

Young Vic

Press Release – Tuesday 29 October 2024

Images available [here](#)

YOUNG VIC TAKING PART ANNOUNCE THE WORLD PREMIERE OF *AITOPIA* - THE INAUGURAL PRODUCTION FROM THE COLLECTIVE

- The Collective is a new company formed of 50 multi-disciplinary artists from Lambeth and Southwark, led by director Michelle Payne and supported by a team of creative consultants.
- Launched in June 2024 by the Young Vic Taking Part Neighbourhood Theatre programme, The Collective will present their first show - *AiTopia* in January 2025.
- Set in a dystopian future, where the police have been defunded. *AiTopia* is a chilling and poignant thriller exploring the impact of fast-changing technology on human relationships.
- Exploring new models of theatre-making The Collective places community and collaboration at the heart of its creative process, pioneering a new approach to co-creating theatre.
- The production will run in the Young Vic Maria Theatre from 25 January - 1 February 2025

Taking Part, the Young Vic's Creative Engagement Department, has today announced the world premiere of *AiTopia*, the inaugural production from new company **The Collective**, which is made up of **50 multi-disciplinary artists from Lambeth and Southwark**. This new company looks to disrupt traditional conventions of theatre-making to pioneer new models of making work centred on community and collaboration.

In an idyllic, self-governing community where the police have been defunded, the opportunity for an AI After Life promises peace, order and financial reward. But behind closed doors, five families are discovering that innovation has a price. As cracks begin to form and relationships are threatened, will AI help them move beyond their grief or threaten their humanity?

Featuring a cast and creative team of over 50 artists, *AiTopia* has been created from scratch by the members of The Collective, led by director **Michelle Payne** and supported by a team of creative consultants. *AiTopia* will run at the Young Vic Maria Theatre from 25 January - 1 February 2025. Tickets are free and will be available to book from late November.

Launched in June 2024 The Collective consists of artists who have all been part of the Young Vic Taking Part Neighbourhood Theatre project within the last five years. Selected via a series of workshops, The Collective has brought together people from all walks of life covering a range of artistic skills and interests from acting, writing, sound and lighting design to movement, production and Set & Costume. Meeting every week for a total of 4 terms

across 8 months , members of the group are developing the key skills in devising, curation, design, and the core building blocks required in the creation of a show.

AiTopia was co-written by **Elsa Joseph, Frances Timlin, Joyce Abosi, Kandy Rohmann, Kevin O'Neill, Rahkim Thomas Hunte, Simon Bracken, Stephen Foley, Thelma Purcell, Xanthus Peters** and **Jennifer Haynes** and directed by **Michelle Payne**.

The cast includes **Adar Owuna, Boma Braide, Deborah Elizabeth Mali Smith, Ioannis Sykovari, Katerina Kaloyerou, Ketrina Brisefert, Kimberley Maloney, Lorna Miri, Matilde Cerruti Quara, Moe Farah, Nana Yaa Oforiwaa Osei-Bonsu, Peter Barrs, Sasha Winslow, Shahab Awad, Tracey-Ann Henry, Eldi Dundee, Marina Hussain, and Michael Sookhan.**

The creative team consists of set and costume design by **Anne-Marie Garbrah, Elisa Rovelli, Marilyn Rogers, Matilde Sazio, Ama Ababio, Roxceina Hibbert** and **Jennifer Anne Marshall**; lighting and sound design by **Darren Anthony Spencer, Liz Heasman, Peter Phillips, Ariel Elkarif** and **Kemi Adekoya**; and movement by **Cherlyn Miller, John Watts** and **Seamus Kennedy**.

The creative consultants on the project are set & costume consultant **Natalie Pryce**, movement consultant **Christopher Tendai**, musical director & composition consultant **Matt Greaves**, and co-dramaturgy by **Emma Dennis-Edwards** and **Shereen Jasmin Phillips** who is also the Creative Producer and Creative Director of the Taking Part department.

Taking Part, the Young Vic's Creative Engagement Department, works with young people, adults, schools, and the local community in Lambeth and Southwark, engaging with over 15,000 people a year and providing free tickets to all shows and free creative and artistic opportunities to participants. Taking Part's three strands, Learning, Participation, and Neighbourhood Theatre, create work that is the beating heart of the organisation.

Alisha Artry, Neighbourhood Theatre Producer, said: *"Over the past four months it has been incredibly exciting to witness *The Collective* devise and develop such a timely new production for the Young Vic stage. By giving this extraordinary group of artists, not only a platform to explore the issues that sit at the heart of their communities but creative autonomy over the production, we're establishing a new model of collaborative theatre-making that places communities at the heart of the creative process."*

Shereen Jasmin Phillips, Creative Director of Taking Part, said:

*"Community theatre is often seen as the underdog, with this production we make it explicitly clear that our work continues to be professional, ground-breaking and relevant. With the world changing before our eyes, protest, war, and technology fast escaping our hands, it shed lights on the topics of Ai and the possibilities of a world that could defund the police. *AiTopia* is not only a unique production but the process in creating this work is an opportunity to integrate how theatre is made to further our understanding of collaboration that centres participants and makes them the creators of their own destiny."*

BSL Performance: Friday 31 January, 7.30pm
All performances will be Relaxed Performances.

-ENDS-

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Images: available [here](#)

About the Young Vic Theatre

Founded in 1970 as a space for world-premiere productions and unexpected takes on classic plays that speak urgently to our present, the Young Vic Theatre has been one of London's leading theatres for more than fifty years.

Welcoming more than 100,000 visitors a year to its London Waterloo location, the Young Vic stands out in the city's cultural landscape for balancing daring commercial drive, success and artistic flair with genuine grassroots social impact change in our neighbourhood. We forge deep connections in our neighbourhood through our Taking Part programme, where we engage with over 15,000 people every year via a wide range of projects, from skills-based workshops to on-stage performances. We give 10% of our tickets free to schools and neighbours, irrespective of box office demand, and we are committed to keeping ticket prices low.

The Young Vic's Creators Program is our space for multi- and anti-disciplinary artists, and is the only scheme of its kind. Launched in 2001, and formerly known as the Directors Program, we offer artists and producers a unique opportunity to develop their craft through opportunities that range from trainee and assistant director roles to a two-year residency through the Genesis Fellow/Associate Director position. The Genesis Network provides an online community to over 2,500 artists and producers. Each year, the recipient of the Genesis Future Directors Award directs a show in the Clare Theatre with full support from the Young Vic team.

Built upon the principles of access, innovation, and community, the Young Vic is deepening its roots nationally and internationally. Recent transfers include a *Death of a Salesman* and *The Collaboration* on Broadway, and *Best of Enemies* and Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* in the West End.

The Young Vic's founding spirit is iconoclastic and pushing at the forefront of possibility, bringing together artists and audiences on a global scale and using the power of stories to change our world.

www.youngvic.org

The Young Vic's annual activities are made possible with public funding from Arts Council England.

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We gratefully acknowledge Ian Burford and Alec Cannell for generously supporting the Young Vic's mission.