



Barclays Theatre Awards  
THEATRE OF THE YEAR



# The Way of the World

## Education Pack

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**exchange  
education**

# Elements of Restoration Comedy

"Mr Congreve raised the glory of comedy to a greater height than any English writer before or since his time ... His plays abound with Characters all which are shadowed with the utmost delicacy ... The language is everywhere that of men of honour, but their actions are those of knaves; a proof that he was perfectly well acquainted with human nature, and frequented what we call polite society."

**Voltaire** Letters Concerning the English Nation, 1733.

In the Republic period of the Commonwealth plays had been banned and the theatres closed down. With the Restoration of Charles II to the throne in 1660, this ban came to an end.

This, and a natural reaction against the confines of Puritanism, encouraged in playwrights a greater freedom. A wave of brilliant and cynical comedies emerged, noted for their sophistication, sharp humour, interest in matters of sexual intrigue, and contemporary social settings.

Restoration comedies deal almost obsessively with the sexual behaviour and moralities of a very narrow section of late seventeenth century society, the fashionable leisured gentlesfolk found in a contemporary London of chocolate houses, parks and theatres in which they watched themselves being staged.

Congreve makes us enter the world of the play and grapple with its complexities on terms remarkably like those he affords to the characters themselves. He even insists that the time span of the action is precisely equivalent to the number of hours we have spent in the theatre watching it unfold. Everywhere, he is concerned to point out how much the way of this comic world, for all its heightened quality, is really the way of our own.

## Wit

"True wit is Nature to advantage  
dressed, What oft was thought,  
but ne'er so well expressed"

**Alexander Pope** (1688 – 1744)

Wit is a particularly intellectual form of comedy concentrating on a sharpness of mind which is demonstrated in speech. It frequently places a premium, not on what is said but on the way it is said. In *The Way of the World*, it is displayed through brilliant repartee, double entendre, barbed comments, epigrams and practical jokes. Congreve believed that true wit was about decorum and judgement and that the Witwoud-type character is therefore a kind of buffoon since he is lacking in both. In contrast to this, the real wit or humourist in Congreve's play is a joker who knows more about what is actually happening than any of the other characters.

**Take a look at Shakespeare's use of the fool in *King Lear* - he is often the wisest person on stage.**

## Satire

In much of *The Way of the World*, the wit becomes satirical. Congreve uses humour to highlight vice and folly both in individual characters and in a society obsessed with wealth, sex and fashion. This form of comedy dominated theatre of the time, though playwrights were careful not to directly criticise the aristocracy as they had the power to terminate the run of a play if it was not to their taste.

**Take a look at the play of *Oscar Wilde* and *Alan Ayckbourne*. Who do these playwrights satirise?**

## Comic Characters

"Humour is the ridiculous extravagance of  
conversation, wherein one man differs from all  
others"

**John Dryden** (1631 – 1700)

Witwoud (note the pun of his name) aspires to the wit of the other characters, and fails. In this he appears very foolish and therefore comic. Millamant urges him to spare the company his 'similitudes' but Witwoud is ridiculously proud of his ability to banter and in fact keeps a little book in which he records all his witticisms.

**Take a look at other examples in the play of characters revealed through their actions rather than their words.**

**Take a look at all the names in 'The Way of the World'- and in other plays and novels - finding characters whose names suggest the essence of their personality or desire.**

Much of the comedy surrounding Witwoud is realised when he is seen in tandem with Petulant, and the two together are a perfect comic double act, not that far removed from the Laurel and Hardy, Morecambe and Wise, Reeves and Mortimer of later years. Such double acts depend on an intimate relationship with each other, with one partner tending to dominate what is generally a playful but often quarrelsome relationship.

