

Press

HOUSE OF ORFEUS

previous title: *Orfeus, A House Music Opera*

2020 Young Vic Theatre production

Editor's Picks

Read all of our theatre and performing arts coverage across the U.K., from exclusive interviews and reviews to photos and videos.



Features

EDITOR'S PICK

15 new musicals to see in 2020

Orfeus: A House Music Opera

The Young Vic's last musical was the emotionally harrowing and brilliant *Fun Home* back in 2018. This new piece, based on the tale of ancient Greek songsmith Orpheus, looks like a bit of a departure – directed by *Motown*'s Charles Randolph-Wright, it features opera, theatre and house music. Already gaining marks for novelty, the production stars award-winning baritone Nmon Ford (who also supplies words, music and libretto). **Young Vic, 14 April to 30 May**

CULTURE › THEATRE

Best London musicals 2020, from Frozen to Sunday in the Park with George

Orfeus: A House Music Opera

It's a marriage of two styles that rarely meet – opera and house music combine in Nmon Ford's *Orfeus*, which tells a near futuristic version of Ovid's Greek myth. Ford himself stars as Orfeus, who must save the beautiful poet Euridyce from his father, a fascist imperial ruler.

April 14-May 30, Young Vic, youngvic.org

Orfeus: A House Music Opera

Nmon Ford's Orfeus A House Music Opera promises a dizzying, genre defying take on a traditional classic. Peter Gray reports.



Following in the venerable footsteps of genre mashing musicals like *Hamilton* and *Sylvia*, Nmon Ford's *Orfeus* takes those boundary blurring principles and unleashes them on the world of opera.

Using an eclectic mash up of house, opera and pop, this unique production transports Ovid's legendary story to a dystopian world where Orfeus must do battle against his father Pluto for the object of his affections, Eurydice.

The production is the work of award winning singer Nmon Ford. The American baritone has written the words, music and libretto for the new show himself, and he has also claimed the lead role of Orfeus. Charles Randolph-Wright (*Motown the Musical*) will take on directorial duties for the world premiere of the new show.

Previous to beginning work on the new production, Ford impressed in a variety of performances for the English National Opera, BBC Symphony and New York Philharmonic Orchestra, and BBC Symphony.

Ford also enjoys a prodigious recording career, having won a Grammy for his stint as a featured soloist on the *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (Naxos).

For his debut as a writer, the baritone has chosen to take on one of the classics in the operatic cannon. The story of Orpheus has inspired artists, writers and playwrights for thousands of years. Written by the legendary Roman writer Ovid, the tale of Orpheus and Eurydice has traditionally been seen as an allegory for the power of love to overcome all obstacles, even death.

Orfeus is expected to open at the Young Vic in late 2020.

Home > Theatre News > News > The Young Vic Launch a "House Music Opera"



The Young Vic Launch a "House Music Opera"

BY JOHN YAP MONDAY, MARCH 9 2020, 06:26 - NEWS - [Twitter](#) [Facebook](#)



The Young Vic in association with The Gallery at Sea Containers London hosted a Private Event on March 5 2020 to launch their new House Music Opera *ORFEUS* which is based on the legend of *Orpheus and Eurydice*.

The musical is set in two zones, the Underness and Overness. Pluto, the father of Orfeus, is the fascist ruler of Underness, a dystopian empire. Orfeus is lured into the Overness by Euridice and the attractions of the good life. Pluto devises a plan to lure Orfeus back to the Underness by kidnapping Euridice. Orfeus goes back to Underness to rescue Euridice but as we all either know, or suspect, things do not go to plan.

We were wined and dined before the presentation by members of the forthcoming Young Vic cast which will include Gianni Arancio, Bernadette Bangura, Franc D'Ambrosio, Grace Farrell, Fionabury, Nmon Ford, Nathan Kiley, Fabiane Leame and Shaq Taylor.

They sang five songs, including: *OVERNESS* (Mayor), *I'VE ALWAYS BEEN ALONE* (Orfeus and Euridice), *COME TOGETHER* (Pluto), *SLOW BURN* (Orfeus) and *NO WAY* (Orfeus and the Girls). The songs certainly entice one to learn more of the remaining score.


