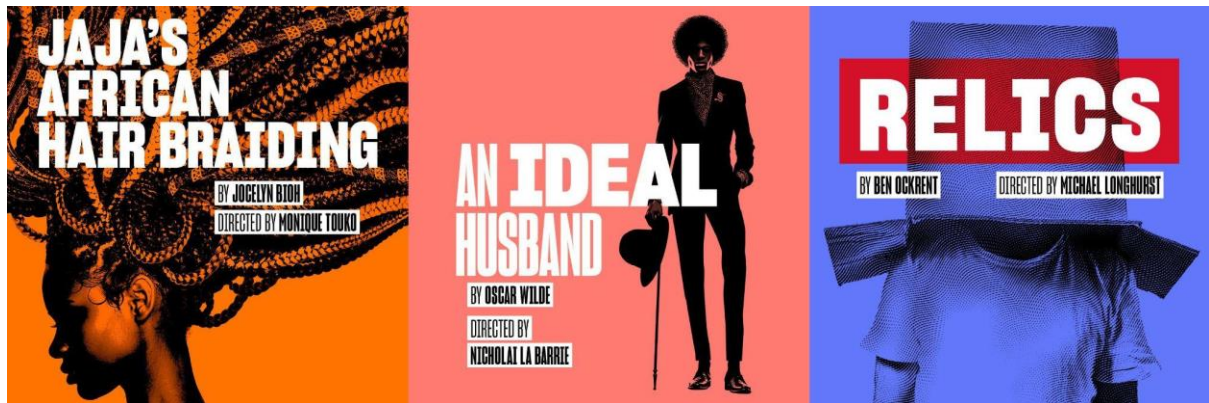




Press Release

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LYRIC HAMMERSMITH THEATRE ANNOUNCES THREE NEW PRODUCTIONS FOR 2026

- TONY AWARD-WINNING *JAJA'S AFRICAN HAIR BRAIDING* BY JOCELYN BIOH AND DIRECTED BY MONIQUE TOUKO RECEIVES ITS UK PREMIERE, REUNITING THE TEAM BEHIND SMASH HIT *SCHOOL GIRLS*
- LYRIC ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR NICHOLAI LA BARRIE DIRECTS A BOLD NEW PRODUCTION OF OSCAR WILDE'S CLASSIC COMEDY *AN IDEAL HUSBAND*
- AWARD-WINNING MICHAEL LONGHURST DIRECTS THE WORLD PREMIERE OF *RELICS*, BEN OCKRENT'S DARKLY COMIC FAMILY DRAMA
- TICKETS ARE ON SALE NOW AT [LYRIC.CO.UK](https://www.lyric.co.uk)

Lyric Hammersmith Theatre Artistic Director Rachel O'Riordan has today announced three new productions for 2026. All three are razor-sharp comedies, set across a single day, inviting audiences into vivid, pressurised worlds, and investigating how we both understand and misunderstand each other.

The season begins with the UK premiere of **Jocelyn Bioh's** Tony Award-winning play ***Jaja's African Hair Braiding***, reuniting the team behind the smash hit *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play* including director **Monique Touko** (*Wedding Band*; *Marie and Rosetta*).

It is followed by a contemporary production of **Oscar Wilde's** ***An Ideal Husband***, directed by the Lyric's Associate Director **Nicholai La Barrie** (*God Of Carnage*, *Aladdin*) on the 100th

anniversary of its last appearance at the Lyric in 1926. This classic comedy uncovers the love, betrayal and scandal that prevails in the rarefied world of modern, affluent London.

Finally **Ben Ockrent**'s darkly comedic play ***Relics*** receives its world premiere production, directed by **Michael Longhurst** (*Constellations*, *Next To Normal*). Following the reunion of four siblings to clean out the content of their mother's house, the play explores the legacy of our childhoods and the true cost of family secrets.

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

The Lyric's 2026 Season is supported by Mark & Sarah Crosbie.

Rachel O'Riordan, Artistic Director of the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre, said: *"I'm excited today to be announcing a new season of three shows for 2026 which exemplify the true spirit of the Lyric: bold, entertaining stories which bring audiences into seemingly familiar settings, and then turn them on their heads."*

We're delighted to be reuniting Jocelyn Bioh and Monique Touko for Jaja's African Hair Braiding. This writer-director team brought us Schools Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play in 2023 and this new play has all the same ingredients to be a great night out at the theatre.