# Battle of the Sexes

"Why, one makes lovers as fast as one pleases and they live as long as one pleases, and they die as soon as one pleases: and then if one pleases, one makes more"

**Millamant** (Act II Scene I)

Lovers, not as friends or partners, but as tyrants and teases, make the stuff of comedy and Restoration Comedy has lewdness and sexual license at the forefront of its themes. In plays of the time there is often an anti-marriage theme or situation, adultery is a common plot device and lustful older women are frequently present. Themes of cuckolding, deception and libertine activities abound. Men and women in Congreve's plays, recognising that this is 'the way of the world', take great pleasure in astutely criticising the other's combined cruelties and vanities with sophisticated and witty repartee.

*Take a look at the 'Proviso' Scene, Act IV, scene 5, where Mirabell and Millamant agree mutual terms and ground rules for their marriage.*

# Revelations & Endings

"In *The Way of the World*, anyone who is aware of a discrepancy has power over others, and the play is organised through a series of revelations and counter-revelations - a peeling away of layers of deceit and misapprehension."

**Trevor R Griffiths** (1995)

It is the audience's knowledge of these layers that makes us complicit with the action, and thereby complicit with the inherent hilarity of the situations. Congreve, however, continues to subvert our expectations and gives us a completely unexpected ending.

*Take a look at the patterns of secrets and revelations running through the play. Find a way of mapping them visually in a graph or diagram, noting the elements of structure and rhythm that they reveal.*

# The Burlesque

In restoration comedy, the mirror held up to nature is a distorting one. Burlesque raises the level of comedy to that of the fantastic so the spectator is no longer distracted by the need to believe in what he sees.

*Take a look at Lady Wishfort's love scene with Sir Rowland (Act IV). It is full of this visual, almost farcical tomfoolery, much of it stemming from Lady Wishfort's self importance and the absurdity of the situation.*

## Why not .... ?

**1** List the above elements of comedy on a sheet of paper. Pair each one with a character or show from contemporary culture. (For example, *The Eleven O'Clock Show*, *Absolutely Fabulous*, *The League of Gentlemen*, *Austin Powers*, *French and Saunders*, *Spitting Image* and *Have I Got News for You*.) Now write two short paragraphs for each pairing, giving an example of:

- how this type of comedy is used in *The Way of the World*
- how this links to the contemporary example you have given.

**2** Try these two exercises to help you reach an understanding of the underlying feelings and motives of characters in *The Way of the World*.

- Take a speech, for example, Millamant's speech from Act IV, scene 5, "ay, as wife, spouse, my dear ... and as well bred as if we were not married at all" and try to work out what each character is thinking when the other is speaking. Go from sentence to sentence. This will illuminate the text, and make clearer why the characters say what they do in response to others.
- Take this further by placing a chair at either end of the room. Start a speech whilst sitting in one chair, then, with each change of thought, stop, stand, go to the other chair, sit and then carry on. This will give a sense of the structure and rhythm of the speech.



# Characters Relationships



## WAITWELL Sir Rowland

Enjoys innuendoes, amorous, dutiful.

Lady Wishfort about Sir Rowland:

**"You have excess of gallantry, Sir Rowland, and press things to a conclusion with a most prevailing vehemence."**



## WITWOUD

Puts great energy into pointless activities, pretends to be wiser, wittier and more sophisticated than he actually is.

Fainall on Witwoud:

**"He has something of good nature, and does not always want wit."**



## MIRABELL

The eligible bachelor. Defines what he wants and then gets it. Creative and flexible. Astute judge of character, archetypal wit, sharp and to the point.

Fainall on Mirabell

**"You are a gallant man, Mirabell; and tho' you may have cruelty enough not to satisfy a lady's longing, you have too much generosity not to be tender of her honour."**



## FAINALL

Cynical, despises marriage.

Mrs Marwood on Fainall

**"Truth and you are inconsistent"**



## FOIBLE

Adaptable, quick-witted, ingenious manipulator.

Mirabell on Foible:

**"Excellent Foible! Matrimony has made you eloquent in love."**



## MILLAMANT

Rich, beautiful and sophisticated. Sincere yet ironic. Sharp tongued, spontaneous, whimsical and teasing.

Mirabell on Millamant

**"Here she comes i'faith full sail, with her fan spread and her streamers out, and a shoal of fools for tenders."**



## PETULANT

Impatient, peevish, sullen, capricious and irritable.

