

**The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
Announces**

**The Royal Shakespeare Company Production of
*HAMLET***

**Paapa Essiedu to Reprise his Acclaimed Performance in
the Title Role for the North American Premiere**

May 2–6, 2018 in the Eisenhower Theater

To download photos of Paapa Essiedu as Hamlet, click [HERE](#).

(WASHINGTON)—The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts announces **The Royal Shakespeare Company's** (RSC) *Hamlet*, directed by **Simon Godwin** with **Paapa Essiedu** in the title role, for six performances only in the Eisenhower Theater, May 2–6, 2018. The critically lauded production of Shakespeare's searing tragedy of murder and revenge won raves both for Godwin's riveting and contemporary vision of Hamlet's Denmark as a state in west Africa and Essiedu's revelatory Hamlet at its premiere in Stratford-upon-Avon in 2016. In the spring of 2018, prior to making its North American premiere at the Kennedy Center, *Hamlet* will tour the U.K. and play a limited engagement at London's Hackney Empire.

Director Simon Godwin said, "Paapa Essiedu is British with Ghanaian heritage. When Paapa and I talked about the production, I realized how radical it might be to see Denmark through the lens of a completely different culture, a culture that Paapa himself had experienced. I began to imagine a Denmark re-conceived as a modern state influenced by the ritual, traditions, and beauty of west Africa. So, our setting is full of the color, emotional intensity, and passion associated with that part of the world. As Hamlet, Paapa is intelligent, youthful,

and charismatic, with a contemporary wit. But Paapa's portrayal is also mercurial with an element of danger. Part ghost story, part family tragedy, part dark comedy, *Hamlet* is an urgent and gripping thriller."

Hamlet at the Kennedy Center will mark Paapa Essiedu's U.S. debut in the role. The rising star won 'Best Performance in a Play' at the U.K. Theatre Awards and received the Ian Charleson Award in 2016. Essiedu has appeared in RSC productions of *The Mouse and his Child* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and is also known to U.K. audiences for his roles in the popular television series *Utopia* and *Not Safe for Work*. Additional casting will be announced at a later date.

"The Kennedy Center is deeply committed to bringing the best of the theater world to our stages, and we are fortunate and proud to continue our long partnership with the RSC and present the first U.S. engagement of their remarkable and vital *Hamlet*," said Jeffrey Finn, Vice President of Theater Producing and Programming.

"We are so pleased to be returning to Washington bringing Simon Godwin's wonderful production. We love sharing our work here in the U.S. and it is great that Kennedy Center audiences will have the chance to see Paapa Essiedu's enthralling Hamlet," said Catherine Mallyon, Executive Director, Royal Shakespeare Company.

Hamlet is designed by Paul Wills with lighting by Paul Anderson. Music for the production is composed by *Jamiroquai* percussionist Sola Akingbola. Sound is by Christopher Shutt.

Hamlet is currently available to Kennedy Center subscribers as a season add-on. Tickets will go on sale to Kennedy Center members on November 6 and to the general public on November 15, 2017.

About The Royal Shakespeare Company

The Royal Shakespeare Company creates theatre at its best, made in Stratford-upon-Avon and shared around the world. We produce an inspirational artistic programme each year, setting Shakespeare in context, alongside the work of his contemporaries and today's writers.

Everyone at the RSC—from actors to armorers, musicians to technicians—plays a part in creating the world you see on stage. All our productions begin life at our Stratford workshops and theatres and we bring them to the widest possible audience through our touring, residencies, live broadcasts, and online activity. So wherever you experience the RSC, you experience work made in Shakespeare’s home town.

We have trained generations of the very best theater makers and we continue to nurture the talent of the future. We encourage everyone to enjoy a lifelong relationship with Shakespeare and live theater. We reach over 500,000 children and young people annually through our education work, transforming their experiences in the classroom, in performance, and online. Registered charity no. 212481 www.rsc.org.uk.

RSC America is an independent organization based in New York, incorporated in Delaware as a non-profit corporation. It has federal tax exempt status under Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3). It supports the RSC’s activities in the UK, the US and throughout the world. Please see www.rsc.org.uk/support/rsc-in-america.

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