

APEX PREDATOR - IntroductionHampstead Theatre - April 2025

Welcome to this introduction to Apex Predator by John Donnelly directed by Blanche McIntyre.

The audio-described performance at Hampstead Theatre is on Saturday the 24th of April. There is a touch tour at 12:45pm, the introductory notes will start in the auditorium at 2.15 pm, and the performance at 2:30pm. The performance runs for approximately 1 hours and 40 minutes including an interval and the live audio description will be given by Lonny Evans

Information on Hampstead's website tells us... ***'Mia is going out of her mind in a flat with a baby that won't feed. Her son Alfie's getting bullied at school; her husband Joe is working all hours for the police on a job he can't talk about; the neighbour keeps blasting music at 2am; and another body has been found in the Thames. As Mia desperately looks for something in her life she can control, Alfie's teacher Ana proposes an unconventional route to empowerment – and suddenly the hunted becomes the hunter....'***

Please note - this production contains depictions of sexual harassment and indecent exposure, violence, blood, death, postpartum depression and psychosis. Use of strong language and discussions of animal death, violence against children and sex. There is also use of flashing lights, haze and loud noises.

The action unfolds in the present with a cast of 5 white actors - 3 male and 2 female including a male child. The costumes worn are contemporary. At times, the action shifts from naturalism into more stylised movement, heightening the sense of unease, and underscoring the story's otherworldly dimensions.

Mia, a new mother in her mid-thirties has pale skin, straight shoulder length blonde hair and a slender toned physique. She wears the casual, practical clothing of someone who's focused on motherhood rather than fashion, a cropped dark navy vest top and dark navy jogging bottoms and comfortable trainers, over her top she wears a soft green linen shirt. When Mia goes out she pulls on a dark green puffer coat that comes to mid-thigh. For a night out she removes the shirt and adds a neat black leather jacket, and wears soft pink lipstick. As the story begins Mia has the nervous quality of someone with an ever-present anxiety, wired and on the alert, holding tension in her body, this changes as events unfold into a solid and more

confident stance. Mia speaks with a Welsh accent. Mia's 5-month-old daughter Isla is represented by a lifelike doll, and for much of the time is held and rocked in Mia's arms or worn on her front in a sling.

Mia and Joe's son **Alfie** is 11 year's old, he is white with short dark brown hair and when we first meet him is wearing his dark grey school uniform trousers and white polo t-shirt under a mid-blue school sweatshirt. He's often seen wearing a mask that he's made in school. The mask has an eerie quality, reminiscent of the Day of the Dead and has a full face with eye holes, one half is white the other black, with a thin black line for the mouth.

Ana, Alfie's temporary teacher appears similar in age to Mia, with a pale complexion, large light blue eyes and full lips. Ana, like Mia is slim though her blonde hair is a little longer. Unlike Mia's initial angst Ana is confident and assertive. When teaching in school she has a demure appearance, her long blonde hair tied back or worn up, and she wears a pair of comfortable black wide leg trousers with white tennis shoes and a soft cotton blouse with a bold pattern of blue flowers. She wears her school ID on a lanyard around her neck. Out of school she has a more seductive and enigmatic presence and her style reflects this for example, on a night out her hair is loose, she wears shiny skin tight black jeans and a clingy black off the shoulder top, with thick soled black leather ankle boots, and her lips have a slash of ruby red lipstick. Later when outside she adds a smart black mackintosh. Ana speaks with a soft Irish accent.

Joe, Mia's husband, is a white man in his mid-thirties, of average height and build with shoulder length straggly brown hair, moustache and goatee. His clothing is smart but understated in dark tones. He wears a dark navy button-down shirt and chinos and dark lace-ups. Returning from work he removes a smart black padded jacket.

The remaining male characters are played by the same actor who is a white man in his forties. We first meet him as a brash **Man on a Train** in a cheap blue suit. Then as a **Doctor**, wearing glasses and a pair of smart navy trousers, with his pale shirt worn with the sleeves rolled back to the elbow and fastened at the neck by a dark blue tie, and around his neck an NHS ID badge hangs on a hospital lanyard. Later

he plays a **Man in a Park** with a tan cotton jacket, pale scarf and flat cap who speaks with a northern accent. Another character is Mia's noisy upstairs **Neighbour** in vest and jeans, who speaks with an eastern European accent. He also plays a wealthy investor by the name of **Victor**, wearing pale tailored chino's and a smart shirt worn open at the collar, with a tailored light brown wool coat, and an expensive gold watch. Victor speaks with an upper-class accent. And finally a bar tender **Gil** in jeans, a lumberjack shirt and t-shirt and a wool beanie. Gil has an American accent.

The set is non-naturalistic, in plain neutral tones, and on two levels with much of the action centred around the kitchen in the flat belonging to Mia, Joe and their family, which takes up the majority of the lower central stage. The space is framed at the sides and across the back by a tangle of scaffolding as though it's still under construction. The level above Mia and Joe's flat consists of a plain grey wall that contains a single door to the flat above and a narrow walkway in front.

The kitchen in Mia's flat is simple, and occupies a central platform which is raised a step up from the surrounding floor – a metre wide section that wraps around the platform at the front and sides. Both areas are covered by the same pale square floor tiles. The central platform is six metres wide and four metres deep with the lower back wall lined by white kitchen units. There's a sink to the left with cupboards underneath that has a frosted window in the wall above it, next to it to the right, under the pale counter-top is a small fridge, then a cooker with another cupboard at the edge of the platform on the far right. In the white tiled wall above are three more cupboards, with open shelves at the top for further storage. At the front of the platform to the left is a white kitchen table and a couple of matching chairs. The door into the flat from outside is suggested as characters arrive or leave from the back left corner of the, whilst the way to unseen bedrooms within the flat is suggested past the kitchen cupboards towards the back right corner.

About half way back on both sides of the platform is a grey toned freestanding doorway, used for entrances to other locations that occupy the area that wraps around the front of the platform. A plain metal balustrade and handrail encloses the space along the right and left sides with the handrail on the left wrapping around the front corner.

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Other locations are created by two pale panelled screens, each about 4 metres wide made up of opaque door-sized panels. The screens can rise to conceal the upper level of the space or lower in front, taking us to other locations like the Thames waterfront, London Streets or Alfie's school. Initially the screens are lowered in boxing off the kitchen, concealing it from view. At moments in the action the screens are lit to cast those behind in silhouette. At other times vibrant, and flickering lights pulse over the surface enhancing the supernatural nature of the story.

Cast and Production Credits

Mia is played by **Sophie Melville**

Joe is played by **Bryan Dick**

Ana is played by **Laura Whitmore**

Victor is played by **Leander Deany**

Alfie is played by **Callum Knowelden** or **Lorcan Reilly**

The Writer is **John Donnelly**

The Director is **Blanche McIntyre**

The Designer is **Tom Piper**

The Lighting Designer is **Jack Knowles**

The Sound Designer is **Chris Shutt**

The Movement and Intimacy Director is **Ingrid Mackinnon**

The Fight Director is **Philip D'Orleans**

Assistant director is **Alex Kampfner**

This is the end of the introduction to **APEX PREDATOR** at Hampstead Theatre. If you have any question or need further assistance please contact the box office on **020 7722 9301**.