# Imelda Staunton and daughter Bessie Carter reimagine Mrs Warren’s Profession at the Garrick Theatre



The revival of George Bernard Shaw’s "Mrs Warren’s Profession" at the Garrick Theatre is a testament to the longevity of the play’s themes and the unique dynamic between its lead actors, Imelda Staunton and Bessie Carter. This production, under the direction of Dominic Cooke, is not the first of its kind featuring a mother-daughter pairing; however, it boldly reimagines the complexities of their relationship, casting an unflinching light on the intimate yet often fraught exchanges that characterise their on-stage interaction.

Carter takes on the role of Vivie, a determined young woman recently graduated from Cambridge, who is eager to embark on a career in law. Her mother, Kitty, portrayed by Staunton, runs a string of brothels, revealing a conflict that is as explosive as it is profoundly revealing. The play’s historical context becomes apparent in its exploration of sex work—not merely as a profession, but as a lens through which to scrutinise broader societal issues, including capitalism and hypocrisy. The themes resonated powerfully in Victorian times, and they hold an equally stark relevance today.

Director Dominic Cooke’s interpretation of the play maintains fidelity to the original, yet at times feels a touch muted. While Chloe Lamford’s design offers a vibrant set reminiscent of an English garden, the production occasionally lacks the dynamism necessary to fully convey Shaw's sharp social critiques. Though moments between Staunton and Carter ignite the narrative, surrounding them are various secondary characters who seem to dilute the potency of the central conflict. Critics have noted that certain figures, like Mr. Praed, might feel extraneous to the emotional core of the drama, serving more as echoes of the primary themes than agents of action.

However, it is within the moments of confrontation and dialogue between mother and daughter that the play revitalises its energy. Each sees the world through a different lens: Kitty oscillates between brazen honesty and selfishness, while Vivie embodies an almost puritanical moral stance. This conflict creates a rich tapestry of generational tensions, particularly evident in their nuanced exchanges that challenge audiences to reconsider their affections and allegiances as conflicts unfold.

The production delivers nuanced arguments about the nature of sex work, suggesting that it is not an immoral act in itself, but rather a symptom of the societal exploitation of women. The piece implicates the established norms, presenting a critique of high society and the church. Amid the play’s static moments, its intellectual vitality remains riveting—a testament to Shaw’s prescience in grappling with issues of agency and societal expectation.

In a contemporary setting, where discussions about gender, economic security, and the rights of women are more urgent than ever, the play’s exploration of these themes resonates deeply. As audiences engage with Kitty and Vivie’s fraught relationship, they are invited to reflect on the complexities of familial duty, societal pressures, and the often painful legacies of choices made by previous generations.

This revival thus not only honours Shaw’s original vision but also breathes new life into it, compelling modern audiences to confront uncomfortable truths about class, morality, and the enduring influence of familial relationships.

