

Press Release
Monday 29 July 2024
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CAST AND CREATIVES ANNOUNCED FOR RACHEL O'RIORDAN'S REVIVAL OF OLIVIER-AWARD WINNING *OUR COUNTRY'S GOOD*



OUR COUNTRY'S GOOD

A Lyric Hammersmith Theatre production
Written by Timberlake Wertenbaker
Based on the novel *The Playmaker* by Thomas Keneally
Directed by Rachel O'Riordan
Thursday 05 September - Saturday 05 October 2024
Press Night: Wednesday 11 September 2024

Lyric Hammersmith Theatre today announces the full cast and creative team for Olivier Award-winning classic *Our Country's Good*, written by **Timberlake Wertenbaker**, and directed by Artistic Director **Rachel O'Riordan**. The poignant and timely revival continues Rachel O'Riordan's 2024 programming and continues productions she has helmed at the Lyric, including the recent critically-acclaimed productions of *Faith Healer* and *Iphigenia in Splott* (Lyric

Hammersmith Theatre), of which the latter was voted as *The Guardian's* top theatre show of 2022.

This brand new Lyric production marks the eagerly awaited UK revival of the modern classic based on the extraordinary true story of Australia's first penal colony. Timberlake Wertenbaker revisits her seminal play, collaborating with consultant **Ian Michael**, to honor the voice and history of Australia's First Nations People.

With deportation as punishment more relevant than ever before, *Our Country's Good* takes on new meaning in 2024, playing at the Lyric from **05 September – 05 October** with **press night** on **11 September**.

Tickets are on sale now at www.lyric.co.uk.

Starring in the production are **Catrin Aaron** (*Richard III, Romeo and Julie*) as Liz Morden/Lieutenant Will Dawes, **Jack Bardoe** (*Love Labour's Lost, A Voyage Round My Father*) as John Arscott/Harry Brewer/Captain Jemmy Campbell, **Ruby Bentall** (*The Rubenstein Kiss, Ramona Tells Jim*) as Mary Brenham/Reverend Johnson/Meg Long, **Nick Fletcher** (*Minority Report, The Crucible*) as Robert Sideway/Captain David Collins, **Olivier Huband** (*The Duchess of Malfi, Mission Impossible: Fallout*) as Caesar/Captain Watkin Tench, **Harry Kershaw** (*Fanny, Peter Pan Goes Wrong*) as John Wisehammer/Captain Arthur Phillip, **Finbar Lynch** (*The Deep Blue Sea, Hamlet*) as Ketch Freeman/Major Robbie Ross, **Simon Manyonda** (*The Crucible, Word-Play*) as Second Lieutenant Ralph Clarke, **Naarah** (*The Sunshine Club, The Sapphires*) as First Nations Narrator, **Aliyah Odoffin** (*Sleepova, Everything I Know About Love*) as Duckling Smith/Lieutenant George Johnston, and **Nicola Stephenson** (*The Empress, War Horse*) as Dabby Bryant/Second Lieutenant William Faddy.

Our Country's Good has Set & Costume Design by **Gary McCann**, Lighting Design by **Paul Keogan**, Sound Design by **Gregory Clarke**, Music by **Holly Khan**, Cultural Consulting by **Ian Michael**, Casting by **Isabella Odoffin CDG**, Casting Assisting by **Joanna Sturrock**, Fight & Intimacy Direction by **Bethan Clark**, Dialect and Voice Coaching by **Joel Trill**, Assistant Direction by **Harper K. Hefferon**.

Rachel O'Riordan, Artistic Director & CEO of Lyric Hammersmith Theatre, said: "*Timberlake Wertenbaker's seminal play Our Country's Good is a visceral story that reminds us of not only the dark history of the British Empire and Australia's first penal colony, but also explores the morality of our justice systems. Through the story of transportation of criminals, the play invites audiences to interrogate whether deportation as punishment ever works and probes the ethics behind our prison systems. Collaborating with Timberlake alongside Ian Michael, our show's First Nation consultant, has been an incredible joy and I am honored to bring this ensemble piece to life in this contemporary and bold revival.*"

“Spewed from our country, forgotten, bound to the dark edge of the earth...”

Thomas Barrett: Transported seven years for stealing one ewe sheep.

James Freeman: Transported 14 years for assault on a sailor.

Dorothy Handland: Stole a Biscuit.

