

Pre-Show Information

Young Vic presents

The Homecoming



Written by Harold Pinter

Directed by Matthew Dunster

This document contains detailed information about the show in order to describe what you should expect when attending.

This includes information about the content warnings, plot, the space, lighting and sound, audience participation, and further access information.

All of the information in this document was correct at the time of publishing. More information will be available closer to the time of performance.

Please note that by discussing the content of the show, **the below information will contain key plot points and descriptions of what happens in the performance.**

If you would like to receive elements of this information **but avoid these spoilers, please do not read the section at the end of this document entitled 'Show Synopsis'.**

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our Box Office team:

E-mail: boxoffice@youngvic.org

Phone number: 020 7922 2922

Show Information:

Running Time: 2 hours 10 minutes with an interval

Content warnings:

- Themes of misogyny and gender stereotypes
- Strong language including explicit sexual language and sexist slurs
- Threats of violence and murder, particularly violence against women
- References to rape, sexual slavery, and scenes of a sexual nature
- Scenes of physical violence and onstage death
- Derogatory language about sex workers
- Ableist language

Production Warnings:

- Haze (this will be particularly heavy at the beginning of each act).
- Sudden blackouts
- Loud and sudden jazz music during scene changes

- Loud and sudden drumming sound effects
- Shouting
- Smoke from stage cigars and cigarettes that contain no tobacco or nicotine
- Steam from replica fireplace

Please note these show warnings are subject to change until Tuesday 5th December, when the show will be finalised. For more information about when these moments occur in the show, please read the show synopsis below.

The Auditorium

The Homecoming

This show will take place in our main auditorium, which is the larger of our three performance spaces.

For this performance, the space will be in a ‘thrust’ arrangement, meaning there will be seats on three sides of the auditorium facing the stage. The maximum capacity is 442.

Access to the main auditorium is via the upstairs (rows J - K) and downstairs (rows A – G) via the main doors. Row T is in the tech gallery. Our ushers are on hand to help you, they wear red t-shirts and jumpers with our logo.

Please arrive at the Young Vic with your ticket ready on your phone or have it printed before you enter or you can collect from box office.

Facilities:

There are toilets located on the ground and first floor at the Young Vic, via The Cut Bar. We have gender-neutral and accessible/baby changing toilets. Sanitary bins are available in all.

Building Accessibility:

All indoor venues will also be accessible with lifts & ramps and toilet provided.

Assistance Dogs:

Assistance dogs are always welcome at the Young Vic, if you are planning a visit please let us know in advance which performance you will be attending by calling our box office on **020 7922 2922** or e-mailing boxoffice@youngvic.org and we will be happy to look after your dog during the show.

Access for all:

For full information about our access measures, please visit our Access for all page, on our website here: www.youngvic.org/visit-us/access-for-all

Show Synopsis:

Please note the information below is subject to change until Tuesday 5th December, when the show will be finalised.

Blue – lights / haze

Green – sound

Purple – distressing themes

The Homecoming centres around a patriarchal family led by Max (**Jarred Harris**), completed by his brother Sam (**Nicolas Tennant**), and his sons Joey (**David England**), Lenny (**Joe Cole**), and Teddy (**Robert Emms**). We find out very quickly Max's wife, Jessie, passed away several years ago. Teddy is away in America when the play begins and arrives partway through with his wife Ruth (**Lisa Diveney**) whom the family has never met.

There will be lots of haze in the pre-set which will slowly settle as the play begins.

Loud jazz music will play before the performance begins and turns off when Lenny comes onstage.

The play begins in the evening in the family home. Max enters the living room where Lenny is reading the paper, and the two begin to argue. Max demands things from Lenny, like the newspaper and a cigarette, but Lenny ignores him. It is clear that Max's power over his family is waning. Max tries to intimidate his son by bragging about the infamous man he used to be along with his brother Mac. He also talks insultingly about his dead wife, Lenny's mother. He threatens Lenny with violence, and Lenny mocks him for it.

