**Press Release – July 2019**

**Thames Reach is taking part in a musical adaptation of William Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* at Queen’s Theatre Hornchurch in partnership with the National Theatre.**

*First look at full cast of As You Like It* [*here*](https://www.dropbox.com/s/hiyilpxolwpib5a/As%20You%20Like%20It%20-%20Queen%27s%20Theatre%20Hornchurch%20in%20partnership%20with%20National%20Theatre.jpg?dl=0)

Following triumphant performances of *Pericles* at the National Theatre in summer 2018, the next Public Acts production of *As You Like It* starts rehearsals this week and will play from 24 – 27 August. Queen’s Theatre Hornchurch’s Artistic Director, Douglas Rintoul will direct this musical adaptation.

Forced from their homes, Orlando, Duke Senior, his daughter Rosalind and niece Ceila, escape to the Forest of Arden, a fantastical place where all are welcomed and embraced. Lost amidst the trees, they find community and acceptance under the stars.

This UK premiere sees more than one hundred community members, professional actors, and performance groups from across London, come together for this magical tale of faithful friends, feuding families and lovers in disguise. The Public Acts community partners are: Body & Soul, Bromley by Bow Centre, Coram, DABD, The Faith & Belief Forum, HASWA (Havering Asian Social Welfare Association), Open Age, Queen’s Community Group and Thames Reach.

*As You Like It* is the second Public Acts production, the National Theatre’s new initiative to create extraordinary acts of theatre and community. The production forms part of a two-year partnership with Thames Reach and other organisations who deliver visionary work in their communities, together with theatre partner Queen’s Theatre Hornchurch. Through Public Acts, members of Thames Reach have taken part in a bespoke programme including weekly workshops, theatre trips and opportunities for socialising and creating together, including performing in *As You Like It.*

Thames Reach is a charity based in London whose work supports vulnerable adults to find decent homes, build supportive relationships and lead fulfilling lives, and has been one of the Public Acts partner organisations since the programme started in 2017. Participants, volunteers and staff have taken part in weekly workshops and theatre visits, and were among the performers on stage for the *Pericles* production on the Olivier stage at The National Theatre.  Its involvement has continued through the second year of Public Acts and is now a key part of Thames Reach’s calendar, giving staff and service users the chance to be involved in something inspirational.

Virginia Croft, Basic Skills Coordinator at Thames Reach, said: *“Working with the Queen’s Theatre Hornchurch and the National Theatre has proved an amazing opportunity; those involved have told us that they feel they belong, they have a voice, and feel part of something.  We know that the people we work with have many challenges in their lives; being part of Public Acts is an experience that no-one can take away from them.”*

The cast of professional actors include Beth Hinton-Lever (*Spring Awakening*, Hope Mill Theatre), Linford Johnson (*The Rise and Fall of Little Voice*, Park Theatre), Ebony Jonelle (*Top Girls*, National Theatre), Rohan Reckord (*The Rat Pack*, The Savoy) and Vedi Roy (*Laila The Musical* tour, Rifco Theatre Company/Watford Palace).The production will also feature several cameo groups who represent the cultural breadth of the city.

This version of *As You Like It,* adapted by Laurie Woolery and Shaina Taub, featuring music and lyrics by Shaina Taub, will be directed by Queen's Theatre Artistic Director Douglas Rintoul, and will feature set and costume design by Hayley Grindle, musical director Yshani Perinpanayagam, choreographer and movement director Sundeep Saini, lighting designer Paul Anderson, sound designer Leigh Davies and assistant director Jules Tipton. The score is infectious, with sounds ranging from calypso to pop, Broadway musical to soul. Live captioning and live audio description will be available at all five performances. Audiences who require audio description are advised to book tickets by calling the Box Office on 01708 443333 to reserve a headset.

Douglas Rintoul, Director of this production said, “Queen’s Theatre Hornchurch is thrilled to be the first theatre partner working with the National Theatre on their excellent Public Acts programme. I can’t wait for our stage here in Outer East London to be the home for *As You Like It*. The project is transforming lives, communities and organisations (ours included) and we are immensely proud that Hornchurch will be at the heart of that this summer.”