Mirabell on Petulant:

**"Where modesty's ill manners, 'tis but fit That impudence and malice pass for wit."**



## MRS FAINALL

Faces problems realistically, which lends her some dignity.

Foible on Mrs. Fainall

**"The pattern of generosity"**



## LADY WISHFORT

Easily influenced by others, social and sexual hypocrite.

Waitwell on Lady Wishfort

**"The antidote to desire"**



## SIR WILFULL

Wants to be thought a wit but lacks mental agility. Solid moral values with a practical and literal mind.

Fainall on Sir Wilfull:

**"Sir Wilfull is an odd mixture of bashfulness and obstinacy. But when he's drunk, he's as loving as the monster in The Tempest, and much after the same manner."**



## MRS MARWOOD

Vicious, discontented, spurned by jealousy, her own worst enemy and discussed by the world.

Millamant on Mrs Marwood:

**"... you are more censorious than a decayed beauty, or a discarded toast"**



## MINCING

Full of affected gentility

Mirabell describes her as part of Millamant's

**"shoal of fools for tenders"**

Notes on the complicated plots and entanglements of *The Way of the World*

*Used to deceive Lady Wishfort disguised as Sir Rowland*

*Lady Wishfort's personal maid*

*Married to Waitwell*

*Reliable servant to Mirabell*

*Secretly employed by Mirabell*

*Lady Wishfort's personal maid*

*In charge of Millamant's fortune*

*Half brothers*

*Fashionable interest in Millamant*

*Friends*

*Parade for developing trust & love*

*Exposes Mirabell's pretend courtship of Lady Wishfort*

*Has to gain Lady Wishfort's approval... plans to expose her love for Sir Rowland...*

*The flippancy between them is a*

*Did not want to marry Mrs Fainall but cared enough to discuss her marriage to someone else*

*Secret affair with Fainall*

*Obsessed with Mrs Marwood*

*Lady Wishfort's daughter*

*Millamant's personal maid*

*Both unhappy in marriage*

*Mirabell's ex-mistress*

# Staging Past... and Present

## Restoration Theatre



A SEVENTEENTH CENTURY RESTORATION THEATRE

## The Buildings

In November 1660 two companies of actors, the King's and the Duke's (after Charles II and The Duke of York), were formed. In 1682 they merged and made Drury Lane their headquarters. In 1695 the leader of the combined companies, Thomas Betterton, quarrelled with the manager of Drury Lane and broke away to return to Lincoln's Inn Fields theatre. This was where *The Way Of The World* was first staged, in 1700.

## The Players

The employment of actresses in the place of boy actors, together with the introduction of moveable scenery, were the two most significant conventions adopted by Restoration theatres. They were to have far-reaching impact on the style of performance.

The players were under the authority and protection of the Lord Chamberlain; some had shares in the company, others were merely hired freelance actors. Acting as a career offered little security, though it was the personal glamour of the players rather than the intrinsic merit of the play that was often noticed.

The general standard of performance at this time seems to have been respectable, and complaints could be expected when there were lapses in standard. Thomas Betterton, the Restoration Actor who played the part of Fainall in the first production of *The Way Of The World*, clearly had his own concerns about the falling standards of the younger actor!:

"When I was a young player under Sir William Davenant we were obliged to make our Study our Business, which our young Men do not think it their duty now to do; for they now scarce ever mind a Word of their Parts but only at Rehearsals, and come thither too often scarce recovered from their last Night's Debauch."

Despite Betterton's concerns, actors were usually present and more or less correct at performances, doing their best to avoid the prompter's whisper. A system of fines and sometimes rewards kept discipline behind the scenes, and attendance at rehearsals was compulsory. If an actor had to drop out at the last minute, a substitute would 'crave the indulgence of the house' and read in the part.

## The Audience

The audiences of the time largely comprised the Court, the wealthy and fashionable, and many holding small appointments; though some apprentices and servants would also attend. The King could make or ruin a playwright by his comments on the play and the audience usually took their cue from his reaction.