A ship, sailing 15,000 miles to Australia, is crammed with Britain’s convicts – a punishment for their crimes. After a life-threatening voyage they arrive in 1788. But keeping the colony disciplined is a brutal job, and cruelty is rife. To keep the convicts in line and attempt to ‘civilise’ this often desperate, violent, poverty stricken group, a young ambitious lieutenant, Ralph Clark, decides they should perform a play.

With a mostly illiterate cast, rising mistrust amongst the ranks, and the leading actor facing the gallows, this is a one of a kind theatre production...

YOUNG LYRIC

In response to *Our Country’s Good*, Young Lyric will create a digital education pack and produce a series of insight interviews with key members of the creative team. In addition, a series of teacher CPD workshops will run alongside this production to support the teaching of *Our Country’s Good* on the AQA Drama and English Literature curriculum specifications.

BIOGRAPHIES

Cast

Catrin Aaron as Liz Morden/Lieutenant Will Dawes

Theatre work includes: *Richard III* (Shakespeare’s Globe); *Romeo and Julie* (National Theatre); *Isla* (Theatre Clwyd/Royal Court); *Missing Julie* (Theatre Clwyd); *Hamlet* (Shakespeare’s Globe); *As You Like It* (Shakespeare’s Globe); *The Wizard of Oz* (Sheffield Crucible); *Henry V* (Regent’s Park Open Air Theatre); *Sex and the Three Day Week* (Liverpool Playhouse); Contractions – nominated Best Actress, Wales Theatre Awards (Chapter, Cardiff); *The Forsythe Sisters* (Gaggle Babble); *The Norman Conquests* (Torch Theatre); *Tartuffe*, *The Three Musketeers*, *The Norman Conquests* (Haymarket Basingstoke); *The Rise and Fall of Little Voice*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *All My Sons*, *The Light of Heart*, *Aristocrats*, *Salt Root & Roe*, *God of Carnage*, *A Doll’s House*, *Roots*, *Gaslight*, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *A Small Family Business*, *Festen*, *Mary Stuart*, *Macbeth*, *A Toy Epic*, *Of Mice and Men*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Hobson’s Choice*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* and *Silas Marner* (Theatr Clwyd, where Catrin is an Associate Artist).

Film includes: *Apostle* (Netflix)

Television includes: *Dope Girls* (BBC); *Truelove* (Channel 4); *Coronation Street* (ITV); *Isla* (BBC); *Carnival Row: S2* (Amazon); *The Bastard Executioner* (FX); *The Indian Doctor* (BBC) and *Casualty* (BBC).

Radio Includes: *Medici* (BBC Radio 4).

Jack Bardoe as John Arscott/Harry Brewer/Captain Jemmy Campbell

Theatre includes: *Love Labour's Lost* (RSC), *A Voyage Round My Father* (Theatre Royal Bath), *Othello*, *Translations* (National Theatre).

Television includes: *A Thousand Blows* (Disney+), *The Canterville Ghost* (BBC Studios), *Screw* (Channel 4), *Belgravia* (ITV/ Carnival Films).

Ruby Brentall as Mary Brenham/Reverend Johnson/Meg Long

Theatre includes: *The Rubenstein Kiss* (Southwark Playhouse), *Hogarth's Progress* (Rose Theatre), *Ramona Tells Jim* (Bush Theatre), *Britten in Brooklyn* (Wiltons Music Hall), *Peter and Alice* (Noel Coward Theatre), *Hansel and Gretel*, *Grief*, *The Miracle*, *DNA*, *Shoot/ Get Treasure/ Repeat* (National Theatre), *Blue Heart Afternoon* (Hampstead Theatre), *Remembrance Day* (Royal Court) and *Alice* (Sheffield Crucible).

Film Includes: *Firebrand* (MBK Productions), *Sweet Sue* (Somesuch & BBC Film), *Hard Truths* (Creativity Media & Film4), *The Personal History of David Copperfield* (Film4), *Misbehaviour* (Pathé & BBC Film), *Operation Mincemeat* (see-Saw Films), *Mr. Turner* (Amusement Park Films & the BFI), *Interlude in Prague* (Stillking Films), *Bikini Blue* (Zebra) and *The Courageous Heart of Irena Sendler* (CBS).

TV Includes: *The Serpent Queen*, *Industry* (Bad Wolf), *Absentia* (Sony TV), *Poldark* (Mammoth Screen LTD), *Jekyll and Hyde* (ITV), *Lost in Austen* (Mammoth Screen), *The Paradise*, *Larkrise to Candleford* and *Oliver Twist* (BBC Television).

