



SHARED
EXPERIENCE

mine

by Polly Teale

Education Pack by Bailey Lock

Supported by



City of Westminster



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Sophie Stone & Lorraine Stanley

Company Credo

At the heart of our work is the POWER and EXCITEMENT of the performer's physical presence and the unique collaboration between actor and audience – a SHARED EXPERIENCE. We are committed to creating theatre that goes beyond our everyday lives, giving form to the hidden world of emotion and imagination. We see the rehearsal process as a genuinely open forum for asking questions and taking risks that redefine the possibilities of performance.

The Pack

The education pack is designed as an introduction and follow up to seeing *Mine*. Included is some background material on issues that arise in the play, information about our creative process, the production itself and interviews with the cast and creative team.

There are exercises and questions throughout, intended to prompt both practical work and discussion. I hope it is of use as a resource and an insight into Shared Experience.

Bailey Lock

Expressionism at Shared Experience

In our everyday lives we hide much of what we think and feel, for fear we would be considered foolish or even mad. We believe there is a longing to see expressed in the theatre that which we conceal in life; to share our 'madness' and understand that we are not alone.

Central to Shared Experience's approach is the desire to go beyond naturalism and to see into the character's private world. There will be moments on stage when we literally enact whatever a character is secretly feeling or imagining. In more realistic scenes the social façade is a thin layer beneath which bubbles a river of suppressed emotion. During rehearsals we encourage actors to allow this bubbling emotional energy to explode and take over. In a scene where someone is secretly feeling very angry, when they allow the inner to erupt onto the surface they may viciously attack the other person; if the other character is feeling afraid they might crawl under the table. Having allowed the inner to erupt, the actor must return to the scene and struggle to conceal it. Although we may see two people drinking tea, we sense that underneath the social ritual it is as if murder is taking place.

This emphasis on subjective experience runs through all areas of the production. For example, the setting of the play will be more expressive of what a place **feels** like than what it realistically **looks** like. In *Jane Eyre* everything on stage was grey or black to express the loneliness of Jane's inner world. In *War and Peace* the set was a hall of mirrors to suggest the vanity and narcissism of the aristocracy in Tolstoy's Russia. In *The House of Bernarda Alba* the house felt like a prison. We decided to make the door colossally large and encrusted it with locks and bolts. It is this emphasis on the 'inner' or the subjective experience which characterises expressionism and it is at the heart of Shared Experience's approach.



War & Peace Robert Day



Brontë Robert Day

Note From The Writer

Two couples, friends of mine who were unable to have children of their own, have adopted babies who were taken from their mothers at birth. They were taken because the mothers were assessed as incapable of parenting. As in the play, the mothers had nine months to rehabilitate and prove themselves adequate parents. If they failed to do so the baby would be adopted.

Whilst being moved by my friends' courage and commitment in the face of this challenge, I was also aware of the birth mothers' loss and the extraordinary potency of the situation.

I had been wanting to write a play about the widening gap between the rich and the poor in a society in thrall to success and its trappings. I wanted to write about the way in which those of us who are privileged might try to protect or insulate ourselves, and the cost of this both to society and the individual. This story allowed me to entangle the lives of a wealthy, successful couple with a woman whose life is in freefall, destroyed by drugs and the damaged past she is trying to escape through her addiction.

I wanted to suggest however that money and all that it can buy might be its own drug and that the appearance of success might be an elaborate cover; that underneath their apparently enviable life lies a sense of alienation and fear; that Rose, the birth mother, for all that she is deeply damaged, retains a connection to the primal, the instinctive part of herself that the Woman has lost. Stripped of her public persona and faced with the task of caring for a baby, the Woman's defences begin to unravel. The beautiful home she has created will not protect her from herself.

The notion of Home is a potent symbol throughout the play. Is their exquisite, architect-designed home a refuge or a prison? What is the Woman trying to keep out? In the box room sits a decaying dolls' house. A relic of an unhappy childhood. A place she both fears and longs to return to. The child that haunts the stage is an expression of both that fear and longing. Sometimes frightening, sometimes wild, sometimes beautiful. She is everything that has been lost.

Polly Teale 2008

To hear more from Polly about *Mine*, please download the interview podcasts available from www.sharedexperience.org.uk

An Interview With Katy Stephens - Woman

How would you describe the Woman's relationship with her Mother?

It is difficult and complex: as with most mums and daughters, her mother has a hold on her that nobody else has. She constantly kicks against her and tries to retain control and her status, but the child inside that needs to be loved undermines that.

What does the Child mean to your character? Why does she haunt her?

Often the Child represents the child inside her and the feelings she finds difficult to express. At other times she is the fantasy relationship the Woman has desired with her own imagined daughter.

What does the Woman learn through adopting the baby? How has she changed by the end of the play?