Nmon Ford has a very striking high Baritone voice, verging on the operatic and amongst the other artists who sang the songs is soprano Fiona Finsbury who is currently singing Tosca and Musetta at the Opera Undone production of Puccini's double bill *TOSCA/LA BOHEME* at the Trafalgar Studios.

The Lyrics, Music and Libretto are written by Nmon Ford, who also plays Orfeus in the forthcoming production at The Young Vic.

It opens on April 14 2020 and will be directed by Charles Randolph-Wright, with Choreography by Shay Barclay, Costumes Designs by Ozwald Boateng, Set Designs by Leslie Travers and Musical Direction by Denjamin Kawsu.

ARTS LONDON PREVIEW THEATRE TRAVEL

In London's (Off) West End 2020: Orfeus – A House Music Opera at the Young Vic

 BY BAKCHORMEEBOY
FEBRUARY 27, 2020

LONDON – Kwame Kwei-Armah, Artistic Director of the Young Vic, has announced the complete cast and creative team for Nmon Ford's *Orfeus: A House Music Opera*. Blurring the lines of opera, house music and theatre into a timeless version of Ovid's legend, the show makes its World Premiere at the Young Vic, directed by Charles Randolph-Wright (*Motown: The Musical*) from 11th April to 30 May. Set in the near future, this unique production sees Orfeus confront his true nature to save the beautiful poet Euridice from his father Pluto, the fascist ruler of a dystopian empire.

Joining previously announced award-winning baritone Nmon Ford are: Gianni Arancio (*Thriller Live* UK Tour, *John Barrowman* UK Tour), Bernadette Bangura (*Jesus Christ Superstar* Barbican; *Sunset Boulevard* UK Tour), Franc D'Ambrosio (*The Phantom of the Opera* – 'World's Longest-Running Phantom' for more than a decade; *Godfather III* Paramount Film), Grace Farrell (*Les Misérables* West End), Fiona Finsbury (*La Bohème* Hampstead Garden Opera; *Phantom of the Opera* West End), Nathan Kiley (*Chicago* West End; Acclaimed Drag Cabaret Artist *Topsie Redfern*), Fabiane Leame (UK Dance Elite Champion Title 2017) and Shaq Taylor (*Girl from the North Country* West End; *Hadestown* National Theatre).

Acclaimed Savile Row designer Ozwald Boateng will Costume Design, with the emerging talent, dancer and performer, Shay Barclay providing Choreography, and Benjamin Kwasi Burrell (*Small Island*, *A Taste of Honey* National Theatre) will Music Direct. They join the previously announced creative team: Words, Music and Libretto by Nmon Ford, Directed by Charles Randolph-Wright, Set Design by Leslie Travers, Lighting by Aideen Malone, Sound Design by Richard Brooker, with Casting by Pippa Ailion CDG and Natalie Gallacher CDG.

Orfeus – A House Opera plays from 11th April to 30th May at the Young Vic.

CULTURE *Whisper*

THEATRE

Orfeus: A House Music Opera, Young Vic

14 APR 20 – 30 MAY 20, 7:30 PM – 10:00 PM

Ovid's underworld myth gets a radical update with a blend of opera and house music in a world premiere by baritone Nmon Ford



By Lucy Brooks on 17/6/2019



Orfeus, Young Vic Theatre

Award-winning baritone Nmon Ford has written the words, music and libretto and will start as the titular Orpheus. The Panamanian-American opera star has impressed in performances with the English National Opera, New York Philharmonic Orchestra and BBC Symphony. *Orfeus: A House Music Opera* is his debut work as writer, and offers a bold fusion between classical tradition and contemporary music. Charles Randolph-Wright, who proved his musical theatre credentials with *Motown: The Musical*, will direct this world premiere.

The tragic tale of Orpheus following his beloved Eurydice into the underworld has inspired musical interpretations from Christoph Willibald Gluck's 1762 opera *Orfeo ed Euridice* to Anais Mitchell's contemporary concept album turned folk musical *Hadestown*. This new take on the tale is set in a dystopian future. In order to save Eurydice from a fascist ruler, Orpheus has to face his own true nature.