Nick Fletcher as Robert Sideway/Captain David Collins

For the Lyric: *Minority Report*

Theatre credits include: *The Crucible*, *Dead Don't Floss*, *The Deep Blue Sea*, *Treasure Island*, *The Overwhelming*, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, *The White Guard*, *Once in a Lifetime*, *Playing with Fire*, *The UN Inspector* (National Theatre); *La Maladie de la Mort* (Theatre des Bouffes du Nord); *Anna Karenina* (Sheffield Crucible); *Maryland* (Royal Court); *For Services Rendered* (Chichester Festival Theatre); *Public Enemy*, *A Doll's House*, *The Shawl* (Young Vic); *The Country Wife* (Manchester Royal Exchange); *Twisted Tales* (Lyric Hammersmith Theatre and Northern Stage); *Thyestes* (Arcola); *Rattle of a Simple Man* (Comedy Theatre); *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Regents Park); *King Lear* (Old Vic), *A Difficult Age*, *Love's Labours Lost* (English Touring Theatre); *Star Quality* (Apollo Theatre); *The Slight Witch*, *Silence* (Birmingham Rep.); *All's Well That Ends Well* (Chicago Shakespeare); *Henry V*, *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (Shakespeare's Globe); *Burdalane* (BAC); *A Wife Without a Smile*, *The House Amongst The Stars*, *Court*

in the Act, The Way of the World, The Last Thrash, The Cassilis Engagement (Orange Tree).

Film and television credits include: *The Wife* (Meta Films); *Father Brown* (BBC); *Conspiracy of Silence* (Viacom); *Outlander* (Starz); *Midsomer Murders* (Bentley Productions); *Mutual Friends* (Hat Trick); *Whitechapel, Rough Treatment* (ITV); *Harley Street* (Carnival); *Silk, New Tricks, True Dare Kiss, Grange Hill* (BBC); *After the War* (Granada); *Queens Of Mystery* (Acorn).

Olivier Huband as Caesar/Captain Watkin Tench

Theatre includes: *The Duchess of Malfi* (Sam Wanamaker Playhouse); *The Tempest* (Shakespeare's Globe), *Much Ado About Nothing* (Shakespeare's Globe), *Henry V* (Donmar Warehouse), *Barefoot in the Park* (Pitlochry Festival Theatre), *An Enemy of the People* (Playground Theatre).

Film includes: *Mission Impossible: Fallout* (Paramount+)

Television includes: *Moonflower Murders* (BBC One); *This England* (Sky), *A Discovery of Witches S3* (Sky), *Becoming Elizabeth* (Starz), *I Hate Suzie* (Sky), *Informer* (BBC One/Amazon).

Harry Kershaw as John Wisehammer/Captain Arthur Phillip

Theatre includes: *Fanny* (Watermill Theatre); *Peter Pan Goes Wrong* (Broadway/LA/ West End); *Good Luck Studio* (UK Tour); *Boris III* (Edinburgh); *What's New Pussycat*, *Edmond De Bergerac* (Birmingham Rep); *The Madness Of George III* (Nottingham Playhouse), *This House* (NT/Headlong); *Mischief Movie Night* (West End); *The Play That Goes Wrong* (West End); *One Man Two Guvnors* (Theatre Royal Haymarket).

Film Includes: *Skyfall* (MGM); *Great Expectations* (BBC Films); *Exhibition* (Wild Horses Films); *Unrelated* (Raw Siena); *Office Royale* (People Love Film).

Television includes: *Jerk, Cuckoo* (Roughcut); *Endeavour* (Mammoth Screen/ITV); *The Interceptor* (BBC Productions/BBC 1); *Switch* (Touchpaper/ITV 2); *Omid Djalili's Little Crackers* (Tiger Aspect for Sky One); *Wallander* (Leftbank/BBC).

Finbar Lynch as Ketch Freeman/Major Robbie Ross

Theatre includes: *The Deep Blue Sea* (Theatre Royal Bath); *Hamlet* (Bristol Old Vic); *The Tempest* (Theatre Royal Bath); *The Forest* (Hampstead Theatre); *Indecent* (Menier Chocolate Factory), *Girl From The North Country* (Noel Coward Theatre, Royal Alexandra Theatre and Gielgud), *The Lady from the Sea* (Donmar Theatre), *Richard III* (Almeida Theatre), *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*; *The Hothouse*; *Antony and Cleopatra*; *Not About Nightingales*; *King Lear* (National Theatre); *Antigone* (Barbican Centre / World Tour).

Television includes: *The Regime*; *Jack Ryan*; *Treadstone*; *The Mallorca Files*; *The Devils*; *The Feed*; *Foyle's War*; *DCI Banks*; *Breathless*; *The Musketeers*; *Game of*

Thrones; Silk; Inspector George Gently; Richard II; Proof; Dalziel and Pascoe; Waking the Dead.