Many of the audience members would attend balls and masques but this did not preclude their involvement in the frequent brawls that broke out in theatres of the time!

## The Staging

The Restoration playhouse was characterised by a deep apron stage, on which most of the action took place, thrusting out from the proscenium. The actors would have had the sense of performing almost in the auditorium, achieving a sense of close contact with the audience.

Lincoln's Inn Fields theatre held about five hundred people. Its stage was covered in green baize and wax candles provided the lighting. All the scene changes were carried out in full view of the audience.

Most plays were performed in contemporary dress; periwigs, wide-brimmed hats, long coats and lace cravats for the men, and gowns after the French fashion, displaying the neck and a generous expanse of cleavage, for the women.

The backstage rooms - known as the 'tiring rooms' - contained a variety of costumes, some of them gifts from the King or the aristocracy.

" One could say the theatre has been conceived with one simple function in mind, namely to please people – those who perform in it, those who operate it and most of all those who we hope will come to enjoy it. If it proves itself in the performance of this function, those of us who have worked together on it will be very content."

**Richard Negri**, *Designer of the Royal Exchange Theatre.*

" The Royal Exchange is lovely to do Restoration theatre in because the audience is so close to the action and theatres in the late 17th century were quite small. But the opposite also applies. There is a lot of stylisation in Restoration drama that depends upon it being played end-on – presenting a façade to the audience. But in the round there is a complexity because you (the audience) breathe the same air as the actors."

**Matthew Lloyd**, *Director.*

"The artistic vision of the company arises from the theatre space itself. The round is three dimensional like our own lives. The plays we present explore the nature of our humanity with the same depth".

**Gregory Hersov**,

*an Artistic Director at the Royal Exchange Theatre.*

" Lighting in the round is very different. The main consideration is what is somebody's back light (ie behind them) is the equivalent of a front light for someone else."

**Chris Davey**, *Lighting Designer.*

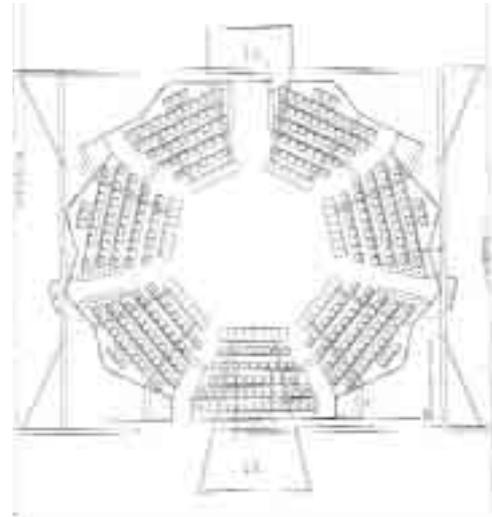
"Why are we in the round? Because we believe that theatre is a happening, and that what happens among people has more effect than what happens the other side of a peep-hole....Richard Negri, whose child this theatre is, conceived – not an aesthetic idea – but an experience and an envelope that would not only make possible but enforce that experience on both the actor and the audience. We had our purpose, and the theatre was to be the exclusive, committed, point-of-no-return expression of it, even beyond our understanding."

**Michael Elliott** – *one of the founding Directors.*

"There seemed to be no advantage in the greater part of the audience being so far away – not for them if they are to be affected, nor for us if we are to be excited and inspired. 'Exchange' coincidentally is a good name for the theatre. The idea being that theatre is an exchange between actors and the audience. An exchange of feeling, not an exhibition of cleverness. The Exchange is intimate and human in scale but it also has grandeur. Perhaps because the theatre is placed in such a huge old building. A smaller world inside a greater one. Our human world inside another one. "

**Tom Courtenay**, *actor.*

## Theatre in the Round



GROUND PLAN OF THE ROYAL EXCHANGE THEATRE

## Why not .... ?

**P** Compare and contrast the workings of early eighteenth century theatre, with the present day. For example, how might Charles II's power to make or ruin a playwright be compared to the role of the contemporary critic? Have types of audience changed? How do methods of lighting and scene-changing compare? And the lives of actors?