She learns a lot about herself and her own childhood. The second question I'll have to answer when the rehearsals are done and the character's journey has been discovered.

The couple's home is very beautiful and stylised, why is this important to the Woman?

The Woman has a very deep urge to be admired – her home is also a suit of armour against the rest of the world, a way of hiding her insecurity.

Woman *Last night. I thought it was never going to stop. She sounded so distressed. As if something terrible was happening. The doctor says she's fine. I mean, he says there's nothing wrong. Nothing to worry about. Why do they do that? As if someone was torturing her. You feel so helpless. Like she desperately needs something and I can't...you don't know what. Whatever you do is useless. You're useless.*



Katy Stephens

An Interview With Alistair Petrie - Man

What is it like working with Shared Experience?

It's my first time and an ambition fulfilled. The rehearsal process is totally collaborative, everyone has a voice, it's a true ensemble experience. All you are asked to do is throw yourself into whatever arises with a real sense of commitment and everyone will be better for it. I can think of no better title for a theatre company – for cast, crew and audience.

What does the Man feel about the adoption of the baby?

He is very, very apprehensive. The threat of chaos is looming in his carefully constructed and ordered world. That's not to say he never saw himself as a father, I'm sure he did, but not in these circumstances. The process of concurrent planning – fostering and potential adoption is so far removed from 'natural conception'. It must be very hard for a man who usually exercises such control in his life.

Why is your character called merely Man?

We have named them in the rehearsal room and in fact Polly and I had the same first name in our heads. Man/Woman is quite primal and the audiences can name them themselves and think about who they are before their story is told. I like the simple economy in just being 'Man'; in the context of the piece naming him just doesn't seem of vital importance.

As an actor what scene presents the most challenges and why?

The scenes with the Woman and Rose; they are delicate with so much at stake for all parties and a well of hidden emotion that has to stay concealed. It's hard, moving and very complex. These are very real people with very strong feelings in an extraordinary situation.

Man *If she's using she's blown it.*

Woman *I don't want to.*

Man *It's important information. It would be wrong to withhold it.*

Woman *I told you. I don't want to.*

Man *It's our duty to tell. It's not about us or her. It's what's best for the child. What's best for Bea.*



Alistair Petrie

What Do I Want?

Each character in the production has a 'want', something that drives them through their lives and the play. This is called the 'Super Objective'. Also there is an 'Obstacle' that stops them from achieving their objective.

Throughout rehearsals, Polly, the director, and the actors discuss what each character's objective and obstacle might be. The actors discussed the ideas below in the very first week of rehearsals. These are never fixed, because through rehearsals ideas grow and change.

Character: Man

Super Objective: To succeed, and within that, to compete, thrive, create and make a mark.

Obstacles: Fear of failing, fear of losing control, of losing balance.

Favourite Line: 'What exactly can be wrong with wanting to make something beautiful? Inspiring? Unique?'

Character: Rose

Super Objective: To numb the pain.

Obstacles: Self loathing, anger, abuse, isolation.

Favourite Line: 'Beautiful, she's beautiful.'

Character: Sister

Super Objective: To find a place where she belongs, to be safe, secure.

Obstacles: Her lack of self-worth, her sense of inadequacy - being stupid, dull and unattractive.

Favourite Line: 'You're my greatest achievement.'

Character: Woman

Super Objective: To keep people at bay by being successful and admired.

Obstacles: The need to be free.

Favourite Line: 'The air, it seems, belongs to no one.'

Character: Mother

Super Objective: To be a success and admired.

Obstacles: Resentment and envy of her daughter, she fears being abandoned and locked out.

Favourite Line: 'Overnight you go from being the star of the movie to a bit part.'

Character: Katya

Super Objective: To better herself and her family, she wants to regain her dignity.

Obstacles: Her situation, she is a stranger in another country, isolated and far from her family.

Favourite Line: 'They don't scare me. They're children. Little boys. You look into their eyes. They're frightened. They pretend to be "big men." '



Alistair Petrie



Clare Lawrence Moody



Marion Bailey



Lorraine Stanley



Katy Stephens



Clare Lawrence Moody



Lorraine Stanley, Katy Stephens, Sophie Stone

Rehearsal Diary

Anna-Sophia Ehnold-Danailov - Assistant Director

Tuesday 26th August - The First Day

The day began with some group games to get to know each other, then Polly drew an imaginary map of Britain and asked us to stand on the spot where we were born and tell the group what we knew about our birth. She then asked us to move to where we were at 20 years of age and describe that, and finally to show where we are living now. We then told our life stories in a minute!

Movement Director, Liz Ranken then led some improvisation exercises in which we examined each character's main objective and motivation in the play, and the internal and external obstacles that prevent them from achieving these goals.