Film includes: *Hedda; The Little People, Adventures of a Mathematician; The World We Knew, Black 47, Property of the State; Suffragette; Child 44; Departure; The Numbers Station; Matilde; To Kill a King; Lost Battalion; King Lear; Scold's Bridle; A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

Simon Manyonda as Second Lieutenant Ralph Clarke
For the Lyric: *A Midsummer Nights Dream*

Theatre includes: *The Crucible* (Sheffield Crucible); *Word-Play* (Royal Court); *The Clinic* (Almeida Theatre); *Far Away* (Donmar Warehouse); *Actually* (Trafalgar Studios); *Alys, Always* (Bridge Theatre); *The Way of the World* (Donmar Warehouse); *Barber Shop Chronicles* (National Theatre); *King Lear* (The Old Vic); *Giving* (Hampstead Theatre); *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* (National Theatre); *Wildfire* (Hampstead Theatre); *King Lear* (National Theatre); *Julius Caesar* (RSC); *Greenland* (National Theatre); *Welcome to Thebes* (National Theatre).

Film includes: *Northern Comfort* (Netop Films); *The Bank of Dave* (Netflix); *Rye Lane* (DJ Films); *The Witches* (Warner Bros. Studios); *Underdogs* (Black Dog Films); *In Fabric* (Rook Films).

Television includes: *Eric* (Netflix); *Pennyworth* (Lucius Fox); *Van Der Valk* (ITV); *The Bay* (ITV); *His Dark Materials* (BBC); *King Lear* (Amazon/BBC); *Shakespeare and Hathaway* (BBC); *Uncle* (BBC3); *Neil Gaiman's Likely Stories* (Sky Arts); *Doctor Who* (BBC).

Naarah as First Nations Narrator

Theatre includes: *The Sunshine Club* (QPAC, Aus National Tour), *The Sapphires* (National Tour), *Into The Woods* (Royal Academy of Music).

Television includes: *Deadloch* (Amazon Prime Video).

Radio includes: *The Musical Show with Naarah* (ABC Classic).

Naarah is the winner of Aboriginal NAIDOC creative talent of the year award for 2024

Aliyah Odoffin as Duckling Smith/Lieutenant George Johnston

Theatre includes: *Sleepova* (Olivier win for Outstanding Achievement in Affiliate Theatre, The Bush Theatre), *Clybourne Park* (The Park Theatre).

Television includes: *A Thousand Blows* (Disney+), *Everything I Know About Love* (RTS North West nomination for Best Breakthrough Talent 2022, BBC).

Nicola Stephenson as Dabby Bryant/Second Lieutenant William Faddy
For the Lyric: *The Empress*

Theatre includes: *War Horse* (West End); *Stepping Out* (Theatre Royal Bath); *A Patriot for Me* (Barbican Theatre); *Edmund, His Girl Friday* (National Theatre).

Film includes: *Tales From The Lodge* (Hook Pictures); *All In The Game* (Tightrope); *Christmas Lights* (Granada Television); *Go Back out* (Granada Television); *The Last Yellow* (Jolyon Symonds Productions Ltd); *The Rainbow* (Vestron Pictures) and *The Walk* (ITV).

Television includes: *Brookside* (Channel 4); *The Long Shadow* (ITV); *The Walk-In* (ITV); *Call the Midwife* (BBC); *Midsummer Murders* (ITV); *Emmerdale* (ITV); *Waterloo Road* (BBC), *Safe House* (ITV), *Homefront* (ITV) and *The Long Shadow* (ITV).

Creative Team

Timberlake Wertenbaker (Writer) 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 Writers' Guild Award for Best Play and opened in Washington in January 2018.

Other plays include: *Winter Hill* (Octagon Theatre), *My Father, Odysseus* (Unicorn Theatre), *We Sell Right* (Salisbury Playhouse), *The Ant and the Cicada* (Royal Shakespeare Company), *Our Ajax* (Southwark Playhouse), *The Love of the Nightingale* (Royal Shakespeare Company), *The Line* (Wilton's), *Galileo's Daughter* (Theatre Royal, Bath), *After Darwin* (Hampstead Theatre), *The Ash Girl* (Birmingham Repertory Theatre), *The Break of the Day* (Out of Joint), *Three Birds Alighting On A Field*, *The Grace Of Mary Traverse*, *Abel's Sister and Credible Witness* (Royal Court Theatre).

