

Wednesday 30 January 2019

The Duchess of Sussex makes her first official visit to the National Theatre as Royal Patron

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The Duchess of Sussex today made her first official visit to the National Theatre. Earlier this month The Duchess was announced as Patron of the National Theatre, one of two Patronages passed on to her by Her Majesty The Queen. The Duchess is a strong believer in using the arts to bring people from different backgrounds and communities together. Today Her Royal Highness had the opportunity to see some of the work the NT is doing across the UK with communities and schools as well as hearing more about training opportunities for backstage careers.

The Duchess was welcomed to the National Theatre by Director, Rufus Norris, Executive Director Lisa Burger and Chair Sir Damon Buffini before joining a workshop with members of the Public Acts company led by Public Acts Director Emily Lim.

Launched last year, Public Acts creates extraordinary acts of theatre and community. The first Public Acts production was a new musical adaptation of *Pericles* which brought over 200 people of all ages from across London together with 6 professional actors to breathe new life into the Shakespeare classic in a new musical version. Following the workshop the Duchess met with Percy, Sharon and Blessing from the Public Acts company who told her about their experiences of being part of Public Acts and performing in *Pericles* last summer on the Olivier stage.

Her Royal Highness then met current and former apprentices who are working as technicians in various departments including carpentry, metalwork and painting. The NT launched its apprenticeship and trainee programme in 2011. In most cases, the apprentices study for a level 2 or 3 qualification with a learning provider, combined with an opportunity to

put the training into practice in the workplace, guided by some of the best practitioners in the country.

The Duchess of Sussex also heard about the National reach and impact of the NT's work and met with Jenna Omeltschenko, Touring Partnerships Manager. Jenna looks after the learning and education work on the National Theatre's touring programme across the UK. She also recently worked with over 60 schools across the UK who hosted our schools' tour of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* which was performed to nearly 13,000 students.

The Duchess ended her visit by watching a performance inspired by *War Horse* by primary school children from Edith Neville Primary School from Camden which was created to mark the centenary of Armistice Day. As part of this project primary schools were invited to see *War Horse* at the National Theatre and, in partnership with the Imperial War Museum, take part in a creative programme to enrich children's understanding of World War One.

Rufus Norris, Director of the National Theatre said: "It has been a pleasure to welcome The Duchess of Sussex to the National Theatre today for her first official visit as our Royal Patron. The Duchess shares our belief that theatre has the power to bring together people from all communities and walks of life so it has been wonderful to introduce her to members of the Public Acts company today. The Duchess also heard more about our work outside of London across the country as we continue to build on our national work through our tours and learning programmes. We very much look forward to working closely with Her Royal Highness in the years to come and sharing more of our work with her".

For more information on the National Theatre, visit: <https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/>

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Notes to Editors:

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, and the free streaming service On Demand In Schools, used by nearly 60% 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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