

# National Theatre

## Visual Story

Lowry



## Dear England

A new play by James Graham

Directed by Rupert Goold

Production photography by Marc Brenner

The commissioning of this production was generously supported by the Sir Peter Shaffer Charitable Foundation. Generous philanthropic support for the production from Marcia B Whitaker, and our team of Production Champions.



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**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

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Marcia B Whitaker.

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***Dear England*** will be showing from **Wed 11 Jun at 2pm & Wed 18 Jun 2025 at 2pm.**

### **Length**

This show is **2 hours and 50 minutes** long. This includes a 20-minute interval. The first and second half are both around **75 minutes** long.

### **Theatre guidelines**

Please do not take photographs or use your phone during the performance. Cameras and phones may be used in the foyer.

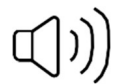
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## **Production Suitability**

Dear England contains:



Flashing lights



Loud noises



Some offensive language.

The play includes discussions and depictions of racism, and conversations surrounding mental health.

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# What is *Dear England*? (cont.)

## What is *Dear England*?

### **The Play**

The play takes place between 2016 and December 2022. It follows the England men's football team under Gareth Southgate and his journey in changing the culture of the team. It will also jump back to past moments over 60 years of football.

With the worst track record for penalties in the world, Southgate knows he needs to open his mind and face up to years of hurt to take the football team and country back to the promised land.

The play is a gripping examination of both the nation and the game. It contains flashing lights, loud noises, swearing and offensive language. Please note that *Dear England* is a fictionalised account of the struggles and successes of England's football teams, based on extensive research and interviews. It features characters inspired by some real-life individuals, and some composite characters entirely imagined by the author.

### **The Set**

The play is performed on our Lyric stage. You will see a bright, circular fixture above, as well a rotating revolve on the stage. Pieces of set, like standing lockers and chairs, are sometimes used to set the scene. Projections and sound are frequently used to represent locations, such as St George's Park training ground, the FA offices, dressing rooms and pitches of stadiums around the world.

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# What is *Dear England*? (cont.)

## Prologue

Prologue: It's **1996**. A young Gareth Southgate misses a game-changing penalty and the commentator reveals that England are out of the competition.



## Act one: five scenes

1.  
**2016.** Twenty years later. Reporters crowd outside the Football Association (FA), trying to get a comment from the recently sacked England manager, Sam Allardyce. Inside, Greg Clarke (incoming FA Chairman) and Greg Dyke (outgoing FA Chairman) offer Gareth Southgate the job of managing the England men's team.



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## What is *Dear England*? (cont.)

2.

A chorus of members of the public offer their thoughts on Southgate's appointment. A parade of previous England managers – Graham Taylor, Fabio Capello, Sven-Göran Eriksson – and even Theresa May briefly make appearances.

Southgate meets his new staff: coach Mike Webster, who expresses his hesitance to change, and Physio Phil. After Pippa Grange delivers a talk, Southgate attempts to convince her to join as England's Culture Coach.

Southgate begins to assemble the team itself: he talks to Harry Maguire (Leicester City), Dele Alli (Tottenham Hotspur), Bukayo Saka (England under-19s team) and Harry Kane (Tottenham Hotspur). Southgate prepares to retire Wayne Rooney from the team. In Rooney's final moment, the commentator announces: 'England is going to Russia.'



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# What is *Dear England*? (cont.)

3.

Pippa Grange arrives at St George's Park, the England team's training ground. The remaining represented players are introduced: Jordan Pickford (Everton), Marcus Rashford (Manchester United), Raheem Sterling (Manchester City), Eric Dier (Tottenham Hotspur), Jordan Henderson (Liverpool) and Kieran Trippier (Tottenham Hotspur).

Southgate explains his strategy, and begins a countdown to the Qatar 2022 World Cup. The coaching staff discuss England's history with penalties, and Pippa Grange proposes a new way for the team to move forward.

4.

Pippa Grange asks the team to support each other. In the canteen, Southgate shakes things up. On the pitch, he introduces the team to penalty training, which morphs into a joyful pool party.

5.

Russia World Cup. 2018. Gary Lineker announces the arrival of the England team. They take their penalties against Colombia, and Lineker announces that England are through to the quarter final.

**Interval.**



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# What is *Dear England*? (cont.)

## Prologue

The fans (chorus) bustle and debate as they watch the World Cup quarter and semi finals. Alex Scott, pundit and former member of England ladies' football team, interviews the players. The commentators announce the next result: England lose 2-1 to Croatia.

Pippa Grange speaks to Rashford about his superstitions. The coaches discuss what went wrong. Theresa May stands outside Downing Street. She is resigning over Brexit.

## Act two: four scenes

1.

Greg Clarke, FA Chairman, considers what it will be like for the team to play at Wembley with no fans present, in the wake of coronavirus. During training, Bukayo Saka and Jadon Sancho join the England team. The team discuss the meaning of the England flag and what they play for.

2.

The players post on their social media, connecting with the fans. Pippa Grange encourages Southgate to write a letter to the fans and to the country.

3.

Jordan Henderson discusses his missed penalty in Russia and the similarities with Southgate's miss in 1996. Dele Alli and Eric Dier are dropped from the team. Pippa Grange decides to step away from England too. Harry Kane questions his position as team captain. Raheem Sterling receives racist abuse on the pitch and addresses this with the press. The fans arrive for the beginning of Euro 2020. Southgate reads his 'Dear England' letter.

England draw 0-0 with Scotland. Coach Mike Webster, infuriated, launches into a rant at Southgate. The players gather as Harry Kane encourages them to let go of their inhibitions and dance. England reach the Euro 2020 final, and the game goes to penalties. A mob



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forms around the players as Rashford, Sancho and Saka step up to take their penalties – and miss. Pippa Grange arrives to comfort a distressed Southgate. In the changing room, Saka reflects on the messages he, Sancho and Rashford received from the fans. Greg Clarke resigns from the FA and acknowledges his own use of racist language. Southgate congratulates Chloe Kelly, an England women's player, and Sarina Wiegman, England women's manager, on their Euros win.



4.  
Qatar 2022. The World Cup. Gianni Infantino, FIFA president, warns that Harry Kane cannot wear his rainbow armband.

Alex Scott narrates England's results through the competition. In the quarter final, Harry Kane's penalty hits the crossbar. They lose the game and are out of the competition. and loses the game. Southgate comforts Kane – not letting him take the same responsibility that Southgate took in 1996. The players regroup. They look towards the future.

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This performances takes place on **Wed 11 Jun at 2pm & Wed 18 Jun 2025 at 2pm.**

**What is a dementia-friendly performance?**

The performance will take place in a more relaxed environment than other performances.

Changes have been made to the lights and sounds in the show, and chillout spaces are available for guests who may need time away from the show.

**You can:**

- Make noise and move around the auditorium
- Leave and re-enter the theatre during the show
- Use chillout spaces