

Young Vic

Welcome to this introduction to *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare, directed by Greg Hersov and designed by Anna Fleischle.

Hamlet will be described by Eleanor Margolies and Miranda Yates. The performance lasts for 3 hours and 10 minutes, with a twenty-minute interval.

This show contains themes of death and bereavement, as well as acts of violence, self-harm and death on stage. There are references of suicide, drug use, and mental illness. The show features the sound effects of guns firing and use of weapons.

There will be infrequent loud music and haze.

The live audio described performance at the Young Vic is on Tuesday 19 October at 7pm. Unfortunately, we are unable to offer a touch tour for this production. Please note that in order to stagger entrances into the auditorium, tickets will include an assigned arrival time and door number. This introduction will last about 15 minutes.

The four streamed performances for Best Seat in Your House will all have live audio description available. The performances will be on Thursday 28 October at 7pm, Friday 29 October, at 7pm, and Saturday 30 October at 2pm and 7pm. Tickets are available on the Young Vic website www.youngvic.org/young-vic-digital/best-seat-your-house The description will be given by Ruth James and Eleanor Margolies.

The stage is open to us but dimly lit as we come into the auditorium. The set shimmers a dull gold. The bench seats rise in thirteen rows sloping up from the stage, with two further rows curving round on balcony level. The Young Vic's auditorium is open to its side walls of dull red breeze block, creating a corridor that

performers can use to circle behind the audience. The audience faces a large square arch cut in the brick wall, about five metres square, with a further space opening up beyond it, towards the back. A square platform the same dimensions as the arch juts out towards the audience, evoking the thrust stage of the Globe theatre. It's about a metre above the auditorium floor level. The arch and the floor are made of panels of dull gold metal. Each panel is about two metres long and a little under a metre wide, arranged like large flagstones on the floor. Standing on the floor, set back slightly from the square opening, are three wide rectangular pillars, each just over 3 metres high and a metre wide, made of the same tarnished gold metal. These heavy pillars can rotate. Some of the sides are highly reflective and serve as mirrors, while other faces are more tarnished. They can stand square on to the audience, like imposing sentries casting long shadows, or be turned at angles to each other, suggesting a maze of corridors and intrigue.

The locations of the play are all created by this setting, with the addition of a few props. Gertrude's bedroom is suggested by a cylindrical footstool upholstered in soft pink velvet. A reception room used by Claudius is furnished with two emerald-green contemporary armchairs – with round seats and spindly wooden legs. Photographic projections of trees on the back wall create outdoors settings.

The company is made up of 11 performers, of diverse ethnic heritages. They wear contemporary clothes.

Hamlet has an androgynous look and is played by a woman. He has light brown skin and the youthful look of someone in their twenties. Hamlet's dark hair is close

cropped and he has large expressive eyes with delicate eyebrows. In mourning when we first meet him, he wears black jeans and a round-necked t-shirt with a black suit jacket, with a black sash tied diagonally across his chest and thick soled black shoes. Later he wears loose pale jeans and a pale grey shirt, or grey joggers and a dark grey sweatshirt with a black baseball cap and white trainers.

Gertrude, Hamlet's mother, is in early fifties with a delicate, attractive face. Her eyes sparkle with joy and her smile is warm around her son. Gertrude's long dark hair is usually pulled back and knotted in a bun at the back. She dresses stylishly: in her first appearance, at court, she wears an exquisitely tailored 2-piece, pencil skirt and fitted jacket in a delicate pale pink with toning heels. Her sleek straight hair is loose and brushed forward over one shoulder. In a less formal moment, she wears cream, high-waisted, wide-leg trousers with a pale yellow silk blouse, adding a cropped pale pink Chanel-style jacket, this time with her hair tucked under a champagne-coloured silk turban. To see the performance by the Players, her cream trousers are teamed with a similarly toned designer jumper with balloon sleeves.

Gertrude's new husband **Claudius** is in his fifties, tall, and in shape for his age. He has a ruddy complexion and his sandy blonde hair is neat and cut short, falling into a centre parting. Claudius is watchful and sharp eyed, his expression often tense, brow furrowed. He wears a tailored, mid-blue suit with a matching tie and a pale blue shirt and polished leather brogues. Later, in a more casual moment, the tie is removed and the shirt worn open at the collar.

Horatio is Hamlet's good friend. Of a similar age to Hamlet, he's shorter and has a sturdier build. He has brown skin and short afro hair with a trimmed beard and moustache. His soft featured face often holds an expression of loving concern for Hamlet. When we first meet him he's wearing dark navy combat trousers and shirt with a moss green canvas gilet, and a dark blue beanie cap.