**P** Work in a group and brainstorm the implications for: (a) an actor, (b) a director and (c) a designer, of staging a play in the round, at the Royal Exchange Theatre.



# an interview with MATTHEW LLOYD director

## What attracted you to Congreve's "The Way of the World"?

I always wanted to do it – I always felt that I had an imaginative affinity with the period when I was a student – I was fascinated by the paintings of the early 18th century – Hogarth for example. The portraitists of the time created very striking, sensual, earthy images. Later on in the 18th century the world became more delicate, elegant – ultimately more civilised. But in the poetry and diaries of the time I was forcefully struck by how impossible it was to seal yourself off from the harsh realities of life even if you were a rich person.

The play has its roots in the conventions of many 17th century playwrights but Congreve always transcends those patterns and structures that he's inherited to pursue more human insights – he had a profound grasp of what motivates people in society. He was devastatingly clear-eyed on money and sex and how they interweave – and on selfishness and egotism.

## What's the nearest thing in Restoration comedy to modern day entertainment? Does Congreve remind you of any contemporary writers?

I don't think there is a complete modern day equivalent. I suppose it is kind of like a restoration version of The Fast Show. But there is a depth and subtlety in the characterisations that doesn't get matched in modern plays – more in the novel because it is as complex in tracking how the characters operate and working out discrepancies in their behaviour.

There are writers who have some of the energy and wanton brio, the vigour of restoration performance such as Caryl Churchill. Nick Dear is a writer who is very candid about being inspired by that genre.

This play came out of an interesting relationship between the stage and the audience – the intimacy of London society. It is almost journalistic – like "Private Eye" – entertaining but also serious.

## How do you as a Director make the play accessible – firstly to the actors and then to the audience?

There are two difficulties that strike me. Firstly a period experience can be very much at arms length. It can be consumed by the audience as a very different experience from their own lives and cutting through that is one challenge. Reaching beyond a very well rendered period experience is important because that can become sealed off from connecting to the modern world. If it doesn't change anything then it becomes boring and inert.

One thing that I look at is the reality of the characters and the lives they are living. In performance, Restoration Comedy often gets a bit camp and stylised. But, if you think about only projecting the right surface, the depth disappears.

My starting point is to make that world come alive in the rehearsal room – so looking at poetry by Swift, Pepys diaries, journalistic writing, documentary depictions of the chocolate houses. Then the actors feel less inhibited about the world they're occupying.

But also the expectations people have work in your favour because it is easier to deliver something more sensual than they anticipate. I encourage the actors to look at the characters and read them as versions of themselves because this was the way it was handled by the playwright.



MATTHEW LLOYD DIRECTOR OF THE WAY OF THE WORLD



## What's your favourite part of the rehearsal process?

That's very hard to answer. I love it all so much. The exploratory phase is fascinating. You start out imparting a certain vision of the play but you find it's changing as you speak, it's shifting as you respond to the human material in the rehearsal room. It is a privilege and a gift when the actors start to play around with their roles – opening doors you hadn't thought were there – that is a very creative period.

I think three weeks in is the period when most directors get frustrated because they are ahead of the actors. There is now an agreement of where you are going but the actors are trying to get off book (to have learnt their lines) and pick up pace and it is easy for the director to get impatient - waiting for an energy that can only come to life when everyone is in the same place.

The last week and through the tech (the technical rehearsal) as everyone has absorbed all the different elements coming together and need to shift the play very quickly, is a scary proposition but enthralling because everyone is so in tune. Incredibly major artistic decisions can be made in a very short space of time, which is very exhilarating.



## How important do you think classical texts are to younger audiences?

The chief importance lies in the demystification of the past and the realisation that the way human dilemmas have to be dealt with was in so many respects the same as it is now. Identifying with the past is potentially quite a liberating and radical process to go through. It can be about core human issues – the universality of emotion and psychology and morality.

