Jubilee* (Manchester Royal Exchange); *Burgerz* (Hackney Showroom); *Imogen* (Shakespeare's Globe); *Doctor Faustus* (RSC); *The Weir, A Streetcar Named Desire* (English Touring Theatre); *Black Men Walking* (Eclipse/Royal Exchange/UK Tour); *Mametz* (National Theatre Wales); *Depart* (LIFT).

Dance includes: *We Are As Gods* (James Cousins); *Enowate* (Dickson Mbi); *Blak Whyte Gray* (Boy Blue); *Clowns, Sun, Political Mother, In Your Rooms, Uprising* (Hofesh Shechter); *Grey Matter, Tomorrow, Frames* (Rambert).

Opera includes: *Orphee Et Eurydice* (ROH); *Fidelio, Nothing* (Royal Danish Opera); *Tosca* (Opera North); *Phaedra* (Linbury Studio, ROH).

Jasmin Kent Rodgman - Composer and Sound Designer

British-Malaysian Artist and Composer Jasmin brings together the contemporary classical, electronics and sound art worlds to create powerful soundscapes and musical identities. In 2018/19 Jasmin was a British Council PRS Musician in Residence, living and composing for two months in Lanzhou, China. In 2017/18, Jasmin was also a London Symphony Orchestra Jerwood Composer, writing new music as well as producing and curating for their 2018 season.

Theatre credits include: *Brown Girls Do It Too* (Soho Theatre); *Red Ellen* (Northern Stage); *Dorian* (Reading Rep); *Missing Julie* (Theatre Clwyd); *Harm* (Bush Theatre and BBC Release).

Her film scores have featured at festivals such as Sundance, SXSW, Toronto International Film Festival and the London Short Film Festival.

Previous commissions include: *Triptych & Nineteen Ways of Looking* (Chinese Arts Now); *At Home with the World* (Bagri Foundation); *Culture Mile* (London Symphony Orchestra).

Jennifer Jackson - Movement Director

Jennifer Jackson is a Latinx British-Bolivian theatre-maker, movement director and actor. She was a recipient of a Jerwood Live Work Award (2021).

Theatre includes: *The Breach* (Hampstead); *KES* (Bolton Octagon); *The Merchant of Venice* (Globe); *5 Children and It* (Theatre Royal Bath); *Endurance* (HOME Manchester/ BAC); *The Mountaintop*, *Cuttin' it*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Death of a Salesman*, *Queens of the Coal Age*, *Our Town* (Royal Exchange Theatre); *Baby Reindeer* (Francesca Moody Productions/The Bush-Olivier Award 2020); *Midnight Movie*, *Invisible Summer*, *Living Newspaper* (Royal Court); *Perspective* (New Views National Theatre); *Amsterdam* (ATC/Orange Tree/ Theatre Royal Plymouth); *I Wanna Be Yours* (Paines Plough/The Bush); *Parliament Square* (Bush Theatre/Royal Exchange Theatre); *The Strange Undoing of Prudencia Hart* (New Vic Theatre); *Be My Baby*, *Around The World in 80 Days* (Leeds Playhouse); *Mountaintop UK Tour* (Young Vic/ Desara Productions Ltd); *Mayfly*, *Out of Water* (Orange Tree).

Events include: Coventry Moves, Coventry City of Culture 2021.

Nadine Rennie CDG - Casting Director

Nadine was in-house Casting Director at Soho Theatre for over fifteen years; working on new plays by writers including Dennis Kelly, Bryony Lavery, Arinzé Kene, Roy Williams, Philip Ridley, Laura Wade, Hassan Abdulrazzak, Vicky Jones and Oladipo Agboluaje.

Since going freelance in January 2019 Nadine has worked for theatres across London and the UK including Arcola Theatre, Orange Tree Theatre, Sheffield Crucible, Leeds Playhouse, Fuel Theatre, National Theatre of Wales, Northern Stage, Pleasance Theatre London, Almeida and continues to cast on a regular basis for Soho Theatre.

Recent theatre includes: *He Said She Said* (Synergy Theatre Tour); *Bacon* (Finborough Theatre); *The Tempest* (Wildcard/Pleasance Theatre); *The Ministry of Lesbian Affairs* (Soho Theatre); *The Breach* (Hampstead Theatre).

Nadine has a long-running association as Casting Director for Synergy Theatre Project.

TV work includes BAFTA-winning CBBC series *Dixi*, casting the first three series.

Nadine is a member of the Casting Directors Guild.

- ENDS -

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Notes to Editors

IMAGES available to download [here](#)

Listings

Lyric Hammersmith Theatre presents

Britannicus

By **Jean Racine**

Translated and adapted by **Timberlake Wertenbaker**

Directed by **Atri Banerjee**

Set and Costume Design by **Rosanna Vize**

Lighting Design by **Lee Curran**

Composer and Sound Designer by **Jasmin Kent Rodgman**

Movement Director **Jennifer Jackson**

Associate Lighting Designer **Lauren Woodhead**

Casting by **Nadine Rennie CDG**

Assistant Director **Kwame Owusu**

Assistant Designer **Tomás Palmer**

Lyric Hammersmith Theatre

Lyric Square, King Street, London, W6 0QL

Dates: Thursday 26 May – Saturday 25 June 2022

Press Night: Wednesday 01 June

Free First Night: Thursday 26 May

Open Captioned Performance: Saturday 11 June, 2.30pm

Audio Described Performance: Saturday 11 June, 7.30pm

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Age guidance: 14+

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#LyricBritannicus