Uncle Sam arrives in his chauffeur uniform, and Lenny greets him. Sam explains he has spent the day driving an American to the airport. Max greets him derisively, but Sam explains that he takes pride in being renowned as a good chauffeur based on his ability to read what his customers want from him. He tells the two men that he had a conversation with a client about serving in WW2. Max remarks that it's strange Sam remains unmarried, and begins to make crude jokes, asking Sam if he ever sleeps with women in the back of his taxi. Sam is offended by the suggestion, seeming to have more delicate sensibilities than his brother. He fondly recalls driving Max's late wife, Jessie, around in his cab, which seems to be a sore point between the brothers.

Joey, the youngest brother, enters and says he is hungry, evoking an angry response from Max, who tells him to look for a mother to take care of him. Lenny recalls bitterly that their father used to look after them when they were children

and leaves. Joey explains that he has been training at the boxing ring, looking for pride or approval from his father, but Max only criticises him, and Joey leaves. Max tells Sam to leave as well, but Sam stays, eager to clarify that he always treated Jessie respectfully when he drove her, trusted by Max unlike their other brother Mac, whom Sam holds a distinct dislike for even though he has died. Max responds by saying he plans to kick Sam out of the house the moment he is no longer bringing in income for the family. Sam insists this is partially his house, as it belonged to their father and mother. Max recalls being cared for by his father as a child.

There is a sudden blackout to end the scene. Loud jazz music will be played during the scene change.

When the lights come back up, Teddy and Ruth are standing on the threshold of the living room, having just arrived back from America. They seem awkward together, and Teddy is very concerned about not making any noise to wake his family. Ruth is concerned that their children might be missing them, but Teddy insists they must stay a while, remarking on the importance of returning to his childhood home. He repeatedly reassures Ruth that she doesn't need to be nervous about meeting his family, even though she insists she isn't. Teddy says they must be up before the rest of the family the next morning to greet them and suggests they should both go to bed. Ruth suddenly decides she wants some air and leaves for a short stroll with the house key, despite Teddy's protests that it is late.

Lenny comes down to find Teddy alone in the living room. The two greet each other neutrally and exchange stilted small talk about their father's health and other topics. Teddy explains he is only staying for a few days, and eventually goes upstairs to bed. Lenny goes to his room to get a small clock and sits in the living room tinkering with it, smoking a cigarette.

Ruth returns and she and Lenny introduce themselves to each other. Lenny complains that the ticking clock has stopped him from sleeping and pours Ruth a cup of water. Lenny asks how Ruth knows Teddy, but seems unwilling to believe that Ruth is Teddy's wife. Ruth explains that she and Teddy are travelling around

Europe, having just visited Venice, and Lenny says he thinks he would have been stationed in Venice if he'd been old enough to serve in World War 2. Lenny suddenly asks if he can hold Ruth's hand. When Ruth asks why, **Lenny tells a disturbing story about how he recently beat up and almost killed a sex worker whom he suspected of having a venereal disease.** Lenny explains that Teddy is his favourite brother, and he frequently wishes he was as sensitive as Teddy is with his doctorate in philosophy. He then tells another story about how he beat up an old lady who asked him for help moving something into her house. He then tries to take Ruth's glass, but she resists, calling him "Leonard" which bothers him. He explains this is the name his mother used to call him. Ruth responds by threatening to seduce Lenny. Lenny is alarmed by this, not knowing how to react. Ruth goes upstairs, and Lenny shouts up after her, trying to establish if she is serious.

The shouting wakes Max, who angrily comes downstairs and accuses Lenny of being drunk. He demands to know who Lenny was talking to, but Lenny insists that he was thinking out loud. Max refuses to let it go, and Lenny changes the topic by asking about the night he was conceived, wondering if he was an accident. Max refuses to answer, and Lenny jokes that he should ask his mother, but can't because she's dead. Max spits at him, but Lenny just calmly states he'll now have to Hoover the carpet tomorrow. Max goes back upstairs, leaving Lenny sitting in the living room.

There is a sudden blackout to end the scene. Loud jazz music will be played during the scene change.