Wednesday 27th August

A 'Meet and Greet' event for the whole Shared Experience company was held, during which the designer, Angela Simpson, presented and explained the model box, describing the set and the costumes. A read-through of the script then took place and a company photograph for the programme was taken.

In the afternoon, following a physical warm up, the company looked at their own childhood memories, visualising where they loved to play as a child, remembering all the sounds, smells and colours. They then began to play in the space as children, just for the pure joy of movement. Polly then encouraged the actors to remember something they really wanted as a child, but weren't allowed to have. They then physicalised this frustration with their whole body, expressing emotion which we gradually learn to conceal as we grow up. Most of the characters in *Mine* have emotions that they try to cover up. Through the rehearsals we have been investigating what is inside every character and how it is both hidden and revealed.

Thursday 28th August

Katy Stephens who plays the Woman, and Clare Lawrence Moody who plays the Sister, improvised the day in their childhood when the dolls' house arrived. Through looking at the emotions evoked by the event, such as longing, envy and excitement, they were able to explore the roots and dynamics of their relationship.

Friday 29th August

We undertook some more movement work, including a mirroring exercise where one person (A) creates a movement representing an unchecked emotion and the other (B) repeats it in a socially acceptable format.

Saturday 30th August

Michael Simmons from the Priory Clinic came to speak with the company about addiction and how it is used as a method of seeking refuge and escaping emotions - fear, worthlessness, solitude or even happiness. He also spoke about adoption and how trauma during childhood can manifest itself in the behaviour of an adult.



The Model Box



Alistair Petrie, Marion Bailey & Katy Stephens

Notes On The Set From Angela Simpson - Designer

The Dolls' House

Woman *When we first moved in... I used to come in here, daydream. Imagine myself telling stories. Singing songs. Think about the wallpaper. The colour scheme. Where to put the cot and the dolls' house. And then... I stopped coming in and you started to put junk in here...*

The dolls' house is a recurring image throughout the play, its function and significance changes frequently in the action, giving us insight into the Woman's character. On the surface, it is connected to the Woman's past. Its presence on stage serves as a reminder of her childhood, and the child she once was. Significantly, she begins to look at it again, bring it out, dust it down, and see what is inside, once she believes she will have a baby. To her, the dolls' house represents something she has lost, both her own childhood, and the children she was unable to have. It has been out of sight for a number of years and is now a reminder of a part of herself that perhaps she has lost touch with.

Visually, the dolls' house is a startling contrast to the space the Woman has created as a home. It looks old and tired, as if it has been sitting in a garage for years getting damp and dusty. The rotten dolls' house in this obsessively clear, highly designed, clean space provides a disquieting juxtaposition - a visual representation of the Woman's chaotic inner self.

Notes On The Set From Angela Simpson - Designer (continued)

The Home

Mother *Step out of your ivory tower and live in the real world where things are messy and frustrating and disappointing...*

Architecture is an important element of the play and its design. Both the Man and the Woman's professions are based on building and creating space. Their own home is a way of keeping control of their life, of displaying their success, and of keeping out the unpleasant, disordered and violent. Although on the surface their home is a form of protection, it is also a self-imposed kind of imprisonment. In cultivating this sanitized and safe 'bubble' they have also cut themselves off from the reality of the world, and this insulated state is challenged and broken down throughout the course of the action.

The notion that we can create such ultra-modern, clean, bright spaces that can hide away dirt, earth, chaos and even emotion, is thrown into contrast with the presence of Rose who has a primitive sort of energy. The tension between Rose and the Woman is at the root of the play, which is basically a pull between life, nature, wilderness and grit in the form of Rose and the control, poise and artificial habitat of the Woman.

The presence of a newborn baby is also one of the most profoundly 'wild' energies that can occupy a space. And it is the polar opposite of the energy of the home created by the Man and Woman, which is all about control, and artificial, almost clinical surfaces. The invasion of the Woman's family, the baby and Rose's desperate life into their world causes both their relationship, and their privileged existence, to unravel.

To represent both the style, yet fragility, of the couple's way of life Polly Teale and I created a set involving a large quantity of glass. As a material, glass can reveal and conceal the actors and give a sense of great expanse, but also confinement.

Questions

What constitutes success? How do you define a home?

Design Exercise

Why do the couple choose to live in a cool, modern and minimalist home? What might they be trying to hide?

Create your own set design for a 'contemporary urban living space'. Consider how your design might change for different theatre spaces, such as in-the-round, proscenium arch or traverse. Consider texture, colour, furnishings, light – what influence does the colour white have on our feelings about our environment, for example?



Image taken from Mine video projection

An Interview With Peter Salem - Composer

What were your initial thoughts on reading the play?