Emily Lim, Director of Public Acts, said, *“*We have had a wonderful second year deepening our relationships with all our exceptional community partners and the brilliant Queen’s Theatre Hornchurch. We can’t wait to bring everyone together to get started on rehearsals for our summer production. We are particularly excited to be working with a brand new creative team on this joyful, ambitious adaptation and to be welcoming lots of new community members to the company”.

Public Acts is inspired by Public Works, the Public Theater’s ground-breaking programme in New York and by the visionary participatory work of other theatres and artists across the UK.

To book tickets visit [www.queens-theatre.co.uk/whats-on/show/as-you-like-it](https://www.queens-theatre.co.uk/whats-on/show/as-you-like-it/)

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Notes to Editors:

For Press enquiries and interview opportunities please contact **Miranda Wilkie**, Press & Marketing Officer, at Queen’s Theatre Hornchurch press@queens-theatre.co.uk / 01708 462376

* **ABOUT THAMES REACH**

Thames Reach support homeless and former homeless people and others who, although they have not been homeless in the past, require assistance and interventions to sustain themselves in accommodation and to improve their quality of life.

The organisation specializes in helping people with complex and multiple problems, including those associated with poor metal health and substance misuse. It manages a range of services, including street outreach, frontline hostels, day services, specialist supported housing for people with substance misuse and mental health problems, tenancy support services, health initiatives and a range of employment, training and education schemes and programmes.

For more information, please visit: [www.thamesreach.org.uk](http://www.thamesreach.org.uk)

Twitter: @thamesreach
Instagram: @thames.reach

* **ABOUT PUBLIC ACTS**

Public Acts is a nationwide initiative to create extraordinary acts of theatre and community. The programme builds sustained partnerships with communities and theatres across the UK, through which we create ambitious new works of participatory theatre.

The first Public Acts production was a new, musical adaptation of *Pericles* in the Olivier Theatre – the NT’s largest stage – in August 2018. Chris Bush, a writer with vast experience of working with large community companies, adapted Shakespeare’s original text. Music was by Jim Fortune and the production was directed by Director of Public Acts Emily Lim. It marked the mid-point of a two-year programme of workshops, visits and opportunities for exchange with eight founding partners who deliver visionary work in their communities, together with the Queen’s Theatre Hornchurch. The partners are: Body & Soul, Bromley by Bow Centre, Coram, DABD, Open Age, Queen’s Community Group, Thames Reach, The Havering Asian Social Welfare Association HASWA (Havering Asian Social Welfare Association) and The Faith & Belief Forum.

Public Acts is inspired by Public Works, the Public Theater’s ground-breaking programme of participatory theatre in New York, by the National Theatre’s own experience of creating *we’re here because we’re here* and by the visionary participatory work of other theatres across the UK over the past decades.

* **ABOUT QUEEN’S THEATRE HORNCHURCH**

Queen's Theatre Hornchurch is a vibrant regional theatre with a rich heritage, working in Outer East London, Essex and beyond, which celebrated its 65th birthday in 2018. As the cultural hub of the region, over 220,000 people enjoy the programme each year, including the best in home grown theatre, visiting live entertainment and inspiring Learning and Participation projects. Behind the scenes, sets and costumes are lovingly created on-site by a highly skilled carpentry workshop, scenic artists, prop makers and wardrobe team. Audiences are guaranteed a warm welcome from a three year winner of UK Theatre's Most Welcoming Theatre (2016 - 2018).

For more information, please visit: [queens-theatre.co.uk](http://www.queens-theatre.co.uk)

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* **ABOUT THE NATIONAL THEATRE**

The National Theatre’s mission is to make world class theatre that’s entertaining, challenging and inspiring – and to make it for everyone. It aims to reach the widest possible audience and to be as inclusive, diverse and national as possible with a broad range of productions that play in London, on tour around the UK, on Broadway and across the globe. The National Theatre's extensive UK-wide learning and participation programme supports young people’s creative education through performance and writing programmes like Connections, New Views and Let’s Play. Its major new initiative Public Acts creates extraordinary acts of theatre and community; the first Public Acts production was 2018’s Pericles. The National Theatre extends its reach through digital programmes including NT Live, which broadcasts some of the best of British theatre to over 2,500 venues in 65 countries. The National Theatre invests in the future of theatre by developing talent, creating bold new work and building audiences, partnering with a range of UK theatres and theatre companies.

For more information, please visit: [www.nationaltheatre.org.uk](https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/)

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