There was a phase of work in the theatre where the quest for making classical texts relevant was very well intentioned but led to shallow work and I don't think that's an easy one to crack but one has to be confident that the world one creates is alluring enough for an audience to enter into even if there are aspects that seem a little alien. I would rather do that than find hard-boiled parallels between then and now. One would get a superficial sense of the production and wouldn't be as richly moved by the experience of the play.

If you talk to a Hollywood producer about what should be the engine of a gripping drama for a young audience, I feel certain that Sex and Money would be on the tip of their tongue and that is *The Way of the World*. There's a sort of visceral take on those issues in the play. People will be surprised at how frankly and nakedly those Gods are exposed – those are the Gods the people in the play worship.

## Why not .... ?

**?** Take two large sheets of paper; head them **SEX** and **MONEY**. Now try to create two spider diagrams or tree-lines showing how these two major themes run through the characterisations, relationships and situations in *The Way OfThe World*.

**?** Create a collage of images of the late 17th century. Collect postcards and book illustrations of 17th century paintings, search the web for theatre illustrations of the time, and collect the poems of writers such as **Dryden** and **Pope**. (Other writers Matthew Lloyd has recommended for research include: Swift, Pepys, Jonson's *The Devil is an Ass*, Ottway's *The Soldier's Fortune*, and Sybil Rosenfeld's *The Theatre of the London Fairs in the Eighteenth Century*.)

**?** Put yourself into the position of Director. How would you 'make the world (of the play) come alive in the rehearsal room'? How might you 'encourage the actors to look at the characters as versions of themselves'?

# an interview with **TOBIAS MENZIES** playing **Witwould**

*Tobias recently graduated from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and this is his second theatre job. He has appeared as Frank Gallagher in the BBC series Casualty. This is his first appearance at The Royal Exchange Theatre and we talked to him in the first week of rehearsals about the work so far.*

## **What preparation did you do for this role before going into rehearsals?**

I went and visited Sir John Soames' house, Hogarth House. The latter was a cartoonist of the day who drew paintings of the period which have great detail and evoke a wonderful atmosphere. They also show what had and hadn't been invented. I also did some background reading but not masses of readings of the play. It varies from job to job really.

## **How have the first week of rehearsals been going?**

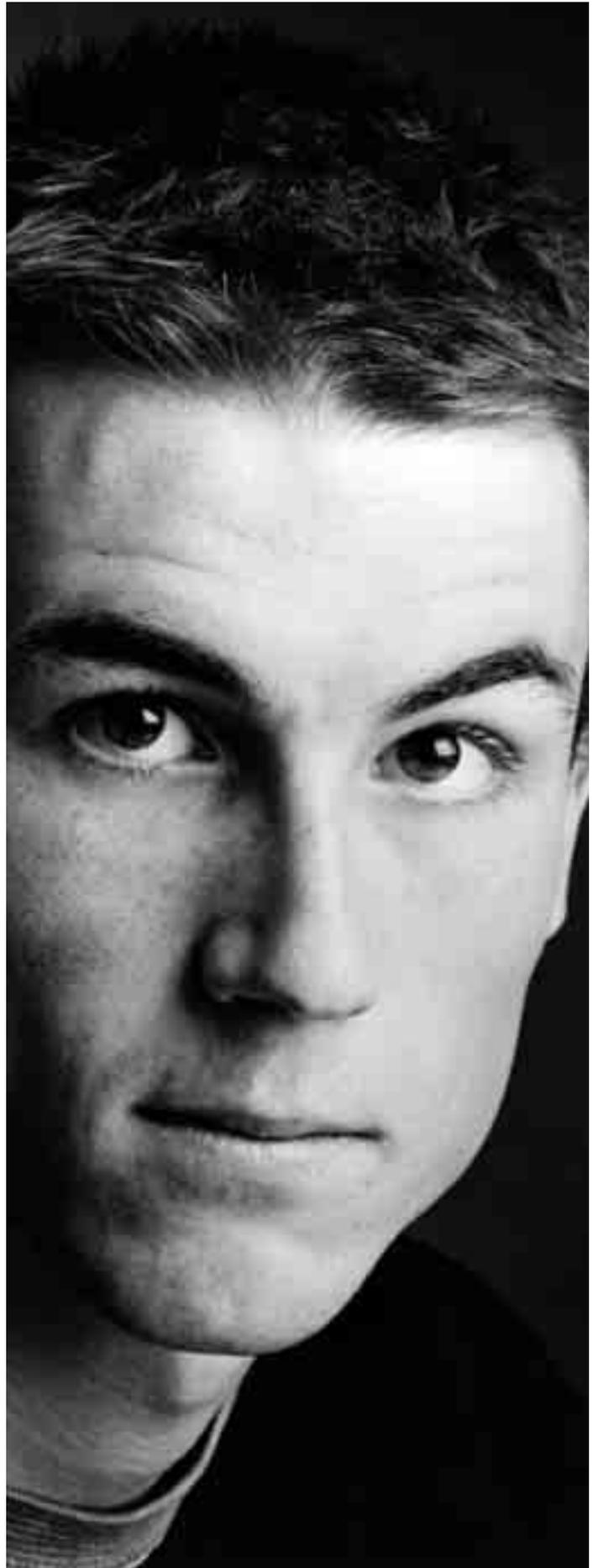
Great. We've had a nice leisurely beginning. We haven't got up yet - just sitting trying to unravel the play. Gently easing ourselves into this other world.