The show blends ancient and modern, house music and classical score, and theatre and song in what looks to be a pioneering premiere at the Young Vic in 2020.

Public booking for *Orfeus* at the Young Vic opens on Tuesday 25 June

WHAT	Orfeus: A House Music Opera, Young Vic
WHERE	The Young Vic, 66 The Cut, Waterloo, London, SE1 8LZ MAP
NEAREST TUBE	Southwark (underground)
WHEN	14 Apr 20 – 30 May 20, 7:30 PM – 10:00 PM
PRICE	£12+
WEBSITE	Click here for more information and tickets

Orfeus: A House Music Opera

Theatre, Musicals



© Jose Zakany | Nmon Ford

Time Out says

A house-slash-opera retelling of the Orpheus myth

You want a mash-up of opera, house music and the Orpheus myth? SURE YOU DO. Created by American baritone Nmon Ford, 'Orfeus' is set in a dystopian near-future and features creator Ford himself as the eponymous hero, who must save the poet Eurydice from his fascist father, Pluto. It sounds delightfully odd.

Monday 24 June 2019

Video

Orfeus: A House Music Opera at the Young Vic – exclusive first listen

WhatsOnStage gets a glimpse at the intriguing new show before its world premiere at the Young Vic

Alex Wood | London | 03 March 2020



Nmon Ford

WhatsOnStage has an exclusive listen to Nmon Ford's brand new show *Orfeus: A House Music Opera*, which has its world premiere at the Young Vic.

With words, music and libretto by baritone Ford, the show blurs the lines of opera, house music and theatre. Set in the near-future, it tells the story of the titular hero who tries to save his love Euridice from his father – and fascist ruler – Pluto.

Ford performs "Slow Burn" from the piece, which will also star Shaq Taylor (*Girl from the North Country*), Bernadette Bangura (*Jesus Christ Superstar*), Franc D'Ambrosio (the world's longest-running *Phantom of the Opera*), Grace Farrell (*Les Misérables*), Gianni Arancio (*Thriller Live*), Fiona Finsbury (*The Phantom of the Opera*), Nathan Kiley (*Chicago*) and Fabiane Leame.



Directed by Charles Randolph-Wright (*Motown*), the production has costume design by Savile Row menswear designer Oswald Boateng, choreography by Shay Barclay, musical direction by Benjamin Kwasi Burrell, set design by Leslie Travers, lighting design by Aideen Malone, sound design by Richard Brooker and casting by Pippa Aillon and Natalie Gallacher.

Orfeus: A House Music Opera will run from 11 April to 30 May, with a press night on 21 April.

Nmon Ford writes and stars in contemporary take of Orpheus myth



Poster for Nmon Ford's *Orfeus: A House Music Opera*

Panamanian-American barihunk Nmon Ford will be fusing opera, house music and Greek mythology in his world premiere of *Orfeus: A House Music Opera*, running from from April 11-May 30 at the Young Vic in London. Tickets are available [online](#).

Ford wrote the words, music and libretto and will star in this contemporary twist of Ovid's *Orpheus and Eurydice*. The show also features *Phantom of the Opera* star Franc D'Ambrosio, Gianni Arancio, Bernadette Bangura, Grace Farrell, Fiona Finsbury, Nathan Kiley, Fabiane Leame and Shaq Taylor. The production will be directed by Charles Randolph-Wright, who is best known for *Motown: The Musical*.

The piece is set in a dystopian future where Orpheus discovers his true nature while saving Euridice from a fascist ruler.

Composers who have written operas on the Orpheus legend include André Campra, Louis Lully, Marc-Antoine Charpentier, Matthew Locke, Claudio Monteverdi, Joseph Haydn, Jean-Philippe Rameau, Jacques Offenbach, Hans Werner Henze, Harrison Birtwistle and, perhaps most famously, Christoph Willibald Gluck.

