

# Young Vic

Press Release - Monday 16 December 2024

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## JAMES GRAHAM'S *PUNCH* EXTENDS RUN AT LONDON'S YOUNG VIC THEATRE



- Olivier Award-winning playwright James Graham's (*Best of Enemies*, *Dear England*, *Sherwood*) latest five-star show extends its run at London's Young Vic Theatre by two weeks due to public demand following a critically acclaimed, sell-out run at Nottingham Playhouse.
- Julie Hesmondhalgh (*Coronation Street*, *Mr Bates vs The Post Office*), Tony Hirst (*Coronation Street*, *Hollyoaks*) and David Shields (*Masters of the Air*, *Black Mirror*) reprise their roles in the powerhouse production, running in the Young Vic Main House from 1 March to 26 April with press night on 6 March 2025.
- Tickets are available now at [www.youngvic.org](http://www.youngvic.org)

The Young Vic Theatre today announces a two week extension to the London transfer of *Punch* due to public demand, now set to run in the Young Vic Main House from 1 March to 26 April with press night on 6 March 2025.

*Punch* is the latest five-star sell-out show from Olivier Award-winning playwright James Graham (*Best of Enemies*, *Dear England*, *This House*, *Sherwood*) and Nottingham Playhouse, which brings Jacob Dunne's powerful and moving memoir to the stage.

Based on the book *Right From Wrong*, *Punch* tells an extraordinary true story of tragedy, forgiveness, redemption and reform, and has ignited discussions across the country from

theatres to courthouses to the House of Commons. *Punch* is directed by Nottingham Playhouse Artistic Director **Adam Penford** with production design by **Anna Fleischle**.

*Jacob Dunne, a teenager from Nottingham, spends his Saturday nights seeking thrills with his friends. One fateful evening, an impulsive punch leads to fatal consequences. After serving prison time, Jacob finds himself lost and directionless. Searching for answers, Joan and David – the parents of his victim James – ask to meet, sparking a profound transformation in Jacob's life.*

Original cast members **Julie Hesmondhalgh** (*Coronation Street, Mr Bates vs The Post Office*), **Tony Hirst** (*Coronation Street, Hollyoaks*) and **David Shields** (*Masters of the Air, Black Mirror*) reprise their roles as Joan, David and Jacob, respectively. The cast is completed by **Alec Boaden** (*Masters of the Air, Random Acts*) as Raf, DS Villiers and Sam; **Shalisha James-Davis** (*Mary Queen of Scots, Romeo and Juliet*) as Clare and Nicola; and **Emma Pallant** (*Cowboys, Queenie*) as Wendy, Sandra and Jacob's Mum.

*Punch* is currently nominated for Best New Play in the 25th Annual WhatsOnStage Awards as well as Best Supporting Performer in a Play for Julie Hesmondhalgh. Earlier this year, David Shields won the award for Best Performance in a Play at the UK Theatre Awards for his role in *Punch*. Playwright James Graham was awarded the 2024 Kevin Pakenham Prize from the Longford Trust for *Punch* and its work in championing prison reform.

**James Graham, Playwright, said:** *"This play and the incredible story it tells could not mean more to me. It feels like one of the most moving and urgent real-life dramas I've had the honour of translating to the stage. But despite its important themes of justice, forgiveness, and the human cost of a decade of neglect in these communities, I'm so proud of the surprisingly funny and oddly hopeful show that Adam Penford and the cast have built. I've never not watched without ugly crying and can't wait to share it with a wider audience."*

James Graham's stage adaptation of Alan Bleasdale's *Boys from the Blackstuff* begins a UK tour at Theatre Royal Windsor from 29 January 2025 and his Olivier-Award winning play *Dear England* returns to the National Theatre from 10 March 2025 until 24 May 2025 with further dates at the Lowry in Salford, from 29 May until 29 June 2025.

**Post-show talks** will be held to discuss the themes of the show with **Jacob Dunne** and guests following the performance on **11 March, 7.30pm**, and on **19 March, 2.30pm** with a panel of guests, with further details to be announced.

Lighting Design is by **Robbie Butler**, Sound Design and Composition by **Alexandra Faye Braithwaite**, Movement Direction by **Leanne Pinder**, Movement Consultation by **Lynne Page**, Casting by **Christopher Worrall CDG**, Voice and Dialect Coaching by **Sally Hague**, Fight Direction by **Kev McCurdy**, Production Consultation by **Jacob Dunne**.

The **Young Vic** presents the **Nottingham Playhouse** production of ***Punch*** in association with **KPPL Productions** and **Mark Gordon Pictures**.