What a profound and emotionally powerful piece it is, with its exploration of what it is to have and to want a child. On the one hand there is the most direct, physical, basic, intuitive, animal connection - wanting a child, bearing a child, physically looking after a child - and then there is the intellectual fantasy projected on to that child by mother/carer based on some idea of the perfect child, the perfect childhood etc. So sound-wise there is definitely a role for the music/sound to heighten both the mythic vision of an almost perfect childhood that recurs in the play and the visceral reality of giving birth to, and caring for, a real physical being.

How do you approach a character, such as the Child, musically?

The Child represents the fantasy of the woman, the childhood she never had and the stirring of the feelings of desire for a child which she finds overwhelming and completely at odds with her lifestyle. The sound will be quite rich and lush for this, though there is also something fragile and damaged about her image of childhood - the dolls' house etc - which relates to her lost childhood or the lost childhood of children she never had and this music will be more broken and distorted. A lullaby tune is referred to in the script and fragments of this will recur throughout the play.

What instruments are you using and why?

I will be using rich sounds for the Child fantasy - strings, piano etc. For the broken-up memories of childhood I am planning to detune the old piano in the rehearsal room and tinker with it a bit to give it a stranger, more haunting sound.

What are the challenges of working with a physical theatre company like Shared Experience?

The new challenge with this piece will be working with the video and seeing how video, sound and physical material work together.

Question

In your opinion, when was the most effective use of music, sound or song in the production? Why?

The Child In *Mine*

Child *When the bad fairy had gone the room felt cold, as if it were midwinter. The music had stopped and there was no sound but the howling wind. The king ordered that every spinning wheel in the land should be destroyed and a great bonfire was built and every home searched from cellar to attic. The fire burned deep into the night and the king and queen held their baby daughter as they watched it blaze.*

Who is the Child? What does she represent?

The Child exists in the Woman's head and cannot be seen by the other characters. She represents different things to the Woman at different times. Sometimes she represents the child the Woman longs for and a mythic, idealised sense of childhood lost. Sometimes she is a memory, a ghost of herself as a child. She also functions as an inner-child, expressing the Woman's repressed feelings or even her fears about what the baby might become. Sometimes these overlap and fuse.

Polly Teale



Sophie Stone

Question

On watching the production, did you have a strong impression of who or what the Child represented for you?

Teacher's Exercise

Ask your group to work individually, to go back to a place that they loved to play as a young child, in their own history. Ask them to remember the smells, sights, sounds. What was special about this place? They should spend some time going back there in their mind's eye only and then after a few minutes, come to life, as themselves as that young child. They should mime going about whatever they actually did in that place. At this point, you can interact with them, asking questions directly to the children and in turn, they must answer from that age and place. After this stage, ask them to go back into their mind's eye and think how this place made them feel. Ask each in turn to say aloud the emotion attached to that memory and revisited experience. Then, bring them back together as a group to share their feelings and discuss what this exercise evoked for them.

*Sophie stone*

An Interview With Sophie Stone - Child

As an adult, how do you physically and vocally begin to create a character like the Child?

Physically, it's connecting to the inner-child we all have, being aware of your centre and the natural position of the spine. If you watch a child they have a natural upright posture, and have an alignment with the spine which we can lose bearing life's pressures as an adult. A lot comes down to observation and listening – I am fortunate to have my own constant source of material in my very willing eight-year-old daughter! We play lots of games, mess about, and sing nursery songs, which enables me to re-capture youth and stretch the imagination.

Who is the Child?

The Child represents different things, the Woman's past, her ideal child, her relationship with her own mother, her fears, her dreams and her nightmares. She also symbolises the loss of childhood and the freedom she craved but was never allowed to experience. She's a figment of the Woman's imagination, a source of expression and relief from the façade the Woman has created through a repressed childhood and adulthood.

How does the set, staging and video add to your characterisation?

The dolls' house, like the Child, represents a lot about the Woman and her childhood. It allows me to explore vulnerability, fragility, camouflage and it offers a space for both retreat and confinement. The minimalist house they live in gives a sense of freedom but also of emptiness.

The video sequences provide a real sense of dreams, where everything seems out of reach – repetitive, stretched and blurred. It helps to give me a sense of the relationship the Child has with the Woman and where she takes us to. I could visualise how the staging would work with the video and the sensations the dream-like state would create in the space.

What are the challenges of working in theatre as a deaf actor?

Most of the challenges are evident in the first couple of weeks when you're adjusting to the change of atmosphere – visibility in the room, light acoustics (does the sound echo and distort?), new people with different lip patterns, volume and habits. And most of all, the exercises, games and improvisations. It's hard for people to feed in information when you're in the middle of a scene without coming out of it in order to lip-read, or sometimes you get so involved in what you're doing that you're still wailing and rolling around on the floor long after everyone else has stopped! But with communication (asking people to sit away from the window so they're not just a silhouette) and time and patience (especially with myself), we're getting there. The group has also become unconsciously aware and I'm adapting to their lip-shapes and the surroundings. The biggest challenges come in technical rehearsals where I may have to hire some help!

