

Welcome to this audio introduction to *The Collaboration* by Anthony McCarten, directed by Kwame Kwei-Armah.

The audio described performance will be on Friday 18th March at 7.30pm. The touch tour will be at 6pm – please book your place with the box office. *The Collaboration* will be described by Eleanor Margolies and Miranda Yates. The performance lasts for 2 hours, including a 20-minute interval. This introduction will last about eight minutes.

The Young Vic website warns that the show contains themes of racism, violence, death, abortion, grief, and body hatred. There are moments of nudity. There are references to drug use, guns and police brutality, as well as the use of strong, homophobic and racist language. There is also the use of loud music and cigarette smoke and flashing lights directed into the auditorium.

In New York, in 1984, fifty-six-year-old Andy Warhol's star is falling. Jean-Michel Basquiat is the new wonder-kid taking the art world by storm. When Basquiat agrees to collaborate with Warhol on a new exhibition, it soon becomes the talk of the city.

There are four characters.

Andy Warhol is in his mid-fifties, thin to the point of being gaunt, with very pale skin and white hair in a messy bob. He wears glasses with clear acrylic frames, and has a compact camera on a lanyard round his neck. Andy first appears in grey jeans, white shirt and tie and a black leather jacket. He often wraps his arms protectively around his chest or paces around the space with barely suppressed agitation. He later

wears a black polo neck and blue jeans or black jeans and glasses with bright red frames.

Jean-Michel Basquiat is a 24-year-old black man with Afro hair in spikes on the top of his head, the sides shorn close. He wears a crumpled mid-brown suit over a scarlet Adidas t-shirt, and white trainers. When Jean first appears, he has a deceptively shambling appearance, hands deep in his pockets, lurching and rambling around the space, but his eyes are alert, missing nothing. To paint, he wears a loose cream shirt open over a grey t-shirt.

Bruno Bischofberger is a Swiss art dealer, a white man in his mid-forties, short and slight in build, with neatly cut dark hair. He wears a buttoned up green wool jacket that has an Alpine feel, with leather edging on the pockets and collar, along with black trousers. On another occasion, he wears a navy blazer, very much the discreet money man.

In Act 2, we meet one further character, **Maya**, a girlfriend of Jean. Maya is 27 with light brown skin and long wavy brown hair that's partly pulled back in a ponytail, and partly falling loose down her back to her waist. She wears lots of eye makeup and big hoop earrings. Her cropped, stonewashed blue denim jeans are teamed with a cropped, off the shoulder t-shirt, and she carries a large black leather shoulder bag.

When we come into the auditorium, it feels like a nightclub, with coloured spotlights swirling over the seats and a DJ playing in the corner of the balcony on the right. The DJ, Xana, is black with bleached blonde cropped hair and wears an orange jacket, with studded black leather belt/braces combo worn over the jacket.

A raised stage is at one end of the space, with bench seats on stalls level running down to it in a central block and more seats wrapping around the space on gallery levels. The stage is about a metre above floor level, and is open to us as we come in. There are four large projection screens which show images of New York in the 1970s and 80s, apartment blocks with metal fire escapes zigzagging down the façade, children playing in the street.

With some variations, the set represents the loft studios of both artists and a Soho gallery.

At the back of the art gallery, there is a wall of bricks painted white on which hang two paintings in bright colours and lively, abstract strokes. Most of the paintings are imagined to be hanging on the invisible fourth wall between us and the stage. The acting area is framed by projections of New York apartments, as if seen through large windows divided into square panels, and the wooden floor is paint-stained.

Andy's loft apartment at 860 Broadway is high-ceilinged and bright with white walls. It contains very few items. A panelled glass wall divides the main space from a lobby area at the back. In the main space there are two tubular metal upright chairs with burgundy vinyl seats. On the left-hand wall, there are three of Warhol's silkscreened canvases of Campbell's soup cans in vivid turquoise and pink. A slide projector stands on a wobbly trolley.

In the rear, lobby area, to the left, there is an iron pillar running from floor to ceiling, next to an unseen window. A phone and cassette player stand nearby. Two more

silkscreened images by Warhol of Marilyn Monroe hang on a white-painted brick wall, next to the entrance of the apartment. One Marilyn has blobs of turquoise on her lips and eyelids; the second print is based on the same photograph, but in pink. On the right-hand wall of the lobby, a kettle and two mugs stand on a small table, next to the door to an unseen room.

In the second act, three years on, we are in Jean's studio in the East Village. In contrast to Andy's minimal working space, Jean's studio is crammed with stuff, with cardboard boxes and pots of paint clustered on the floor to both sides. There's a two-seater sofa with burgundy vinyl upholstery facing a cluttered coffee table towards the back on the right, and on the opposite side of the room, a large white refrigerator covered in doodles in black marker pen. A very small tv set, with a screen about six inches wide, stands on a high stool to the left, next to an easel and canvases leaning against the wall, and a long mirror on a stand, draped with clothes. Jean now wears a baggy blue sweatshirt, his locks have grown long and wild.

Cast and Production Credits

Andy Warhol Paul Bettany

Jean-Michel Basquiat Jeremy Pope

Bruno Bischofberger Alec Newman

Maya Sofia Barclay

Writer **Anthony McCarten**

Director **Kwame Kwei-Armah**

Set & Costume Designer **Anna Fleischle**

Lighting Designer **Mark Henderson**

Sound Designer **Emma Laxton**

Projection Designer **Duncan McLean**

Casting **Isabella Odoffin CDG**

Composer **Ayanna Witter-Johnson**

DJ/VJ **Xana**

Assistant Director & Production Dramaturg **Olivia Nwabali**

Associate Designer **Tina Torbey**

That's the end of this audio introduction to ***The Collaboration***. If you have any questions please contact the Young Vic box office on 020 7922 2922.