# National Theatre issues trigger warning for Hamlet amid modernisation drive



The National Theatre in London has issued a trigger warning for its upcoming production of Shakespeare's "Hamlet," advising ticket buyers of the play's themes including death, grief, suicide, madness, violence, and coercive behaviour. The production, which is part of artistic director Indhu Rubasingham's inaugural season, is set to open in September at the Lyttelton Theatre with a press night on October 2, followed by a global broadcast through the National Theatre's digital platform, NT Live.

Starring Olivier Award-winner Hiran Abeysekera as the Danish prince, the play will revisit the well-known story that culminates in a fatal duel resulting in the deaths of most principal characters, including Hamlet himself. The warning issued by the theatre reads: "This production contains themes of grief and death, including suicide and the loss of a parent, depictions of madness, violence, and coercive behaviour."

The decision to include a trigger warning on a classic play that has been a cornerstone of English literature for over four centuries has sparked debate among theatre-goers and commentators. Roy Schwartz, a historian and author, told the Daily Mail that the warning is unnecessary and described it as "gratuitous" for a work so widely known to contain mature subject matter. Schwartz questioned whether trigger warnings should then be applied to all history books, religious texts, and sermons, suggesting that it infantilises culture by shielding audiences from reality.

Writer Simon Evans also criticised the move, calling trigger warnings "tiresome, infantilising and ultimately counterproductive." He remarked that attaching such a warning to one of the supreme works of art in the Western canon, especially one famous for its exploration of suicide, was "risible in the extreme." Evans suggested that all theatres, bookshops, and cinemas should adopt a single warning for human experiences contained in art and literature.

This production of "Hamlet" is part of wider initiatives at the National Theatre under Indhu Rubasingham, the venue's first female and ethnic minority artistic director, who has introduced plans to modernise and diversify the theatre’s output. Among these plans is the staging of rap adaptations of classic Greek tragedies, aimed at broadening the appeal of the theatre to new audiences.

In line with this modernisation effort, the National Theatre is expanding its digital reach through National Theatre At Home, a streaming service launched in 2020 at £9.99 per month. This platform allows subscribers to watch productions from home, with ambitions to create a "Netflix for theatre." National Theatre executive director Kate Varah highlighted the global aspirations of the theatre, stating that its audience now numbers 28 million annually and spans 184 countries worldwide.

Additionally, there are reports that grime artist Stormzy, real name Michael Omari Owuo Jr, has been recruited to lead a confidential diversity project at the National Theatre. The inclusion of such a prominent figure underscores the theatre's commitment to diversifying its creative voices and expanding its cultural reach.

The National Theatre's run of "Hamlet" begins on September 25 at the Lyttelton Theatre, with performances running into the autumn alongside the global NT Live broadcast.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/productions/hamlet/> - The National Theatre's official page for their upcoming production of 'Hamlet' in September 2025, featuring Hiran Abeysekera as Hamlet and directed by Indhu Rubasingham.
2. <https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/whats-on/hamlet-2015/> - Information about the 2015 production of 'Hamlet' at the National Theatre, starring Benedict Cumberbatch, providing context on previous performances of the play.
3. <https://www.ntlive.com/> - The National Theatre Live platform, which broadcasts performances globally, including the upcoming 'Hamlet' production.
4. <https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/productions/hamlet/> - Details about the National Theatre's 'Hamlet' production, including themes of death, grief, suicide, madness, violence, and coercive behaviour.
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7. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-14664757/Trigger-warning-Hamlet-National-Theatre-death-grief-madness.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data