Background On Rose

Prostitution and Poverty Figures

*An Excerpt from **Paying the Price: A consultation paper on prostitution: Home Office Communication Directorate, July 2004***

It has been estimated that there could be as many as 80,000 people involved in prostitution in the UK. It takes place in a variety of ways and those involved are far from a homogeneous group. However, common characteristics include:

Abuse - as many as 85% report physical abuse in the family, with 45% reporting familial sexual abuse.

Difficult lives - many report poor school attendance and as many as 70% spent time in care.

Homelessness - many report having run away from home, or having suffered periods of homelessness.

Problematic drug abuse - as many as 95% of those involved in street-based prostitution are believed to use heroin and/or crack.

Approaches to prostitution have tended to focus on the activities of the prostitute rather than those of the user. While the existence of commercial sexual transactions is generally accepted and even tolerated in certain circumstances, the prostitute is a commonly pilloried figure. This is often based on a general assumption that those involved are in control of their situation. However, the evidence is clear that this can be far from true. High levels of childhood abuse, homelessness, problematic drug use and poverty experienced by those involved strongly suggest survival to be the overriding motivation.

A common pattern is for men and women to be trapped in street-based prostitution after having been coerced into it at a young age, or to fund their own – and often their partner's – problematic drug use. Those involved in this way rarely benefit, apart from ensuring their drug supply. The profits of the 'trade' go straight into the pockets of drug dealers.

The link between commercial sexual exploitation and Class A drugs is a crucial one. It is becoming increasingly clear that these markets are so closely linked that any strategy to eradicate local drug markets must take account of those pimps who may also control the supply of Class A drugs locally. Often those who control prostitution are also closely involved with crack houses and other forms of drug dealing. Both markets offer lucrative rewards to pimps and controllers.

Read the following scene and consider:

- When Rose is with the baby, the baby stops crying. What is it about Rose's presence that calms the baby?
- Although Rose had a difficult childhood she remembers mothering her brothers and sisters as babies. What do you think the baby represents to Rose and why does she want to keep her?
- Why is the Woman drawn to Rose? Although the Woman has wealth and power is there something in Rose that she envies?
- Money is a form of drug? – Discuss

Scene:

Woman *How old is yours? Which one is yours?*

Rose *She's four weeks. Two days, three hours and (looks at her watch) thirty minutes.*

Woman *Is she doing well.*

Rose *Beautiful. She's beautiful.*

(The baby starts to cry)

Man *If you don't mind we... It's our first visit and we'd like to!*

Rose *I know.*

Man *We don't have very long and we'd like to be alone.*

Rose *I know. It's the same for me. Goes past so quick don't it. Feels like no time at all. Like you've only just arrived and it's over. They're telling you it's over.*

Man *I'm sorry. I don't want to be rude but we really!...*

Rose *Don't want to be rude. No, you shouldn't be rude. Not to me.*

(They stare at her. Uncertain)

I come because I wanted to meet you. Wanted to be here when you... There's things you should know. I need to tell you. She don't like being laid on her back you see. That's why she's crying. She likes to be up so's she can see what's going on. Do you mind if I show you because that's the easiest way isn't it.

(Rose takes the baby and holds her on her shoulder. The crying subsides)

That's it. That's better. There's a good girl. Shshsh. She's alright now see. I was the oldest of nine so I got lots of practice. My folks were out most of the time. Left it to me, so you see I know about babies. About children. There's nothing I don't know about kids.

Man *(Getting up) I'll go and get!*

Rose *No, don't do that. She's alright now. She can smell me can't she. They say that don't they. They can smell you. Hear your voice. All them months inside listening to you. Strange to think she was inside me only a few weeks ago. Sometimes wish she was still there. Miss her, don't I, giving me indigestion, keeping me awake at night. Making me sick.*

Magic i'nt it. Like a miracle, what grows in there. Not just skin but nails and hair and eyelashes and perfect little ears, like sea shells. Purple she were when she come out. Like part of your insides. Part of you ripped out. All them days, weeks, months spent wondering what she'd look like and here she is. Here you are. Only you can't tell yet can you. Takes years don't it... to become... themselves. To see who they're going to be. To know who they are.