## **Have you ever worked in-the-round? How are you finding it compared to other forms of theatre?**

No I haven't worked in-the-round. I'm really excited. I'm not particularly daunted - perhaps I should be! But I'm sure it will become apparent. When I was at drama school I did a production that was almost in-the-round and I was told never to get stuck in one place too much. Moving in curved lines. This is only my second theatre job so I haven't got too many habits to break! All the other work I have done is T.V. and film which is very different but theatre is what I'm trained to do, so I'm very excited.

## **How are you feeling about going from the very immediate contemporary role of Frank in "Casualty" to Restoration Comedy? Are there any parallels?**

Obviously there are parallels. I mean it's all me. You use your own experience to make it immediate for yourself. The world and how these people function - they are pretty different people. As I go more into it I'll probably find more parallels - if I go looking for them. You have to try to make the words you say meaningful for yourself and people around you. The techniques and process are not dissimilar - there are words on the page to bring to life. You have to find reasons for why you're saying what you say, and to whom. Of course there are different costumes, language, physicality but that is helped by the world that is created for you by the set. I suppose that the building blocks are the same.



TOBIAS MENZIES

## What is your favourite part of the rehearsal process?

It varies. There are no two rehearsal processes that are the same. It's about the interaction of the people in the rehearsal room and the different ways of working that that brings. I mean, it's a neurotic business and not always fun. It's hard work - a hard slog dispersed with "eureka" moments. You respond to the moment. It's always different each time but I do enjoy it.

## What do you think of productions that 'modernise' classical texts?

I'm sort of mixed about it. Sometimes it can be great - there are really two schools of thought. One, you have an ancient text and you work and work on it until you unlock a way to communicate it that way today. You don't sacrifice the piece but you also communicate it to the audience. The other one is to help the audience out by doing something funky with it. But the danger is that you don't actually communicate what the play is really about - you simply sidestep the difficult moments and avoid the dangers and challenges of the text. I have no problems in terms of modern costumes, but I think ultimately you have to tell the story with the emotions and ideas that are in the play.

## What aspects of the play were you really drawn to?

In terms of performing, it is a really interesting piece. There's lots of scope. It's a very theatrical part. I love theatre that can't be anything other than theatre. The job of theatre is to be theatre - that live experience. There's great language to speak in the play. It is very witty and erudite with lots of layers. Therefore the play gives the actor lots of scope - exploring the truth and lies, deceit and many plots in the play.