As the curtain rises on this production, it frames a critical conversation on the intersections of personal and societal morality, making "Mrs Warren’s Profession" a relevant and thought-provoking experience for contemporary theatre-goers.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1: [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2025/may/23/mrs-warrens-profession-review-imelda-staunton-garrick-theatre-london), [[3]](https://www.whatsonstage.com/news/imelda-staunton-and-bessie-carter-led-mrs-warrens-profession-starts-performances_1677170/), [[4]](https://www.soniafriedman.com/news/imelda-staunton-and-bessie-carter-to-star-in-mrs.-warren%27s-profession-directed-by-dominic-cooke)
2. Paragraph 2: [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2025/may/23/mrs-warrens-profession-review-imelda-staunton-garrick-theatre-london), [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2025/jan/09/imelda-staunton-and-daughter-bessie-carter-to-star-in-west-end-revival-of-mrs-warrens-profession)
3. Paragraph 3: [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2025/may/23/mrs-warrens-profession-review-imelda-staunton-garrick-theatre-london), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2025/may/23/mrs-warrens-profession-review-imelda-staunton-garrick-theatre-london)
4. Paragraph 4: [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2025/may/23/mrs-warrens-profession-review-imelda-staunton-garrick-theatre-london), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2025/may/23/mrs-warrens-profession-review-imelda-staunton-garrick-theatre-london)
5. Paragraph 5: [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2025/may/23/mrs-warrens-profession-review-imelda-staunton-garrick-theatre-london), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2025/may/23/mrs-warrens-profession-review-imelda-staunton-garrick-theatre-london), [[7]](https://www.timeout.com/london/theatre/mrs-warrens-profession)
6. Paragraph 6: [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2025/may/23/mrs-warrens-profession-review-imelda-staunton-garrick-theatre-london), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2025/may/23/mrs-warrens-profession-review-imelda-staunton-garrick-theatre-london)
7. Paragraph 7: [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2025/may/23/mrs-warrens-profession-review-imelda-staunton-garrick-theatre-london), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2025/may/23/mrs-warrens-profession-review-imelda-staunton-garrick-theatre-london)
8. Paragraph 8: [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2025/may/23/mrs-warrens-profession-review-imelda-staunton-garrick-theatre-london), [[5]](https://www.broadwayworld.com/article/Imelda-StauntonandDaughter-Bessie-Carter-Will-Lead-MRS-WARRENS-PROFESSION-20250109), [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2025/jan/09/imelda-staunton-and-daughter-bessie-carter-to-star-in-west-end-revival-of-mrs-warrens-profession)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2025/may/23/mrs-warrens-profession-review-imelda-staunton-garrick-theatre-london> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2025/may/23/mrs-warrens-profession-review-imelda-staunton-garrick-theatre-london> - A review of the 2025 revival of George Bernard Shaw's 'Mrs Warren's Profession' at London's Garrick Theatre, starring Imelda Staunton and Bessie Carter. The production is praised for its compelling performances and relevance to contemporary issues, despite some directorial choices that may not fully capture the play's original impact.
3. <https://www.whatsonstage.com/news/imelda-staunton-and-bessie-carter-led-mrs-warrens-profession-starts-performances_1677170/> - An announcement detailing the start of performances for the revival of 'Mrs Warren's Profession' at the Garrick Theatre, featuring Imelda Staunton and Bessie Carter. The article highlights the significance of this mother-daughter duo taking the stage together for the first time in this production.
4. <https://www.soniafriedman.com/news/imelda-staunton-and-bessie-carter-to-star-in-mrs.-warren%27s-profession-directed-by-dominic-cooke> - A press release from Sonia Friedman Productions announcing that Imelda Staunton and Bessie Carter will star in a new production of 'Mrs Warren's Profession,' directed by Dominic Cooke. The release provides details about the production's opening at the Garrick Theatre and the collaboration between the artists.
5. <https://www.broadwayworld.com/article/Imelda-StauntonandDaughter-Bessie-Carter-Will-Lead-MRS-WARRENS-PROFESSION-20250109> - An article from BroadwayWorld discussing the casting of Imelda Staunton and her daughter Bessie Carter in the lead roles of 'Mrs Warren's Profession.' The piece provides insights into the production's direction, casting, and the significance of the mother-daughter pairing.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2025/jan/09/imelda-staunton-and-daughter-bessie-carter-to-star-in-west-end-revival-of-mrs-warrens-profession> - A report by The Guardian announcing that Imelda Staunton and her daughter Bessie Carter will star together in a West End revival of 'Mrs Warren's Profession.' The article discusses the roles they will play and the thematic relevance of the play in contemporary society.
7. <https://www.timeout.com/london/theatre/mrs-warrens-profession> - A preview of the 2025 revival of 'Mrs Warren's Profession' at the Garrick Theatre, featuring Imelda Staunton and Bessie Carter. The article provides context about the play's themes, the significance of the casting, and the production's direction by Dominic Cooke.