Man *Look. I'm sure you mean well but I... we... weren't expecting!*

Woman *(To the Man) It's OK.*

Man *You're not supposed to be here are you?*

Rose *Not supposed?*

Man *You'd be in trouble if they knew.*

Rose *I'm her mother.*

Man *It's up to you. You can leave now or I'm going to get!*

Woman *Don't.*

Rose *(Leans forward to shake their hands with her free arm) Rose. I know your names. They told me. You're going to foster her until I'm ready!*

Man *I'm going to go and get our social worker.*

Woman *It's alright.*

Man *(To his Wife) I don't think we should get involved.*

Rose *Not get involved. She's my baby.*

Man *(To Rose) Either you leave now or I'm going.*

(The baby starts to cry. He goes)

Rose *She's hungry. Ready for her feed. Two o'clock.*

Woman *Yes. They said we could. Left us a bottle.*

Rose *I wanted to feed her myself but they said I couldn't. Gave me pills to dry it up but I didn't take them. It leaks out when she cries. I think she can smell it. Like an animal isn't it. You realise that when you have a baby. We're animals. Things happen. Nothing to do with you. It's the body. Takes over. The instinct. Don't seem fair does it. I got it. She wants it but they won't let me give it to her.*



Lorraine Stanley

An Interview With Lorraine Stanley - Rose

What are Rose's strengths and weaknesses?

She's a survivor, streetwise, clued-up and tough, but she's also self-destructive, helpless and without willpower.

What research did you do before coming to rehearsals and during rehearsals?

We met with a psychiatrist from the Priory and I'd met both prostitutes and drug addicts before when researching other characters. I've also been reading some material about mothers who give their children up for adoption.

What does Rose feel about the Couple? Does she make the right decision about the baby?

Rose thinks the couple are posh, snobby, rich and patronising. I think the decision is out of her hands.

Woman Thank you for coming. I hope, over the next few months we'll be able to... work together to give her/

Rose Beauty.

Woman to give Beauty the best possible start. I want you to feel you can ask us whatever.... That we're here to help.

Rose I bought her something. (Gets something out of her pocket. An identity bracelet) It's got her name on it. I want her to wear it. I want you to promise me that she'll wear it. Always.

Woman I promise. We promise.

Question

Why is it so important to Rose that Beauty should wear the bracelet?

Poverty In The UK - The Widening Gap Between Rich And Poor

Woman I look out there. (Looking through the window) All those lights. Those lives. How many people are there in this city? We live so close to one another and yet what do we know. What do we know of what goes on. The misery, the mess, the madness. We hurry home to our own little universe.

An excerpt from an article in The Guardian, *Meet the Rich* by Polly Toynbee and David Walker, 4th August 2008:

History, many like to believe, is a Whiggish tale of wealth, social progress and fairer distribution, an onward march: we all wear the same clothes, meet on equal terms on Facebook. Yet background predicts who will run the banks and who will clean their floors. It's not happenstance; it is largely pre-programmed. General mobility is a myth. The top 10% of income earners get 27.3% of the cake, while the bottom 10% get just 2.6%. Twenty years ago the average chief executive of a FTSE 100 company earned 17 times the average employee's pay; now it is more than 75 times. Since Labour came to power in 1997 the proportion of personal wealth held by the top 10% has swelled from 47% to 54%.

Excerpt from *London Divided: Income inequality and poverty in the capital*, by The Greater London Authority, November 2002:

London's formidable wealth generating capacity coexists with truly staggering levels of economic disadvantage...

Once housing costs are taken into account, 41% of children in London are living in income poverty, the highest rate in Great Britain. In Inner London, this rises to one in two children. Poverty rates for working age adults and pensioners are also far higher in Inner London than in any region of Great Britain.

The growing gap in earnings between higher and lower paid occupations indicates that lower paid workers, and those whose only employment opportunities lie in lower paid work, are faced with increasingly difficult options, as they experience the same cost of living pressures as other London residents. To the extent that growth in real earnings, concentrated in higher paid groups, feeds into increased housing and childcare costs, workers and potential workers can find themselves effectively priced out of the labour market, particularly if they have young children.



Image taken from Mine video projection



Image taken from Mine video projection

Video Projection In *Mine*

The use of film and projected video imagery allows the audience to travel instantly to different destinations, both externally and within the psyches of the characters. Projected imagery is also used to express the Woman's unconscious, her fears and fantasies.

In the projected imagery there are three landscapes. One is the interior of an old house, with endless corridors and doors, which relates to the dilapidated dolls' house and the Woman's dream that she is trapped inside. The dolls' house, of course, is a relic of her unhappy childhood and a part of the self.

The second landscape is a wood with a river. This relates to a place she escaped to as a child. Wild and beautiful, it has a heightened sense of something elemental that has been lost. A mythic notion of childhood. A state of unfettered freedom, connected to nature. The antithesis of the home she has created for herself as an adult.

Finally there is the landscape of the city. Dirty, threatening, sometimes beautiful. This imagery relates to her feelings about Rose and the world she inhabits. The Woman is both repelled and fascinated by it. Again it is the antithesis of their exquisite architect-designed home with its immaculate interior and manicured garden.

Questions

Why is the dolls' house there?

What does the house tell you about the couple?

Why did Polly Teale write the Man and Woman characters as an architect and interior designer?