In recent seasons, Ford has sung Crown in Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* at the English National Opera, Iago in Verdi's *Otello* with the Atlanta Symphony and Jochanaan in Richard Strauss' *Salome* with the Pittsburgh Opera.

at 7:45 AM



Labels: [nmon ford](#), [Orfeus: A House Music Opera](#), [orpheus](#), [Young Vic](#)

[What's on](#) » Nmon Ford's Orfeus: A House Music Opera



Nmon Ford's Orfeus: A House Music Opera

[Share on Facebook](#) [Share on Twitter](#) [Add to calendar](#)

[Drama and comedy](#) [Opera](#)

Date: Tuesday 12 May 2020

Time: 7:30 pm

Ticket price: £10-£43

Touch Tour: Time TBC

Audio described in-house.

Blurring the lines of opera, house music and theatre, Nmon Ford's Orfeus: A House Music Opera makes its World Premiere at the Young Vic, directed by Charles Randolph-Wright (Motown: The Musical).

Set in the near future, this unique production blends music genres and performance into a timeless version of Ovid's legend. Orfeus confronts his true nature to save the beautiful poet Euridice from his father Pluto, the fascist ruler of a dystopian empire. Award-winning baritone Nmon Ford plays Orfeus.

Please note that the audio description for this performance is not delivered by VocalEyes. Every effort has been made to ensure that these details are correct; however, please do double-check with the venue for the availability of introductory notes and touch tours when booking.

[Booking contact number 020 7922 2922](#)

[Booking contact email \[boxoffice@youngvic.org\]\(mailto:boxoffice@youngvic.org\)](#)

Venue



Young Vic

66 The Cut
Waterloo
London
SE1 8LZ

[020 7922 2922](#)

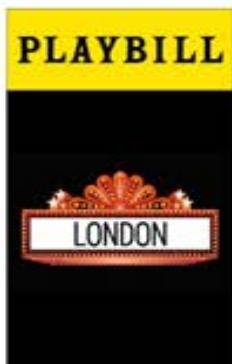
[Visit venue website](#)

About VocalEyes

We believe that blind and visually impaired people should have the best opportunities to experience and enjoy art and heritage

[Learn more](#)

[020 7375 1043](#)



Orfeus: A House Music Opera

LONDON | OPERA | REVIVAL

YOUNG VIC THEATRE
THE CUT, WATERLOO, LONDON, LONDON, EN

SYNOPSIS: Set in the near future, Orfeus confronts his true nature to save the beautiful poet Euridice from his father Pluto, the fascist ruler of a dystopian empire.

Directed by Charles Randolph-Wright

Cast: Nmon Ford

Show Times: Monday- Saturday @7:30pm, Wednesday and Saturday @2:30pm

MUSIC: NMON FORD

LIBRETTO: NMON FORD

PRO INFO

PLAYBILL PRO ORFEUS: A HOUSE MUSIC OPERA 

FIRST PREVIEW



OPENING DATE



CLOSING DATE



NEWS: Full Cast and Creative Team Announced for Orfeus: A House Music Opera

The production will play at the Young Vic Theatre from the 11th April.



Full cast and creative team have been confirmed for the upcoming world premiere of Nmon Ford's *Orfeus: A House Music Opera*. Joining previously announced award-winning baritone Nmon Ford are: Gianni Arancio (*Thriller Live UK Tour, John Barrowman UK Tour*), Bernadette Bangura (*Jesus Christ Superstar Barbican; Sunset Boulevard UK Tour*), Franc D'Ambrosio (*The Phantom of the Opera – 'World's Longest-Running Phantom' for more than a decade; Godfather III Paramount Film*), Grace Farrell (*Les Misérables West End*), Fiona Finsbury (*La Bohème Hampstead Garden Opera; Phantom of the Opera West End*), Nathan Kiley (*Chicago West End; Acclaimed Drag Cabaret Artist Topsy Redfern*), Fabiane Leame (*UK Dance Elite Champion Title 2017*) and Shaq Taylor (*Girl from the North Country West End; Hadestown National Theatre*).