Claudius's chief advisor is **Polonius** who's in his seventies, with brown skin, a balding head and grizzled short hair and beard. Although not tall, Polonius carries himself with a stately deportment, chin lifted. He dresses stylishly in a double breasted beige and brown plaid suit, worn with a pale blue shirt and a deep, burnt orange tie, a matching handkerchief in his breast pocket. His trousers are held up by red braces. Polonius wears a gold signet ring and gold lapel pin. He carries a black leather portfolio.

Polonius has a son and a daughter, who are both young adults.

Laertes has a fiery temperament and a strong athletic physique. He has brown skin and close cropped afro hair with a neat beard and moustache. For a formal occasion, Laertes wears a smart burnt orange suit with a pale top and a thin gold chain around his neck. Later, for travel, he changes into a designer tracksuit in racing green. Red stripes down the legs evoke military uniform and he wears white socks and sliders. He carries a large sports holdall as his travelling bag. He returns in black, in smart casual style, his black suit trousers belted at the waist and worn with a snug black jumper. On his wrist is a gold watch and he wears black boots.

Later, for a sporting contest, he wears a white Nike tracksuit with orange trim, and white trainers.

His relationship with his younger sister, Ophelia, is affectionate with a little mutual teasing. **Ophelia** is in her late teens, with a soft, dreamy expression. She has a petite frame and thick wavy shoulder length dark hair, and her pale face is not made up. When we first meet her she wears loose high-waisted jeans in a washed-out pale blue with a deliberately distressed tear at the knee and a cropped blouse in a soft lime green with a delicate floral print and a frilled hem. With this she wears red Converse trainers, a pair of pale pink headphones round her neck. Resting in her room, her hair is pulled back off her face and she wears a pair of pale blue cotton shorts and t-shirt and a cropped grey zip up hoodie, with white socks pulled up to her calves. At a meeting with Hamlet instigated by her father, she wears an ankle-length pale green patterned dress with square neckline and a mustard-coloured short sleeved cardigan.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are two student friends with a hippy college style.

Rosencrantz has thick curly brown hair that falls below her shoulders and wears an orange crop top with loose cotton trousers in a faded orange check and trainers.

Over this she has a short jacket covered in mirrors that could be from Rajasthan or central Asia. **Guildenstern** has bleached blonde hair, cut short. He wears a striped orange and blue shirt, beige chinos, an oversized pale blue denim hooded-jacket and brown Converse trainers. He often takes a pull on a vape. The pair are inseparable.

Arriving soon after Rosencrantz and Guildenstern is a group of five **travelling players** who wear informal rehearsal clothes – they all have matching white company t-shirts decorated with a round orange logo, teamed with various tracksuit bottoms and leggings. The lead player is an older black man with a grey beard and a bald head.

At the opening of the play, we first meet Bernardo and Marcellus, two guards. They are contemporary soldiers in dark navy uniforms, flak jackets and heavy black boots.

Bernardo is a black woman in her twenties with long magenta coloured braids.

Marcellus is a white man of the same age, in the same uniform, with a beret pulled over his pale blonde hair. Both carry sub-machine guns across their bodies.

As well as the soldiers, there are security guards within the court who wear smart dark suits, white shirts and ties. A senior officer appears briefly at court in dress uniform – a double-breasted suit with gold buttons and a row of medals. He has a black peaked cap and a sky blue sash worn diagonally across his chest, with aviator sunglasses.

Another courtier is **Osric**, who wears round tinted sunglasses, hair severely drawn back from her face. She wears a formal outfit of collar and tie and green trousers under a vaguely military ankle-length greenish-grey wool coat. A leather folder is tucked under her arm as she strides about officiously.

Cast and creative credits

Hamlet is played by **Cush Jumbo**

Laertes, **by Jonathan Ajayi**

Guildenstern and Osric is **Joana Borja**

Claudius is played by **Adrian Dunbar**

Gertrude is **Tara Fitzgerald**

Ophelia is played by **Norah Lopez Holden**

Horatio is played by **Jonathan Livingstone**

Polonius by **Joseph Marcell**

Adesuwa Oni plays Barnardo, a Player and a member of the Elsinore security

Rosencrantz and Marcellus are played by **Taz Skylar**

and **Leo Wringer** plays a Player and the Gravedigger

The Director is Greg Hersov, and the **Designer** Anna Fleischle

Lighting Designer is by Aideen Malone with **Sound Design** by Emma Laxton

the **Video Designer** is Nina Dunn, the **Movement Director** is Lucy Hind

the **Casting Director** is Sophie Holland CDG, with **Casting Assistants** Faye Timby
and Finnian Tweed

Voice & Text is Barbara Houseman, the **Fight Director** is Kev McCurdy

the **Associate Director** is Zoe Templeman-Young

Boris Karloff Trainee Assistant Director is Kirk-Ann Roberts

and the **Jerwood Assistant Designer** is Jida Akil

That's the end of the introduction. To book or if you have any questions, please contact the Young Vic Box Office on 020 7922 2922.