The first video projection is of a child running through corridors and into a wood. Why do you think this image appears when the Woman first hears about the baby?



Image taken from Mine video projection

Interview With Thomas Gray - Video And Projection Designer

What is the function of the video in the production, how does it impact on our understanding of the characters?

Using video on stage allows us to take the audience out of the performance space. Sometimes it's used as a window, seeing outside to places such as Rose's world, or creating a location for the Woman and Man's house. It is also being used to take us into people's dreams and memories. With video we can see what they are seeing inside their own heads. This helps the audience more fully understand the characters.

How did you formulate the ideas and images that we see on screen?

The first step was to meet with the director/writer and set designer so they could talk about their overall feeling about the piece. After reading the script we met again to discuss everything in much greater detail. In this case the director already had a fairly clear idea where in the script the video would be used and why. She talked about what she was trying to accomplish at these points and I offered suggestions on what the video images might look like. We also looked at a lot of images and discussed style, colour and movement within the video.

What was the biggest challenge in creating the footage for Mine?

Running after a 7-year-old girl through a house while carrying a large video camera. Trying to get a good shot without falling, hurting myself and breaking the camera. Then doing it out in the woods down a very muddy and slippery path. Once the little girl was tired I then had to film again by myself running through the same hallways and muddy paths in case we decided not to use the little girl in the final videos. They all came out great, but it was hard work.

What do you think is the future for video and film in theatre?

I think as the technology improves and prices come down we are going to see more and more videos used in theatre. Currently it is mostly video projection but other technologies such as LED screens are also becoming more common.

Scene Study

Read through the scene below in small groups and then consider the following questions:

Questions

How does the Woman's extended family affect her behaviour and decisions?

How would you describe the Woman's relationship with her Mother?

Do you believe you are more influenced by nature or nurture in your own upbringing?

Why do only Rose and Katya have character names?

Mother *You should have called me. I could have come over.*

Woman *I didn't mean..... I wasn't saying!*

Mother *You shouldn't be alone with her.*

Woman *What?*

Mother *You shouldn't.*

Woman *I'm fine. I was just exhausted.*

Mother *It's not fair. Not right. How can you be expected.*

Woman *What do you mean?*

Mother *You haven't... You didn't.....(meaning "give birth to her") You don't!.....*

Woman *Listen. I'm not sure I'm ready for us to.... I think you should come back another day.*

Mother *Go? I only just got here. You just said you/ needed*

Woman *I'll ring you when I'm ready....*

Mother *You need help.*

Woman *I'm fine, I just*

Mother *For her sake.*

Woman *What?*

Mother *You said yourself you couldn't cope.*

Woman *I said I was tired. Exhausted.*

Mother *Exactly.*

Woman *What's that supposed to mean?*

Mother *Listen. There's an agency. Angels. They provide twenty four hour care. They stay overnight so you can sleep. I'll pay for it. Just a couple of days a week. Then I can come in the mornings!*

Woman *What is it? What is it about this baby?*

Mother *What did I say?*

Woman *Every time you open your mouth/ you say something.....*

Mother *I didn't mean to criticise.*

Woman *Implying I'm incapable. Couldn't possibly know. Like I'm a danger to her.*

Mother *I was only saying....You've had so little experience of children.*

Woman *I see the kids all the time.*

Mother *Sunday lunch every couple of months.*

Woman *Look. Let's stop now before we say/ something.*

Mother *You've had a very fortunate, very privileged existence.*

Woman *You mean selfish.*

Mother *That's not what I meant.*

Woman *Selfish. Self obsessed.*

Mother *I didn't say that.*

Woman *Well perhaps I agree with you.*

Mother *I didn't mean!*

Woman *Perhaps that's why I want to do this!....*

Mother *You're putting words into my mouth.*

Woman *"Ivory tower." That's what you said.*

Mother *What?*

Woman *If I live in an "Ivory tower" whose fault is it?*

Mother *What are you talking about?*

Woman *Who was it had me believe I had to be the best?*

Mother *Don't you dare throw that in my face. You who had everything. Every opportunity. Whatever it took.*

Woman *Everything but what I wanted.*

Mother *You were the loveliest little girl. Everyone said so. Everyone.*

Woman *Because I had to be.*

Mother *Nonsense.*

Background On Adoption

The first Act to introduce legal adoption in England and Wales was the Adoption Act 1926. Extract from a transcript of the Act, to make provision for the adoption of infants, 4th August 1926:

Upon an adoption order being made, all rights, duties, obligations and liabilities of the parent or parents, guardian or guardians of the adopted child, in relation to the future custody, maintenance and education of the adopted child, including all rights to appoint a guardian or to consent or give notice of dissent to marriage shall be extinguished, and all such rights, duties, obligations and liabilities shall vest in and be exercisable by and enforceable against the adopter as though the adopted child was a child born to the adopter in lawful wedlock...