Lights come back up on Joey in front of a mirror, combing his hair and practicing some boxing moves. Max comes in, and Joey stops boxing and sits down with a newspaper. Max complains that he hates the living room and would prefer to be in the kitchen, but he has been driven out by the noise of Sam doing the dishes. Max invites Joey to come and see a football game with him, but Joey declines, explaining he is training this afternoon. Max is frustrated by this, so he calls Sam, who comes out of the kitchen where he's been doing the dishes. Max insists Sam is making so much noise out of resentment towards him, despite Sam's insistence that he is just cleaning up. Max demands that Sam get over his feelings of

resentment, reminding Sam that their father asked Max to look after his brothers on his deathbed. Max shows his disdain for Sam, remembering when they were children and Sam was unhelpful in the family butcher shop, unlike Max and Mac. He takes all the credit for looking after his brothers and demands of Sam “What have you done?” Sam responds by telling Max that Max can finish the cleaning up, pushing the dishcloth into his hands.

In the middle of this argument, Ruth and Teddy come downstairs in dressing gowns, and the room falls silent. Teddy awkwardly explains that they overslept and had intended to come down earlier. Max is furious that he didn't know Teddy was in the house and begins to call Ruth insulting names for a "prostitute". Teddy tries to interrupt, explaining that Ruth and he are married. Joey says that Max is getting unreasonably angry due to his old age, and Max strikes Joey and then Sam, who moves forward to help him.

This scene will have staged physical violence and shouting.

Loud sudden drumming will be played to further intensify the physical violence.

Max then asks Ruth if she has children, and when she answers yes, he has a sudden change of heart and brings Teddy into an embrace. **There is a sudden blackout to end the scene.**

This is the end of Act 1. There will be a 20-minute interval at this point where people can leave the auditorium to get a drink or go to the toilet.

Act 2 opens with all the family sitting having coffee after lunch. Max praises Ruth's coffee and begins to reminisce about what it would be like if his wife Jessie was still with them. He praises Jessie, calling her the moral backbone of the family. He recalls one particularly happy memory when he thought he was going to come into a large amount of money, and promised to buy Jessie expensive clothes, though it is revealed this change in their fortunes never happened. Max's brief happy moment ends, and he begins to berate Sam for not yet having left for work. Max insists that his job as a butcher is more manly than Sam's job as a driver and speaks insultingly about his wife and family whom he supported. He ends by accusing Sam of not having killed anyone in the war, and Sam leaves.

Max's demeanour suddenly shifts, and he turns to Teddy, congratulating him on his marriage and his career. Ruth responds, saying Teddy was worried about how his father would view her, and ambiguously saying she was different when she and Teddy first met, but the men dismiss this. The conversation moves to Teddy and Ruth's family, with Teddy praising Ruth's successes as a wife and mother back in America. A strange moment of competition emerges between Lenny and Teddy, with Lenny asking Teddy theoretical questions on theology which Teddy does not know the answers to. Ruth joins in this theological debate, sensuously drawing attention to her own body. There is a pause in the conversation as the men process her words. Max breaks the silence, reminding Joey it's time he went to the gym to train. Joey seems transfixed by Ruth but follows Lenny and Max out of the room.

Alone with Ruth, Teddy suggests they cut their trip short, saying he wants to go home to their sons. Ruth questions this sudden change, asking him if he doesn't like his family. Teddy denies this but still argues they should leave, saying he'll go pack their bags and insisting Ruth rest. Teddy goes upstairs leaving Ruth in the living room. Lenny comes in, and the two begin to talk about the changing seasons, leading them to discuss clothes. Ruth reveals she used to be a model before she got married. She tells a story of how she used to go to do modelling at a country house by a lake. Teddy comes downstairs with their suitcases and tells Ruth to put on her coat so they can leave. Lenny puts on the record player and asks Ruth for one dance before she leaves. Ruth agrees, and the two dance, and then begin to kiss.

