

by Jo Caird

THEATRE PREVIEWS



Above: Helen Mirren as Queen Elizabeth II in *The Audience*. Right: Director Jamie Lloyd leading rehearsals for *Macbeth*

MACBETH

Trafalgar Studios
To April 27 Having starred alongside Forest Whitaker in the 2006 film *The Last King of Scotland*, James McAvoy finally dons the Celtic crown himself in this new production of *Macbeth*. Director Jamie Lloyd's brave staging sees Shakespeare's tragedy of bloody royal ambition set in a dystopian Scotland brutalised by war. The *Atonement* actor hasn't taken on a theatre role since his Olivier Award-nominated performance in *Three Days of Rain* in 2009, making this one of spring's hottest tickets. The show is the first in the *Trafalgar Transformed* season at the Whitehall theatre, a programme of plays, events, discussions and readings around the theme of politics.
 14 Whitehall, SW1A 2DY
 0844 871 7632

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Vaudeville Theatre
Booking to June 1 This is the first time that Charles Dickens' much adapted 1861 novel has been staged in the West End, and it's long overdue. The story of Pip's remarkable journey

from orphaned apprentice blacksmith to rich London gentleman is told in a series of flashbacks that summon up character after extraordinary character in this much-loved tale. Taylor Jay-Davies stars as the show's hero, with Grace Rowe as his beautiful love interest Estella, Paula Wilcox as the tragic Miss Havisham and Chris Ellison as the convict Magwitch. As a great lover of the dramatic arts himself, Dickens would surely have approved of director Graham McLaren's richly theatrical production of Jo Clifford's excellent adaptation.
 404 Strand, WC2R 0NH
 0844 412 4663

PETER AND ALICE

Noël Coward Theatre
To June 1 The inaugural season of the Michael Grandage Company continues along its starry course with this new play by John Logan, scriptwriter on *Skyfall* and *Gladiator*. Grande dame of British theatre Judi Dench stars alongside Ben Whishaw (who played Q to Dench's M in *Skyfall*) in *Peter and Alice*, which tells the story of how the girl who

inspired *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* met the boy who inspired *Peter Pan*. Logan's first play since the Tony Award-winning *Red* in 2010 (also directed by Michael Grandage), this world première describes the meeting between Alice Liddell Hargreaves and Peter Llewelyn Davies at the opening of a Lewis Carroll exhibition in 1932.
 St Martin's Lane, WC2N 4AU
 0844 482 5141

THE AUDIENCE

Gielgud Theatre
To June 15 Following her Oscar-winning performance as Elizabeth II in the 2006 film *The Queen*, Helen Mirren reprises the role on the West End stage in new play *The Audience*. Written by Peter Morgan (the man behind *The Queen*), the drama imagines what might have been taken place during the weekly audiences that the Queen has held with her 12 Prime Ministers over the six decades of her reign. Beginning with Winston Churchill (Edward Fox) and ending in the present day with current Prime Minister David Cameron (Rufus Wright), the play breaks the contract of

silence upheld by all concerned, giving us a tantalising glimpse into this world of power and influence. Stephen Daldry directs the all-star cast.
 35 Shaftesbury Avenue, W1D 6AR
 0844 482 5130

THE WINSLOW BOY

The Old Vic
To May 25 The last couple of years have seen a triumphant resurgence of the work of Terence Rattigan. One of the mid-20th century's best-loved playwrights, he fell out of favour when bright young things like John Osborne arrived to shake up British theatre in the 1950s. *The Winslow Boy*, which tells the story of a father's fight to save his son's name after being convicted of theft and expelled from Naval College, was first staged in 1946. This production by Lindsay Posner (director of *Noises Off*, staged at the Old Vic in 2011 before touring last year) stars Henry Goodman, who recently played the title role in *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* at the Chichester Festival Theatre to great acclaim.
 103 The Cut, SE1 8NB
 0844 871 7628