

# National Theatre

## Press Release

National Theatre's Public Acts community members across Doncaster and London perform in online musical "*We Begin Again*" produced by The Guardian, in partnership with National Theatre

17 December 2020



Launching today on The Guardian and the National Theatre's digital platforms as a musical video and a standalone track released by Grammy winning record label Broadway Records, "*We Begin Again*" is a unifying song for the country to take stock of the extraordinary year gone by and reset for the year ahead.

Written by Olivier award winner **James Graham** (*This House - NT, Quiz*) and produced by The Guardian in partnership with the National Theatre, *We Begin Again* features a multi-generational cast reflecting on their individual lives and the impact 2020 has had on them. 100 community members from the National Theatre's Public Acts programme sing a hopeful chorus encouraging everyone to 'begin again'. Filmed both on location and remotely, this online musical is a clear product of these unique times.

This is the first time the National Theatre has collaborated with The Guardian to create a musical and an example of the innovative ways a news website, an arts organisation and a

record label, can interpret the year gone by and bring the performing arts to a global audience during a time when many theatres have been forced to close or reduce their audience intake.

Stars of stage and screen **Anita Dobson** (*EastEnders*), **Zubin Varla** (*Jesus Christ Superstar*), **Susan Wokoma** (*Enola Holmes*) and **Noah Thomas** (*Everybody's Talking About Jamie*) are joined by members of the NT's Public Acts community partner organisations in Doncaster in partnership with Cast ([B:friend](#), [Conversation Club](#), [Edlington Community Organisation \(ECO\)](#), [Cast Young Company](#), [darts](#), [Right Up Our Street](#)) and our founding Greater London community partners ([Bromley by Bow Centre](#), [Body & Soul](#), [Coram](#), [DABD](#), [Havering Asian Social Welfare Association \(HASWA\)](#), [Open Age](#), [Thames Reach](#), [The Faith & Belief Forum](#)) as the community choir in the musical video. [Quirky Choir](#) (Doncaster) and [Faithworks Gospel Choir](#) (London) also feature as cameo choirs.

**Emily Lim**, Director of the National Theatre's Public Acts programme said, *"It has been such an exciting, new experience creating this piece with our amazing Public Acts company. It is the first time we've ever made a film, and the first time our community members in Doncaster and London have united to collaborate together, cross-country! It has felt so important to stay creative and connected with one another at this time, despite all the restrictions, and we can't wait to share this message of renewal and hope with everyone at the end of such a difficult year"*.

**Jess Gormley**, Guardian Commissioner & Executive Producer said, *"The Guardian is delighted to have partnered with the National Theatre on this unique project, with both production teams working around the various obstacles this year has thrown up. As theatres have had their stage productions curtailed, going online to a large international audience provides new opportunities to reach audiences and we were excited to connect our skilled film team with Public Acts' diverse and numerous company members from London and Doncaster. It's been a tremendous group effort and we hope the final film provides a balm to our viewers, at the end of a difficult year."*

*We Begin Again* is composed by **Jim Fortune** (*Pericles*, NT) and directed by **Amy Hodge** (*Mr Gum and the Dancing Bear – The Musical!*, NT). **Julian Simmons** is Music Producer, and Music Director is **Tarek Merchant**.

The musical film is now available to watch on The Guardian website here: <https://www.theguardian.com/we-begin-again> and the cast recording is available wherever digital music is sold and on [www.Broadwayrecords.com](http://www.Broadwayrecords.com).

**ENDS**

Images and clips for media use are available to download [here](#).

For more information please contact Rhian Bennett on [rbennett@nationaltheatre.org.uk](mailto:rbennett@nationaltheatre.org.uk)

For more information about the National Theatre's Public Acts programme visit [www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/about-the-national-theatre/our-national-work/public-acts](http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/about-the-national-theatre/our-national-work/public-acts)

## **About Public Acts**

Public Acts is the National Theatre's nationwide initiative to create extraordinary acts of theatre and community. The programme creates ambitious new works of participatory theatre and is built on sustained partnerships with theatres and community organisations across the UK who share our vision of theatre as a force for change. Our theatre partners are Cast in Doncaster and Queen's Theatre Hornchurch.

The first Public Acts production was *Pericles* in August 2018, at the National Theatre, in the Olivier Theatre. The second production was *As You Like It* in August 2019 at the Queen's Theatre, Hornchurch. The third production in partnership with Cast has been postponed from 2020 however we are rescheduling for a future date and continuing to work with our community partners and creative team over the coming months.

Public Acts is inspired by Public Works, the Public Theater's ground-breaking programme of participatory theatre in New York.

Public Acts is supported by Arts Council England's Strategic Touring Fund, Garfield Weston Foundation, Bloomberg Philanthropies, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Hertz, Mr & Mrs A Mosawi, Simon & Sue Ruddick and Wates Foundation.

## **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 and schools through performance and writing programmes like Connections, New Views and Let's Play, while Public Acts creates ambitious new works of participatory theatre in sustained partnership with theatres and community organisations around the country. 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 Collection, which makes recordings of shows available to UK schools and the global education sector, and now National Theatre at Home. 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 [nationaltheatre.org.uk](http://nationaltheatre.org.uk)

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### **About Guardian News & Media**

Guardian News & Media (GNM) publishes [theguardian.com](http://theguardian.com), one of the world's leading English-language newspaper websites. Traffic from outside of the UK now represents around two-thirds of the Guardian's total digital audience. In the UK, GNM publishes the Guardian newspaper six days a week, first published in 1821, and the world's oldest Sunday newspaper, The Observer.

### **About Broadway Records**

Broadway Records (Van Dean, President) is the Grammy® winning record label dedicated to preserving musical theatre and theatre vocalists. Recent releases include *If The Fates Allow: The Hadestown Holiday Album*, *Lea Salonga Live In Concert with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra*, the North American releases of hits from London including *Everybody's Talking About Jamie* and *Mythic*, the Grammy® and Tony Award-winning *The Color Purple* (2015 revival), the Tony Award® winning and Grammy® nominated revival of *Once On This Island*, the Grammy® nominated *Matilda The Musical*, *Fiddler on the Roof* (2015 revival) and *My Fair Lady* (2018 revival), *Anastasia*, *Bandstand*, *Groundhog Day*, *The Lightning Thief* and NBC's television events, "The Wiz Live!" and "Peter Pan Live!". The label's critically-acclaimed "Live at Feinstein's/54 Below" series features top Broadway stars including Patti LuPone, Aaron Tveit, Annaleigh Ashford, Norbert Leo Butz, Sierra Boggess, Laura Benanti, Emily Skinner & Alice Ripley, Adam Pascal & Anthony Rapp, Micky Dolenz and many others. Broadway Records launched the Broadway for Orlando initiative (in partnership with creators Seth Rudetsky and James Wesley) culminating in the all-star benefit single, "What the World Needs Now is Love," which leaped to #1 on iTunes with no radio airplay. Broadway Records philanthropic endeavors also include the From Broadway With Love benefit concerts for Sandy Hook, Orlando (Emmy Award for Sound) and Parkland. To learn more, visit [BroadwayRecords.com](http://BroadwayRecords.com).

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