Statistics on Adoption from the Department of Children, Schools and Families Report: Children looked after in England, year ending 31 March 2007:

- From 2006 to 2007 there were approximately 60,000 children in the UK care system at any one time. Many returned home but many stayed in foster care or other types of placement. About 5% of these children were placed for adoption because it was not possible for them to return to their birth families.
- 3,300 children were placed for adoption in 2007.
- 76% of the children adopted in year ending March 2007 came from an abusive or neglectful background.
- The average age of children when they are adopted is 4.2 years old. 170 children (about 5%) are over 10 years old.
- 87% of children adopted in 2007 were white, 8% were mixed race. 90 black and 60 Asian children were adopted from the care system.
- 290 children (about 9%) were adopted by single adopters, and 60 (2%) were adopted by same sex couples.

Excerpt from *Half a Million Women; Mothers Who Lose Their Children by Adoption* by David Hore, Phillida Sawbridge, Diana Hinings, 1992

We have no word for the woman who surrenders her child for adoption. This is unusual in the world of human relationships which has a rich and evocative vocabulary. We speak of lovers and mistresses, lotharios and strumpets, putative fathers and orphans, but there is no simple word for the woman who gives her baby to be reared by another. The absence of a name is further evidence that once the child is adopted, the mother is expected to do the decent thing and disappear from the picture. Her silence is required. The most selfless act she can perform on behalf of her child is to let go and forget all about him or her. And once the child has been surrendered, she has no further role, and she is therefore left without a name. She is a mother who has no baby, and that is no mother at all.

Rose I undress her. Look at her body. Try to remember. To learn it by heart. Everything. Every detail so's when she's gone I'll be able to imagine. Imagine I'm holding her. Feel her weight. Her smell. See her weird little toes. The soft hair on her back. Like a monkey. The birth mark on her cheek. Then I think maybe I shouldn't, in case I miss her too much and I can't stand it and I wish I never saw her. Never smelt, felt, touched. But it's too late now. I done it haven't I. Let her in. Let her into me.

Questions

- What do you think happens to the baby after the end of the play?
- Who does the baby belong to?

Drama Games And Exercises From The *Mine* Rehearsal Room

Ball Game

- Keep the ball up in the air. Whenever you hit it shout your name
- Stand in a circle and create a pattern by always throwing the ball to the same person and shouting their name – repeat the pattern
- Later introduce a second ball: throw it to someone else and thereby create a different pattern.

Chair-Questions Game

- The group sits on chairs in a circle
- One person sits in the centre: this person asks the group a question
- If anyone's answer is 'yes' they need to get up and quickly move to another chair
- The person in the middle should also try to get to one of the empty chairs
- The one who didn't get a chair is the new 'it' and will then sit in the centre-chair and ask a question
- (N.B. Except for the person in the centre, you cannot return to your own chair)

The questions asked in rehearsal ranged from personal: 'Do you have siblings?' to ones related to the play 'Do you know anyone who has been adopted?'

Try this exercise choosing your own relevantly themed questions.

You may want to come together as a group after the game to discuss some of the shared topics brought up.

Status Game

- Each member is given one card from 2 to 10 (2 being the lowest and 10 the highest)
- Don't look at the card but hold it on your forehead so that everyone can see what status you have, (only you don't know which number you represent)
- Imagine you are at a social event. Try to figure out what status you have by the way others react to you. At the same time treat people according to their status
- Finally the group should try to line up in the order of the number they think they have

Consider the characters in *Mine*. Their outer status is how they are perceived. Their inner status is how they perceive themselves. These may change according to different situations. The difference between the two may create conflict. In rehearsal, we gave each character in *Mine* an external and internal status number and found out that though some of the characters might have a very high status in society, their inner status was very low.

Gesture Game

- Stand in a circle. The first person makes a movement and sound towards the person on their right involving the whole body
- That person should then repeat this movement and sound and create a new one which they pass to their right and so on around the circle
- Respond quickly, don't think about them, just follow your impulse
- Ensemble-together version: The whole circle repeats every movement and sound at the same time. Try to build up a group rhythm

Writing A Review

Guidelines for writing a review

- Say what you saw
- Say what you think
- Reflect on your responses
- Write freely from the heart
- Don't worry about given theories
- Create your own theories
- Describe the tiniest moment that remains vivid
- Question that moment
- Find out what it says to you
- Say why it spoke to you

Consider

- The light, the sound, the movement, the colours and textures of the play
- The words, the music, the rhythms of the text
- The set, the use of video, the costumes, the style of the production
- The Objects: the glass walls, the images on screen, the dolls' house
- The themes
- The characters
- The story
- The ending...
- (and try to say everything you want in just 300 words!)

Send your review to

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Or e-mail: admin@sharedexperience.org.uk

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