

24 September 2019

THE NATIONAL THEATRE PRODUCTION OF

A TASTE OF HONEY

BY SHELAGH DELANEY

**WILL TRANSFER TO THE WEST END IN DECEMBER FOR A LIMITED RUN
FOLLOWING A UK TOUR**

A Taste of Honey

Trafalgar Studios

5 December 2019 – 29 February 2020

The National Theatre today announced that **Bijan Sheibani's** (*Barber Shop Chronicles*, *Dance Nation*) production of ***A Taste of Honey***, the remarkable taboo-breaking 1950s play written by **Shelagh Delaney** when she was just 19, will transfer to the West End immediately following a nine-week UK tour. *A Taste of Honey* will play a limited 12-week run at **Trafalgar Studios** from 5 December in a co-production with **Trafalgar Theatre Productions**, with an opening night on Monday 9 December. Tickets will go on sale to the general public from 11 October.

Jodie Prenger (*Oliver!*, *Shirley Valentine*, *Annie*, *Abigail's Party* UK tour), leads the cast as Helen, with **Gemma Dobson** as Jo, **Durone Stokes** as Jimmie, **Stuart Thompson** as Geoffrey, and **Tom Varey** as Peter. They are joined by understudies **Liam Bessell**, **Katy Clayton**, and **Claire Eden**.

A Taste of Honey, which returns to the West End for the first time in 60 years, is designed by **Hildegard Bechtler**, who collaborated with Sheibani on the NT's 2014 Lyttelton Theatre production. This production is reimagined in an exciting new staging featuring original compositions - influenced by blues and soul music - by **Benjamin Kwasi Burrell**, and rearranged songs from the jazz era, performed live by an on stage three-piece band.

A Taste of Honey is an exhilarating depiction of working-class life in post-war Salford which offers an explosive celebration of the vulnerabilities and strengths of the female spirit in a deprived and restless world.

When her mother Helen runs off with a car salesman, feisty teenager Jo takes up with Jimmie, a sailor who promises to marry her, before he heads for the seas. Art student Geof moves in and assumes the role of surrogate parent until, misguidedly, he sends for Helen and their unconventional setup unravels.

The lighting designer is **Paul Anderson**, the movement director is **Aline David**, the sound designer is **Ian Dickinson** for Autograph, and Company Voice Work is by **Joel Trill**.

Shelagh Delaney wrote her first play, *A Taste of Honey* in ten days after seeing Rattigan's *Variation of a Theme* in Manchester. She sent the script to Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop and the play opened at the Theatre Royal, Stratford East in 1958 before transferring to the West End in 1959. It was later made into a BAFTA-winning feature film with Rita Tushingham, Dora Bryan and Murray Melvin. The play's Broadway transfer featured a cast including Joan Plowright and Angela Lansbury. Delaney's other work includes *The Lion in Love*. For television she wrote *The House That Jack Built* and was a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

Lisa Burger, Executive Director of the NT said, '*We opened the NT tour of A Taste of Honey at The Lowry in Salford last week and it was very special to be able to take Shelagh Delaney's beloved play home. It now feels very fitting to return this important play to the West End for the first time in 60 years, following its tour around the UK. After the success of Nine Night at Trafalgar Studios, we look forward to partnering with Trafalgar Theatre Productions to introduce new audiences in London to this classic.*'

A Taste of Honey opened at The Lowry, **Salford** and is playing at the Kings Theatre, **Edinburgh** this week before visiting the Marlowe Theatre, **Canterbury** (1 – 5 October); **Richmond** Theatre (7 – 12 October); Grand Opera House, **Belfast** (15 – 19 October); **Leicester** Curve (22 – 26 October); Theatre Royal, **Bath** (28 October – 2 November); Grand Theatre, **Wolverhampton** (5 – 9 November); and the **Norwich** Theatre Royal (12 – 16 November) before arriving in the West End.

Bijan Sheibani is an award winning theatre and opera director. His work for the National Theatre includes *Barber Shop Chronicles*, *A Taste of Honey*, *Emil and the Detectives*, *The Kitchen*, and *Our Class* (Olivier Nomination for Best Director). Other theatre includes *Dance Nation* and *The House of Bernarda Alba* (Almeida Theatre); *Circle Mirror Transformation* (Home, Manchester); *The Brothers Size* (Young Vic, Olivier Nomination); *Giving* (Hampstead Theatre); *Moonlight* (Donmar Warehouse); *Gone Too Far* (Royal Court Theatre, Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in an Affiliate Theatre). He was artistic director of Actors Touring Company from 2007 to 2010, and an associate director at the National Theatre from 2010 to 2015.

Hildegard Bechtler is an Olivier Award-winning theatre and opera designer whose designs for the NT include *Consent*, *Sunset at the Villa Thalia*, *Waste*, *A Taste of Honey*, *Scenes from an Execution*, *After the Dance*, *Harper Regan*, *The Hour We Knew Nothing of Each Other*, *The Hothouse*, *Thérèse Raquin*, *Exiles*, *Primo*, *Iphigenia at Aulis*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Richard II*, and *King Lear*. For the RSC she has designed *The Crucible* and *Electra*. In London's West End her designs include *Oresteia* (also Almeida Theatre), *Top Hat*, *Passion Play*, *Old Times*, *The Sunshine Boys*, *Arcadia*, *The Lady from Dubuque*, *By the Bog of Cats*, *The Master Builder*, *Footfalls*, *Hedda Gabler*, *The Misanthrope*, *The Goat or Who is Sylvia?*, *The Crucible*. On Broadway she has designed *Primo*, *Arcadia*, and *The Seagull*.