At the Lyric, we're committed to taking classic works and reimagining them for the audiences of today. Nikolai La Barrie's major new production of An Ideal Husband will do exactly that, taking Oscar Wilde's enduring comedy and setting it in an opulent, modern-day London.

It is always a thrill to programme a world premiere and Ben Ockrent's Relics is no exception. Directed by Michael Longhurst, this dark comedy explores the long shadow of family secrets, shared history and sibling rivalries. Buckle up for a delicious family drama.

From a Harlem hair braiding salon, to the highest echelons of modern-day London, and a family home haunted by secrets: I cannot wait for audiences to see these worlds come to life on our beautiful stage."

Jaja's African Hair Braiding

A Lyric Hammersmith Theatre, and Madison Wells Live and Chase This Productions co-production

By Jocelyn Bioh

Directed by Monique Touko

Wednesday 18 March – Saturday 25 April 2026

Press Night: Thursday 26 March 2026

"Are we making money today or what?"

Welcome to Jaja's! This bustling Harlem braiding salon is where neighbourhood women come to have their greatest hairstyle dreams come true, all in the hands of a lively group of West African immigrant braiders.

Across one hot summers day, these women experience everything in the pressure cooker of the sweltering shop: from demanding customers to secrets and lies, laughter and betrayal. But each of these women has big dreams as well, dreams which increasingly pit them against the city they call home.

The UK premiere of this Tony Award-winning comedy reunites the team behind smash-hit School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play including writer Jocelyn Bioh and director Monique Touko.

Jaja's African Hair Braiding is set designed by **Paul Wills**; Wigs, Hair & Make-Up design by **Cynthia De La Rosa**; lighting design by **Simisola Majekodunmi**; sound design by **Tony Gayle**; movement direction by **Kloé Dean**; casting by **Julia Horan**; assistant direction by **Gráinne Flynn**.

Jocelyn Bioh (Writer), said: "At the center of it, *Jaja's African Hair Braiding* is about the power of community and I cannot think of a better theatre community to come back to! The love that UK audiences gave to me and my play *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play* two years ago was beyond incredible and it is truly an honor to team back up with Lyric and the incomparable director Monique Touko for the UK premiere of *Jaja's African Hair Braiding*. I hope audiences will once again connect with the heart, humor and universality of my work. I truly cannot wait for the shop to open!"

Monique Touko (Director), said: "I'm so thrilled to return to the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre with Jocelyn Bioh for our second collaboration. *Jaja's African Hair Braiding* is a portrayal of femininity rooted in the African experience. Jocelyn's writing is a celebration and interrogation of what it means to dream and survive in a place where you are othered. We will invite everyone to the shop- to listen, learn and laugh and expose UK audiences to a context which puts black women front and centre with joy, complexity and power."

An Ideal Husband

A Lyric Hammersmith Theatre Production
By Oscar Wilde
Directed by Nicholai La Barrie
Thursday 07 May – Saturday 06 June 2026
Press Night: Wednesday 13 May 2026

"I love London Society! It is entirely composed now of beautiful idiots and brilliant lunatics."

Sir Robert Chiltern is riding high on all the very best that modern life has to offer a man of his impeccable taste and immaculate reputation. The house, the clothes, the wife.

All seems well until the arrival of the devious Mrs Cheveley, who has a taste for drama and secrets to spill. Her revelations threaten scandal, betrayal, public disgrace: so how far will this perfect gentleman go to protect his good name?

This bold new production of Oscar Wilde's enduring comedy is directed by the Lyric's Associate Director Nicholai La Barrie.

Nicholai La Barrie (Director), said: "*An Ideal Husband* is, at its heart, about the contradictions that define us: love and betrayal, politics and family, forgiveness and redemption, morality and greed. More than a century after it was written, these themes feel as urgent as ever. We are still navigating the same questions—how to balance ambition with integrity, how to forgive the people we love, how to reconcile private mistakes with public lives. Wilde wraps these

struggles in razor-sharp wit, reminding us that laughter can be a way of facing uncomfortable truths. What I love most about this play is how it holds a mirror to us all, exposing the masks we wear in society while gently nudging us to find compassion, honesty, and even humor in our flaws.”

Relics

A Lyric Hammersmith Theatre Production, in association with Francesca Moody Productions
and Chalk Hills

By Ben Ockrent

Directed by Michael Longhurst

Thursday 18 June – Saturday 18 July 2026

Press Night: Wednesday 24 June 2026

“There’s some Alphabites in the freezer. Pop the oven on. You can eat your own words.”

