

WEDNESDAY 18 FEBRUARY 2026

THE ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY PRESENTS

GEORGE R. R. MARTIN'S

GAME OF THRONES: THE MAD KING

A NEW PLAY

BASED ON THE NOVELS BY GEORGE R. R. MARTIN

ADAPTED BY DUNCAN MACMILLAN

DIRECTED BY DOMINIC COOKE



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The Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) today announces the world premiere of *Game of Thrones: The Mad King*, a new play based on the novels by George R. R. Martin, adapted by Duncan Macmillan and directed by Dominic Cooke.

Game of Thrones: The Mad King will have its world premiere at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon in Summer 2026. Priority booking will go on sale from 14 April 2026 with public booking to be announced in April 2026. For early access, visit rsc.org.uk/join to become an RSC member. More information will be announced later in the year. Full details of the upcoming RSC season will be announced on Thursday 26 February 2026.

'Enter the world before.

A long winter thaws in Harrenhal, and spring is promised. At a lavish banquet on the eve of a jousting tournament, lovers meet and revellers speculate about who will contend. But in the shadows, amid growing unease at the blood-thirsty actions of the realm's merciless Mad King, dissenters from his inner circle anxiously advance a treasonous plot. Far away, the drums of battle sound.

Family bonds, ancient prophecies, and the sacred line of succession will be tested in a dangerous campaign for power. Who will survive? Who will rise?

'Wars aren't won by those with most cause, but whose story's best told.'

Game of Thrones: The Mad King is a sweeping new stage epic from the world of George R. R. Martin, written by Duncan Macmillan and directed by Dominic Cooke. Spanning the final years before the events of the novels, this powerful drama reveals a legendary chapter of Westerosi history.

Come face to face with familiar characters from the houses Targaryen, Stark, Lannister, Baratheon and Martell and witness the events that set the stage for the world's most critically acclaimed series.

Executive Producer and creator **George R. R. Martin** said: "When I first wrote Game of Thrones, I never imagined that it would be anything other than a book. It was a place for my imagination to exist without limits. To my great surprise, it was adapted for a series and viewers have been able to enter the world of my imagination through the medium of television. For my work to now be adapted for the stage is something I did not expect but welcome with great enthusiasm and excitement. Theatre offers something unique. A place for mine and the audience's imagination to meet and hopefully create something magical.

"For me, the RSC was the obvious choice when thinking about putting a Game of Thrones story on the stage. Shakespeare is the greatest name in English literature, and his plays have been a constant source of inspiration to me and my writing. Not only that, he faced similar challenges in how to put a battle on stage, so we are in good company. It will be thrilling to watch the events of this new play unfold in a live environment. Duncan's masterful script honours the world completely, and I am so excited for both fans of the series, and

perhaps people who have never picked up one of my books, to experience this new story in a theatre.”

Adaptor **Duncan Macmillan** and director **Dominic Cooke** said: “*The play is a prequel, taking place over a decade before the events of Game of Thrones. A long winter has started to thaw and, for the first time in years, all the great houses come together for a tournament - destined to be the greatest of the age. It feels like a new dawn, full of hope and opportunity. But tournaments always have a darker purpose.*

“George’s storytelling is Shakespearean in its scale and its themes - dynastic struggle, ambition, rebellion, madness, prophecy, ill-fated love. From the beginning, Shakespeare’s histories and tragedies have been our primary reference for the ambition of this production, so the RSC feels like a natural home.

“It will be thrilling for us to share this new play with audiences, both those that know and love George’s books and HBO’s series, but also audiences who know nothing and want to come and experience something both beautifully intimate and truly epic.”

RSC Co-Artistic directors **Daniel Evans** and **Tamara Harvey** said: ““When we first read *Duncan’s script, it was immediately apparent how this epic cycle of warring families sits in a continuum with Shakespeare’s history cycles. So it feels like an exciting and apposite marriage between the RSC and Game of Thrones universe.*

“Stories of power, ambition and the complexities of succession are evergreen - and this adaptation explores the true nature of authority through the lens of young people grappling with inherited identities. The story will have all the epic qualities audiences would expect from Game of Thrones, but ultimately, it has a very human heart.”