Joey and Max enter the room and witness what is happening. Joey derogatorily refers to Ruth as promiscuous, but then joins Lenny and Ruth. Joey and Ruth embrace on the sofa while Max cheerily talks to Teddy, telling him to return soon and that he shouldn't be ashamed for having married a woman beneath him. Joey and Ruth roll off the sofa and onto the floor. As Lenny moves to join in, Ruth jumps up and begins demanding food and whiskey from Lenny and Joey. They eagerly bring her whatever she asks for. Ruth asks Teddy if his family have read his critical works and he rants that they wouldn't understand them, that he is above their behavior.

There is a sudden blackout to end the scene.

Lights come back up to show Sam and Teddy sitting in the living room, Teddy wearing his coat and with the suitcases by his side. Sam asks Teddy if he remembers his uncle MacGregor. He then reveals Teddy is his favourite nephew, and that Teddy was his mother's favourite of her sons while she was alive. Lenny comes in, remarking his surprise that Teddy hasn't left. He goes to the kitchen to get his cheese roll only to find it missing. Teddy admits he ate it because he wanted it and refuses to apologise. Lenny lectures Teddy, saying he needs to make more of an effort to rejoin the family unit after being away.

Joey comes downstairs and Lenny's questions make it clear he has been in bed with Ruth. He embarrassedly admits they haven't gone "all the way" in the two hours they've had. The brothers debate whether Ruth is a tease, or if the problem stems from Joey's inadequacy in the bedroom. **Joey and Lenny tell a very disturbing story about when they abducted and raped two women.** Max enters and sympathises with Joey, questioning whether Teddy faces the same lack of satisfaction. When Sam and Lenny suggest he doesn't as he is Ruth's rightful husband, Joey gets angry and threatens violence. Max suggests a woman's presence in the house might be a positive thing and wonders if they should ask Ruth to stay with them. Teddy disagrees, arguing that he and Ruth must get home to their children, and Sam agrees. Max, Joey and Lenny ignore this and begin planning how they will make the money for Ruth's allowance if she stays with them. Max insists they must keep her in luxury, so it doesn't reflect poorly on them.

As the men wonder where the money will come from, Lenny has the idea to have Ruth earn money through sex work. Joey disagrees, insisting he doesn't want to share her, but Max enthusiastically agrees. Lenny excitedly begins to plan the business side of things, asking Teddy if he will take business cards to advertise Ruth's services to distinguished clientele in America. Ruth comes downstairs in the middle of this discussion and sits down. Teddy awkwardly puts forward the idea that Ruth stays with his family for longer if she wishes, assuring her he will take care of their children until she gets back. Ruth worries she would be too much trouble, and Max reassures her that they have been missing a woman's

presence in the house since his wife died. Teddy explains that Ruth would have to make some money to help support herself, reminding her that she can always return home with him as an alternative. Max and Lenny jump in, assuring Ruth that they will get her a flat in town if she stays. Ruth begins to bargain with them about the size of the flat, and they give in to her wishes. Ruth insists she will need a signed inventory assuring that all her needs will be met, including new clothes and a maid. Lenny and Max enthusiastically agree to give her everything she wants if she agrees to stay.

Suddenly, Sam announces that MacGregor slept with Jessie, Max's wife, in the back of his cab at one point when he was driving them, and then collapses on the floor. **This scene may be distressing to watch, as the actor playing Sam will act as though he is in pain. Loud sudden drumming will be played to further intensify this moment.**

Max and Lenny debate whether he is dead, but then get distracted by Ruth, who agrees that she will stay. Teddy gathers up his belongings and bids goodbye to his family. Teddy has an amicable goodbye with Max, who gives him a picture of himself for his grandchildren. He also bids goodbye to Lenny, Joey, and finally Ruth. Teddy departs, leaving Ruth with Joey, Lenny and Max. Joey goes to where Ruth is sitting and puts his head in her lap, and she begins to stroke his hair. Max paces, frantically questioning Lenny about whether Ruth finds him attractive or only thinks of him as an old man, receiving no reply. Working himself into a frenzy, suddenly paranoid that Ruth is playing them, he collapses next to Ruth and demands that she kiss him, but she makes no move to do so. The play ends.

If you would like any further clarification or have any questions, please do get in touch with our Box Office team.

Email: boxoffice@youngvic.org

Phone number: 020 7922 2922

See you soon!

Welcome Team