Set in the near future, this unique production blends music genres and performance into a timeless version of Ovid's legend. Orfeus confronts his true nature to save the beautiful poet Euridice from his father Pluto, the fascist ruler of a dystopian empire.

As well as being directed by Charles Randolph-Wright (*Motown: The Musical*), the creative team for the production includes: costume design by Ozwald Boateng, choreography by Shay Barclay and musical direction by Benjamin Kwasi Burrell. Set design is by Leslie Travers, lighting by Aideen Malone, sound design by Richard Brooker, with casting by Pippa Ailion CDG and Natalie Gallacher CDG.

Orfeus: A House Music Opera will play at the Young Vic Theatre from the 11th April until the 30th May.

 Douglas Mayo | 13th February 2020 | News, Off West End, The Phantom Of The Opera

Complete cast and creative team announced for the World Premiere of Orfeus: A House Music Opera at the Young Vic Theatre, London from April 2020.



Kwame Kwei-Armah, the Artistic Director of the [Young Vic](#), today announces the complete cast and creative team for Nmon Ford's *Orfeus: A House Music Opera*.

Blurring the lines of opera, house music and theatre into a timeless version of Ovid's legend, the show makes its World Premiere at the Young Vic, directed by Charles Randolph-Wright (*Motown: The Musical*) from 11 April – 30 May. Set in the near future, this unique production sees Orfeus confront his true nature to save the beautiful poet Euridice from his father Pluto, the fascist ruler of a dystopian empire.

Joining previously announced award-winning baritone Nmon Ford are: Gianni Arancio (*Thriller Live* UK Tour, *John Barrowman* UK Tour), Bernadette Bangura (*Jesus Christ Superstar* Barbican; *Sunset Boulevard* UK Tour), Franc D'Ambrosio (*The Phantom of the Opera* – 'World's Longest-Running Phantom' for more than a decade; *Godfather III* Paramount Film), Grace Farrell (*Les Miserables* West End), Fiona Finsbury (*La Bohème* Hampstead Garden Opera; *Phantom of the Opera* West End), Nathan Kiley (*Chicago* West End; Acclaimed Drag Cabaret Artist *Topsy Redfern*), Fabiane Leame (UK Dance Elite Champion Title 2017) and Shaq Taylor (*Girl from the North Country* West End; *Hadestown* National Theatre).

Acclaimed Savile Row designer Ozwald Boateng will Costume Design, with the emerging talent, dancer and performer, Shay Barclay providing Choreography, and Benjamin Kwasi Burrell (*Small Island*, *A Taste of Honey* National Theatre) will Music Direct. They join the previously announced creative team: Words, Music and Libretto by Nmon Ford, Directed by Charles Randolph-Wright, Set Design by Leslie Travers, Lighting by Aideen Malone, Sound Design by Richard Brooker, with Casting by Pippa Ailion CDG and Natalie Gallacher CDG.

Orfeus: A House Music Opera will play at the Young Vic from 11 April – 30 May 2020.

Theatre News

Orfeus: A House Music Opera at the Young Vic full cast announced

The world premiere show brings the classic Greek tragedy into the 21st century

Alex Wood, Daniel Perks | London | 13 February 2020



Bernadette Bangura, Shaq Taylor and Grace Farrell
© Left: Ruth Crafer, centre: Dan Wooller for WhatsOnStage and right: Emma Bullivant

Shaq Taylor, Bernadette Bangura and Franc D'Ambrosio are among the cast for the world premiere of *Orfeus: A House Music Opera* at the Young Vic, it was announced today.

With words, music and libretto by baritone Nmon Ford, the show blurs the lines of opera, house music and theatre. Set in the near-future, it tells the story of the titular hero who tries to save his love Euridice from his father – and fascist ruler – Pluto.

Ford also stars in the production alongside Taylor (*Girl from the North Country*), Bangura (*Jesus Christ Superstar*), D'Ambrosio (the world's longest-running *Phantom of the Opera*), Grace Farrell (*Les Misérables*), Gianni Arancio (*Thriller Live*), Fiona Finsbury (*The Phantom of the Opera*), Nathan Kiley (*Chicago*) and Fabiane Leame.