Translations and adaptations include: *Jules and Jim*, *Britannicus*, *Antigone*, *Elektra*, *Hecuba*, *Wild Orchids*, *Jenufa*, *Filumena*, *The Thebans*, *Mephisto*, *False Admissions* and *Successful Strategies*. Timberlake has undertaken many adaptations for radio including Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*.

Timberlake is currently writing a new play for The Globe Theatre and adapting *Amets Arzallus' and Ibrahima Balde's Minan (Little Brother)* for the Arte Drama Theatre Company in the Basque County.

Rachel O'Riordan (Director) is Artistic Director and CEO of the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre where she launched her critically acclaimed debut season in Autumn 2019 with a triumphant adaptation of *A Doll's House* by Tanika

Gupta. She most recently directed a revival of Brian Friel's *Faith Healer* at the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre and *Romeo & Julie*, by Gary Owen, at the National Theatre and Sherman, which received five star reviews and is currently in development for a film adaptation. She also directed the sold-out remount of *Iphigenia in Sploot* at the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre in Autumn 2022, which was featured as one of The Guardian's 50 best theatre shows of the 21st century and was Number 1 in The Guardian's Top 10 Theatre Productions of 2022. At the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre, she co-directed the Lyric's 2020 summer reopening production *Out West*. Other Lyric shows include *Love, Love, Love* by Mike Bartlett, in the 10 year anniversary revival; Martin McDonagh's *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* with Chichester Festival Theatre. Previously, she was Artistic Director and CEO of Sherman Theatre, Wales from 2014 and transformed the venue which won The Stage's prestigious Regional Theatre of the Year Award in 2018. Directing credits include the Olivier Award-winning *Killology*, *Bird* and *Iphigenia in Sploot*. She was Artistic Director of Perth Theatre, Scotland between 2011 and 2014 and won The Critics' Award for Theatre in Scotland for Best Director and Best Ensemble for *The Seafarer* by Conor McPherson. From 2002 to 2011, she co-founded and ran Ransom Productions in Northern Ireland. She has been named as one of the most influential people in UK Theatre in The Stage 100. Published work includes *Women in Irish Theatre*.

Further biographies of the full creative team are available to download [here](#).

- ENDS -

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Notes to Editors

IMAGES and BIOGRAPHIES available to download [here](#).

ABOUT THE LYRIC HAMMERSMITH THEATRE

The Lyric Hammersmith Theatre produces bold and relevant world-class theatre from the heart of Hammersmith, the theatre's home for nearly 130 years. Under the leadership of its joint CEOs, Artistic Director Rachel O'Riordan and Executive Director Amy Belson, it is committed to being vital to, and representative of, the local community. A major force in London and UK theatre, the Lyric produces adventurous and acclaimed theatrical work that tells the stories that matter.

The Lyric Hammersmith Theatre has a national reputation for ground-breaking work to develop and nurture the next generation of talent, providing opportunities for young people to discover the power of creativity and to experience the life changing impact of theatre.

We are the creative heart of Hammersmith, proud of our history and ambitious for our future.

Listings

Lyric Hammersmith Theatre
Lyric Square, King Street, London, W6 0QL
Tickets from £10
Box office: 020 8741 6850
www.lyric.co.uk

X: [@LyricHammer](https://twitter.com/LyricHammer)

Instagram: [/LyricHammersmith](https://www.instagram.com/LyricHammersmith)

Facebook: [/LyricHammersmith](https://www.facebook.com/LyricHammersmith)

A Lyric Hammersmith Theatre Production

Our Country's Good

Written by **Timberlake Wertenbaker**

Based on the novel *The Playmaker* by **Thomas Keneally**

Directed by **Rachel O'Riordan**

Set & Costume Design by **Gary McCann**

Lighting Design by **Paul Keogan**

Sound Design by **Gregory Clarke**

Music by **Holly Khan**

Cultural Consulting by **Ian Michael**

Casting by **Isabella Odoffin CDG**

Casting Assisting by **Joanna Sturrock**

Fight & Intimacy Direction by **Bethan Clark**

Dialect and Voice Coaching by **Joel Trill**

Assistant Direction by **Harper K. Hefferon**

Dates: Thursday 05 September – Saturday 05 October 2024

Press Night: Wednesday 11 September, 7pm

Audio Described Performance: Saturday 28 September, 2.30pm

BSL Performance: Monday 30 September, 7.30pm

Open Captioned Performance: Thursday 19 September, 7.30pm

Chilled Environment Performance: Saturday 21 September, 2.30pm