When four siblings reunite at their recently-deceased mother’s home with the intention of divvying up her possessions, a long-buried family secret explodes out into the open - challenging everything they thought they knew about themselves and each other.

True to form, Liv thinks she can bulldozer her way back to how things used to be. People-pleaser, Rob, just wants everyone to get along. But Michelle’s had enough of towing the fragile family line. And with prodigal son, Jonny, hellbent on pushing everyone’s buttons, they all look set to lose everything - their dignity included.

The world premiere of Ben Ockrent’s Relics is a darkly comic family drama about the legacies we inherit, the choices we make, and the heartbreaking compromise of growing up, directed by the award-winning Michael Longhurst.

Ben Ockrent (Writer), said: “I am beyond excited that *Relics* will have its world premiere at the beautiful Lyric Hammersmith Theatre, under the stellar direction of Mike Longhurst. Over the course of one evening, the four characters of this play unravel through their conflicting responses to a hugely personal moral dilemma. That we should be putting on this play now, when all around the world there appears to be such a dearth of moral leadership, feels particularly timely and I can’t wait to share this funny and heartfelt story with our audiences!”

Michael Longhurst (Director), said: “Ben’s play is brilliantly challenging and very very funny. He’s taken that classic tinderbox set-up - the post-funeral family get-together, where emotions and resentments run high - and gleefully dumped a ton of petrol on it. Siblings behaving badly, doesn’t begin to cover it. I was agog reading it and can’t wait to get in a room with these characters and bring them to a Lyric audience.”

For further information please contact

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The Lyric's 2026 Season is supported by Mark & Sarah Crosbie.

Listings

Lyric Hammersmith Theatre

Lyric Square, King Street, London, W6 0QL

Box Office: 020 8741 6850

www.lyric.co.uk

Tickets from £10

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

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

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

Jaja's African Hair Braiding

A Lyric Hammersmith Theatre, and Madison Wells Live and Chase This Productions co-production
By Jocelyn Bioh

Directed by Monique Touko

Dates: Wednesday 18 March – Saturday 25 April 2026

Press Night: Thursday 26 March 2026

Audio Described Performance: Tuesday 14 April 2026 at 7.30pm (with Touch Tour at 6pm)

BSL Performance: Tuesday 07 April 2026 at 7.30pm

Chilled Performance: Wednesday 08 April 2026 at 2.30pm

Open Captioned Performance: Thursday 16 April 2026 at 7.30pm

An Ideal Husband

A Lyric Hammersmith Theatre Production
By Oscar Wilde

Directed by Nikolai La Barrie

Dates: Thursday 08 May – Saturday 06 June 2026

Press Night: Wednesday 13 May 2026

Audio Described Performance: Thursday 04 June 2026 at 7.30pm (with Touch Tour at 6pm)

BSL Performance: Tuesday 26 May 2026 at 7.30pm

Chilled Performance: Wednesday 27 May 2026 at 2.30pm

Open Captioned Performance: Tuesday 02 June 2026 at 7.30pm

Relics

A Lyric Hammersmith Theatre production, in association with Francesca Moody Productions and Chalk Hills

By Ben Ockrent

Directed by Michael Longhurst

Dates: Thursday 18 June – Saturday 18 July 2026

Press Night: Wednesday 24 June 2026

Audio Described Performance: Tuesday 14 July 2026 at 7.30pm (with Touch Tour at 6pm)

BSL Performance: Tuesday 07 July 2026 at 7.30pm

Chilled Performance: Wednesday 08 July 2026 at 2.30pm
Open Captioned Performance: Thursday 16 July 2026 at 7.30pm

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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 130 years. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Rachel O'Riordan and Executive Director Amy Belson, it is committed to being vital to, and representative of, our 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.

School Tickets

The Lyric offers a discounted schools rate for all Main House shows, which is available to all schools, colleges and universities.

Tickets are offered at £15 per student with one free teacher ticket for every ten students and two free teacher tickets for SEND schools. This offer is available for all performances Monday – Wednesday during the main run of the show (subject to availability).

Young Lyric Membership

The Lyric offers Young Lyric Membership for young people aged 0–25 who live in one of the 10 West London boroughs (Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith & Fulham, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Kensington and Chelsea, Richmond upon Thames, Wandsworth and Westminster). You can sign up for membership as an individual (over 18) or as a parent/carer of a young person (under 16). Young Lyric members get £5 tickets to Main House shows, access to low cost or free courses and masterclasses, access to free bursary spaces for classes, performance opportunities and many more opportunities throughout the year.