This production is dedicated to James Hodgkinson and all victims of one-punch.

Post-show talks: Tue 11 March, 7.30pm, Wed 19 March, 2.30pm

Audio Described Performances: Fri 14 March, 7.30pm & Sat 22 March, 2.30pm

Captioned Performances: Mon 17 March, 7.30pm & Wed 26 March, 2.30pm  
Relaxed Performances: Mon 17 March, 7.30pm & Sat 29 March, 2.30pm  
BSL Performance: Tue 18 March, 7.30pm  
Sensory Adapted Performance: Fri 28 March, 7.30pm

**-ENDS-**

**Images and biographies:** [available here](#)

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**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](http://www.youngvic.org)

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

We thank Lambeth Council and Southwark Council for their ongoing support.

Additional support is provided by the Genesis Foundation.

Punch is generously supported by The Charlotte Aitken Trust.

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

Thank you to all of our donors who make our work possible.

### **About Nottingham Playhouse**

Nottingham Playhouse is dedicated to making bold and thrilling world-class theatre, proudly made in Nottingham. In 2023, it was named the UK's Most Welcoming Theatre in the UK Theatre Awards.

Nottingham Playhouse is one of the country's leading producing theatres, renowned for creating ambitious and diverse productions, many of which have toured across the UK and have transferred to the West End and Broadway.

James Graham's world premiere of *Punch*, based on Jacob Dunne's book *Right from Wrong* and directed by Nottingham Playhouse Artistic Director Adam Penford, will transfer to the Young Vic in March 2025. The critically acclaimed, sell-out 5-star production received standing ovations every night and unprecedented audience feedback. James Graham was awarded the Kevin Pakenham Award (Longford Trust) for *Punch*, and David Shields won the Best Performance in a Play (UK Theatre Awards 2024).

In autumn 2024, Adam Penford directed a brand-new, non-replica production of the smash-hit musical *Dear Evan Hansen*, which is now on an extensive UK wide tour into summer 2025.

Nottingham Playhouse has recently been shortlisted for 9 WhatsOnStage Awards for *Punch*, *Dear Evan Hansen*, *Minority Report* and *A Raisin in the Sun*, and 9 Broadway World Awards for *Punch* and for Best Front of House Staff.

The theatre's Participation department offers over 60 different programmes which create life-changing experiences for the local community and ensures it is a space where everyone feels they belong.

Nottingham Playhouse nurtures the next generation of theatre-makers through their extensive artist support programme, Amplify, which has over 750 active members and includes an annual Amplify Festival.

Nottingham Playhouse is committed to continually improving its sustainability standards across productions and its Grade II\* listed building and in 2024 received a Carbon Literate Organisation Silver Award.

**The original production of *Punch* at Nottingham Playhouse was sponsored by Nottingham Trent University.**

**KPPL Productions** is a theatre and film company with an explicit social justice focus. Director Phyllida Lloyd and Producer Kate Pakenham first worked together on the Donmar Shakespeare Trilogy (2012-2017) which they presented on stage in London and New York, on screen, and in prisons and schools. KPPL is currently working in partnership in the criminal justice and education sectors, as well as developing a variety of projects for stage and screen. The company's work combines compelling story-telling with dynamic partnerships which enliven audiences towards critical social issues of our time. In Spring 2024, KPPL co-produced the National Theatre's production of '*GRENFELL: in the words of survivors*' at St Ann's Warehouse, Brooklyn.

**Mark Gordon Pictures** is an international film, television, and theatre production company. In 2020, with its history in film (*Saving Private Ryan*, *Speed*, *The Day After Tomorrow*, 2012, *Murder on the Orient Express*, *Source Code*, *Molly's Game*, *The Patriot*) and television (*Grey's Anatomy*, *Criminal*

*Minds, Ray Donovan, Designated Survivor, Quantico, The Rookie*), Mark Gordon Pictures expanded into theatre in the US and the UK. Broadway credits include *Life of Pi*; *The Piano Lesson* (nominated - TONY for Best Revival of a Play); and *POTUS*. Off-Broadway and regional US theatre credits include *Teeth* (Playwrights Horizons and, beginning Fall 2024, New World Stages), a new musical by Anna K. Jacobs and Pulitzer and TONY winner Michael R. Jackson; *Highway Patrol* (Goodman Theatre); *Nollywood Dreams* (MCC); and *The Buddy System* (Circle in the Square Downtown). UK credits include *People, Places, and Things* (West End); *Punch* (Nottingham Playhouse); *The Old Man and the Pool* (West End); *School Girls; Or, the African Mean Girls Play* (Lyric Hammersmith); and *Brace Brace* (Royal Court).