With words, music and libretto by baritone Nmon Ford, the show blurs the lines of opera, house music and theatre. Set in the near-future, it tells the story of the titular hero who tries to save his love Euridice from his father – and fascist ruler – Pluto.

Ford also stars in the production alongside Taylor (*Girl from the North Country*), Bangura (*Jesus Christ Superstar*), D'Ambrosio (the world's longest-running *Phantom of the Opera*), Grace Farrell (*Les Misérables*), Gianni Arancio (*Thriller Live*), Fiona Finsbury (*The Phantom of the Opera*), Nathan Kiley (*Chicago*) and Fabiane Leame.

Directed by Charles Randolph-Wright (*Motown*), the production has costume design by Savile Row menswear designer Ozwald Boateng, choreography by Shay Barclay, musical direction by Benjamin Kwasi Burrell, set design by Leslie Travers, lighting design by Aideen Malone, sound design by Richard Brooker and casting by Pippa Aillon and Natalie Gallacher.

Orfeus: A House Music Opera will run from 11 April to 30 May, with a press night on 21 April.



ORFEUS

A HOUSE MUSIC OPERA

WORDS, MUSIC AND LIBRETTO BY **NMON FORD**
DIRECTED BY **CHARLES RANDOLPH-WRIGHT**

London Theatre News Today: Thursday 13 February

By Kitty Underwood

First Published 13 February 2020, Last Updated 23 April 2020

Full cast and creative announced for Orfeus

The full cast and creative team have been announced for the world premiere of Orfeus: A House Music Opera, which opens at the [Young Vic](#) in April.

Blending elements of opera, house music and theatre, this brand new production transposes Ovid's classical legend into a unique piece of theatre set in the near future. Orfeus must confront his own nature in order to save Euridice from his father Pluto, who is the fascist ruler of this dystopian world.

Joining previously announced Nmon Ford are: Gianni Arancio (Thriller Live UK Tour), Bernadette Bangura (Jesus Christ Superstar), Franc D'Ambrosio (The Phantom of the Opera), Grace Farrell (Les Miserables), Fiona Finsbury (Phantom of the Opera West End), Nathan Kiley (Chicago; also known as drag cabaret act Topsy Redfern), Fabiane Leame (UK Dance Elite Champion 2017) and Shaq Taylor (Girl from the North Country).

The Young Vic also announced some new additions to the creative team today. Savile Row designer Oswald Boateng is designing the costumes, Shay Barclay providing Choreography, and Benjamin Kwasi Burrell (A Taste of Honey) joining as Music Director.



ORFEUS

A HOUSE MUSIC OPERA

WORDS, MUSIC AND LIBRETTO BY **NMON FORD**
DIRECTED BY **CHARLES RANDOLPH-WRIGHT**



Orfeus A House Music Opera at The Young Vic

Cast and Creative Team Announced for Orfeus: A House Music Opera at The Young Vic

by Staff Writer — February 13, 2020 Reading Time: 2 mins read

Kwame Kwei-Armah, Artistic Director of the [Young Vic](#), today announces the complete cast and creative team for Nmon Ford's *Orfeus: A House Music Opera*. Blurring the lines of opera, house music and theatre into a timeless version of Ovid's legend, the show makes its World Premiere at the Young Vic, directed by Charles Randolph-Wright (*Motown: The Musical*) from 11 April – 30 May. Set in the near future, this unique production sees Orfeus confront his true nature to save the beautiful poet Euridice from his father Pluto, the fascist ruler of a dystopian empire.

Joining previously announced award-winning baritone Nmon Ford are: Gianni Arancio (*Thriller Live* UK Tour, *John Barrowman* UK Tour), Bernadette Bangura (*Jesus Christ Superstar* Barbican; *Sunset Boulevard* UK Tour), Franc D'Ambrosio (*The Phantom of the Opera* – 'World's Longest-Running Phantom' for more than a decade; *Godfather III* Paramount Film), Grace Farrell (*Les Misérables* West End), Fiona Finsbury (*La Bohème* Hampstead Garden Opera; *Phantom of the Opera* West End), Nathan Kiley (*Chicago* West End; Acclaimed Drag Cabaret Artist Topsy Redfern), Fabiane Leame (UK Dance Elite Champion Title 2017) and Shaq Taylor (*Girl from the North Country* West End; *Hadestown* National Theatre).