A Taste of Honey is produced in the West End by the National Theatre and Trafalgar Theatre Productions.

A Taste of Honey is supported by American Express, the NT's preferred card partner.

ENDS

For further information, images or interview opportunities contact Susie Newbery on 020 7452 3155 / snewbery@nationaltheatre.org.uk or Matilda Hunter on 020 7452 3985 / mhunter@nationaltheatre.org.uk

Booking information

A Taste of Honey

5 December 2019 – 29 February 2020

Trafalgar Studios, 14 Whitehall, Westminster, London SW1A 2DY

Tickets from £18

Book via nationaltheatre.org.uk / 020 7452 3000 or <http://www.atgtickets.com/venues/trafalgar-studios> / 0844 871 7632 from 11 October.

Social media

Twitter: @TasteofHoneyNT

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ATasteofHoney

#ATasteofHoney

Notes to Editors

Production images available [here](#).

Company biographies

Gemma Dobson's work in theatre includes *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* for *Out of Joint* at the Royal Court and on tour, and *Plenty* at Chichester Festival Theatre. Television includes *In The Club*, *Brief Encounters* and *Care*.

Jodie Prenger's work for the NT includes *One Man, Two Guvnors* for the NT in the West End; *Nancy in Oliver!* (Theatre Royal, Drury Lane); *Lady of the Lake* in *Spamalot* (Playhouse Theatre and UK Tour); *Calamity Jane* in *Calamity Jane* (UK Tour); *Tell Me on a Sunday* (UK Tour); *Miss Hannigan* in *Annie* (New Theatre, Oxford); *Shirley* in *Shirley Valentine* (UK Tour); *Kelly* in *Fat Friends The Musical* (UK Tour) and *Beverly* in *Abigail's Party* (UK tour). Television includes *Years and Years*, *Citizen Khan*, *Wizards vs Aliens*, *Candy Cabs* and *Waterloo Road*. She won the Theatregoers' Choice Whats On Stage Award for Best Supporting Actress in a Musical.

Durone Stokes' theatre credits include *Dream Girls* in the West End and *Grand Hotel* at Southwark Playhouse.

Stuart Thompson trained at LAMDA and *A Taste of Honey* is his professional stage debut.

Tom Varey's theatre credits include *Deathwatch* at the Print Room, *One Arm* at Southwark Playhouse and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Liverpool Everyman. Television includes *No Offence*, *Ackley Bridge*, *Game of Thrones*, *Dark Angel* and *The Village*. Film includes *Pond Life*.

Liam Bessell's theatre credits include *The Life and Opinions of Mary Read* for *Queynte Ladies*, and *Skellig* for *Playbox Theatre Company*.

Katy Clayton's theatre credits include *The Band* on tour and *West End*. Television includes *Little Crackers*, *Shameless*, *Holby City*, *Waterloo Road*, *The Good Samaritan*, *Where the Heart Is*, *The Street* and *Coronation Street*. Film includes *Me, Myself & Di*, *Chicken Tikka Masala* and *Re-Inventing Eddie*.

Claire Eden's theatre credits include *The Band* on tour and *West End*, *Waiting for Gaga* for *Slung Low*, *Muddy Cows* at *Stephen Joseph Theatre*, *Mexican Proverbs* at *Bradford Playhouse*, *Teechers* (also on UK tour), *Shakers* and *Say It With Flowers* at *Hull Truck Theatre*. Television includes *Coronation Street*, *Emmerdale*, *Hollyoaks*, *Candy Cabs*, *All In The Family*, and *DCI Banks*.

Marcel White's theatre credits include *Freeman* and *Green Leaves Fall* for *Strictly Arts Theatre* at the *Edinburgh Festival Fringe*, *Legacy: The Story of Martin Luther*, *The Soul in the Machine*, *Darkness Falls*, and *Stand for It* for *Saltmine Theatre Company*.

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, and the free streaming service On Demand In Schools, used by nearly 65% of UK state secondary schools. 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 <https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/>

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Trafalgar Theatre Productions

Co-founded by Sir Howard Panter and Dame Rosemary Squire, Trafalgar Entertainment is a live entertainment business. The production arm, Trafalgar Theatre Productions, is producing a group of new shows and classic musicals in London and internationally including the Lincoln Center Theater's award-winning production of *The King and I* at the London Palladium and now worldwide, *The Rocky Horror Show* worldwide; Peter Nichols' *A Day in the Death of Joe Egg* starring Toby Stephens, Claire Skinner and Patricia Hodge, English Touring Theatre and Theatre Royal Stratford East's production of *Equus* by Peter Shaffer, Joshua Harmon's *Admissions* starring Alex Kingston, new British musical Tom Morris' *The Grinning Man* and *Apologia* starring Stockard Channing at Trafalgar Studios. Trafalgar Theatre Productions is delighted to be co-producing *A Taste of Honey* at Trafalgar Studios.