Game of Thrones: The Mad King is co-produced with Simon Painter, Tim Lawson, Mark Manuel, Warner Bros. Theatre Ventures obo HBO and Sir Leonard Blavatnik and Danny Cohen for Access Entertainment.

BIOGRAPHIES

George R. R. Martin is a celebrated author, master storyteller and creator of worlds. He is undeniably one of the most influential voices in modern fantasy literature, having captivated readers around the globe with his epic series *A Song of Ice and Fire*.

Born in Bayonne, New Jersey, George began writing science fiction and fantasy short stories in the early 1970s, earning acclaim for works like *Sandkings* and *Fevre Dream*. He has worn many creative hats—novelist, screenwriter, editor—and his passion for richly layered narratives and morally complex characters has redefined the fantasy genre.

In addition to his writing, George R. R. Martin is the driving force behind the *Wild Cards* anthology series and has furthermore helped bridge the gap between literature and television in groundbreaking ways. He lives in Santa Fe with his wife, Parris McBride Martin, and his three cats.

Duncan Macmillan is a writer and director for theatre, television, and film. His plays include *Lungs*, *People, Places and Things*, *Every Brilliant Thing*, and adaptations of *1984* (with Robert Icke), *Rosmersholm*, *An Enemy of the People* and *The Seagull*. His work has been staged worldwide at venues such as the National Theatre, Royal Court, and Schaubühne Berlin, on the West End and on Broadway and has been featured at festivals including Edinburgh and Avignon and the Berlin and London Film Festivals. He is an Olivier Award nominee and won Best Director at the UK Theatre Awards. His productions have also been recognised with Tony and Drama Desk nominations.

Dominic Cooke is an accomplished British theatre, film, and television director. He was recently appointed Artistic Director of London's Almeida Theatre. He will take up the post in 2026. From 2007-2013, he was Artistic Director of the Royal Court Theatre. During his tenure, he helped launch the careers of a new generation of playwrights including Bola Agbaje, Mike Bartlett, Lucy Kirkwood, Anya Reiss, Penelope Skinner and Polly Stenham. As Associate at the National Theatre between 2013 and 2025, his productions included *The Corn Is Green*, *The Normal Heart*, *Follies*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* and *Here We Go* and between 2003 and 2006, he was Associate Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company. Recent theatre productions include *Mrs Warren's Profession*, *Hello Dolly!*, *Medea* and *Good* in the West End. On screen, he directed *The Courier* and *On Chesil Beach*. For TV he directed three BAFTA nominated episodes of *The Hollow Crown*.

ENDS

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NOTES TO EDITORS

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The **Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC)** is a leading global theatre company that sparks local, national and international conversations that build connections, create opportunities and bring joy.

We passionately believe that great storytelling can change the world, and that theatre offers its own unique form of storytelling: it's live and shared, and transforms a group of strangers into audiences who, together, experience a story come to life in front of their eyes.

We collaborate with the most exciting artists to tell the stories of our time, and through a range of programmes we nurture the talent of the future.

We perform on three stages in our home in Stratford-upon-Avon, in London and in communities and schools across the country and around the world.

Our transformative Creative Learning and Engagement programmes reach over half a million young people each year.

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. We have set out our strategic vision in Let's Create that by 2030 we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish and where everyone of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. We invest public money from Government and The National Lottery to help support the sector and to deliver this vision. www.artscouncil.org.uk. Following the Covid-19 crisis, the Arts Council developed a £160 million Emergency Response Package, with nearly 90% coming from the National Lottery, for organisations and individuals needing support. We are also one of the bodies responsible for administering the Government's unprecedented

Culture Recovery Fund, of which we delivered over £1 billion to the sector in grants and loans. Find out more at www.artscouncil.org.uk/covid19.