Acclaimed Savile Row designer Ozwald Boateng will Costume Design, with the emerging talent, dancer and performer, Shay Barclay providing Choreography, and Benjamin Kwasi Burrell (*Small Island, A Taste of Honey* National Theatre) will Music Direct. They join the previously announced creative team: Words, Music and Libretto by Nmon Ford, Directed by Charles Randolph-Wright, Set Design by Leslie Travers, Lighting by Aideen Malone, Sound Design by Richard Brooker, with Casting by Pippa Ailion CDG and Natalie Gallacher CDG.



Cast & Creative Team Announced For World Premiere Of ORFEUS: A House Music Opera at the Young Vic

by Stephi Wild Feb. 13, 2020



Kwame Kwei-Armah, Artistic Director of the **Young Vic**, today announces the complete cast and creative team for **Nmon Ford**'s Orfeus: A House Music Opera. Blurring the lines of opera, house music and theatre into a timeless version of Ovid's legend, the show makes its World Premiere at the **Young Vic**, directed by **Charles Randolph-Wright** (Motown: The Musical) from 11 April - 30 May. Set in the near future, this unique production sees Orfeus confront his true nature to save the beautiful poet

Euridice from his father Pluto, the fascist ruler of a dystopian empire.

Joining previously announced award-winning baritone **Nmon Ford** are: **Gianni Arancio** (Thriller Live UK Tour, **John Barrowman** UK Tour), **Bernadette Bangura** (Jesus Christ Superstar Barbican; Sunset Boulevard UK Tour), **Franc D'Ambrosio** (The Phantom of the Opera - 'World's Longest-Running Phantom' for more than a decade; Godfather III Paramount Film), **Grace Farrell** (Les Miserables West End), **Fiona Finsbury** (La Bohème Hampstead Garden Opera; Phantom of the Opera West End), Nathan Kiley (Chicago West End; Acclaimed Drag Cabaret Artist Topsy Redfern), Fabiane Leame (UK Dance Elite Champion Title 2017) and **Shaq Taylor** (Girl from the North Country West End; Hadestown National Theatre).

THEATRE

“For Many Of Us, It’s The 21st-Century Church”: The West End’s Brightest Stars Reflect On The Unique Power Of Theatre

As many British theatres stand dark, artistic director Kwame Kwei-Armah considers their unique place in our collective culture, while *Vogue* introduces some of the great performers now waiting in the wings, in a piece that originally appeared in the December 2020 issue. Photographs by Jack Davison, styling by Nell Kalonji.

BY KWAME KWEI-ARMAH
2 January 2021

On Monday 16 March, we at the Young Vic announced the premature closure of our show *Nora: A Doll’s House*. I had never closed a show under such circumstances before, so I didn’t quite know what to say to the cast. Nor to the audience. Due to [the coronavirus pandemic](#), by the end of that week we had also shut rehearsals of our forthcoming show *Orfeus* – a heady new mix of house music and opera – and sent our New York-based creative team home. Like my colleagues up and down the country, I would argue that at that moment, the engine room of Britain’s cultural sector – [theatre](#) – ground to a halt.

Months later, while there may be [a few green shoots of hope](#), the sector is still by and large closed – or, as we say in the game, “dark”. And oh, how we miss it.

I miss the light. There is something uniquely special about the West End of London at showtime. The people queuing outside the theatres know that over the next few hours they will be challenged by some of the finest writers, actors, directors and stage wizards in the world. Of course, magic can be found elsewhere in the city – and country – too. There is something so beautiful about seeing young, aspiring performers congregating outside the Bush Theatre in Shepherd’s Bush, or watching theatre-makers finishing a hard day of rehearsal at the Bristol Old Vic in preparation for putting before an audience a new play that tells us how we live, and asks if we want to change anything about it.