## What modern comedy either in theatre or on T.V, does the play remind you of?

That's a difficult question. The danger with comparisons like that is that they become overtly caricatured and it's more interesting if they're real people with real desires. I saw "Art" by Yasmina Reza the other week at the Wyndham's Theatre in London and that reminded me slightly of the play but I can't think why now. I think Moliere is quite similar - that comedy of manners which explores the deception and lies of how people interact. There is an element of the absurdity of "Absolutely Fabulous" but really one wants to evoke the world of the play for the audience and transport them there. If we can do that then it will be really goose-pimply.

## Why not .... ?

Try a few of these practical drama exercises to help you think about character in *The Way Of The World*:

- Physical character** – try walking around the room as your character. Think about how fast or slow you are. Do you know where you are going? What part of the body do you lead with? What is the most tense part of your body? Give yourself situations to explore such as – it's raining, it's dark, you're late, you're too early,, Concentrate on exploring the physicality of your character.



PAIR OF MEN'S REHEARSAL SHOES. EVERY ACTOR IS GIVEN REHEARSAL SHOES TO PRACTICE THEIR WALKING AND HELP THEM GET INTO CHARACTER.

- Status line-up** – Choose a character and decide how high or low your status is at the beginning of the play. One end of the room is low status (number one) and the opposite end is high status (number 10). Where would your character stand in that line up? Look at where the other characters are standing – do you disagree with anyone? Are there any status struggles? Now, what is your status at the end of the play? Has it changed? Have your relationships to other characters altered?
- Stills** – start rehearsing a scene and then freeze it at a given point. When you are tapped on the shoulder, speak your characters private thoughts at that moment. This exercise can help you to consider the underlying motivations of your character.





# aspects of the CREATIVE TEAM

## Interview with Louise Ormerod, Stage Manager

It's 24 hours before I start working full time as Stage Manager on *The Way of the World* and this is the story so far...

### Design Meetings

I've been to two **design meetings** for the show. The first was a chance to meet the Director, Designers and all the in-house Head of Departments working on the show. This was to get a feel for the Director and Designer's intentions. Matthew and Rae spoke a lot about helping the audience "get into" this period by recreating the strong smells that would have been around: by using real dirt on the floor, woodchips around the edge of the stage and creating the smells of tobacco, perfumes and chocolate. I now know that this is not a show where I'll be sweeping the floor and polishing the furniture! The second design meeting confirmed the details of the set, furniture and costumes so that workshop and the props buyer could begin to create it all.

### Prep Day

This will be the Friday before rehearsals start. It will be the first time the new Stage Management Team gets together. Lisa the **DSM** and Andy the **ASM** have not been to the design meetings so I'll share everything I've learnt with them. Lisa and I will then find out who's in the cast and ring them with a **call time** for Monday's read through. We will also create a **rehearsal call** for the departments in the building. Andy will make a list of all the props and furniture and we'll endeavour to get a rehearsal version of everything from our Props and Furniture Store. Lisa will make up the **prompt script**, into which, over the next four weeks, she will record all the **blocking**. We'll hopefully get in to the rehearsal room to do a **mark-up** and then off to enjoy a rare two day weekend!

### Rehearsals Start

On Monday the actors arrive and meet everyone. The Designer will show them the **model box** and then there'll be a read through of the play. This is particularly useful for Stage Management as the actors help us to make sense of the play. With such complicated subplots and relationships it's great to be able to put faces to the characters at last. To welcome the actors to the theatre, there are drinks in the Marketing Department at the end of the day.

For the next four weeks, we rehearse Monday to Friday but often on Saturday mornings too. Rehearsals start at 10.00am so we arrive at around 9.30am to prepare. Sometimes we might rehearse evenings as well. As rehearsals progress, I'll be working out what we will need to do in the scene changes. I'll also be finding out what costumes and wigs each character needs and begin to plot any quick costume changes.

### Towards Production Week

Stage Management is responsible for getting all the **running props** and **paper props**. For this show, Andy and I will be experimenting with preparing large amounts of hot chocolate for the burner in Act One.

In the final two weeks, we use the actual stage for rehearsing. Rehearsals on stage have to finish around 5.00pm, so that we can do the **turnaround** for the evening show. If the Director wants to rehearse after this, all the props and furniture are moved back to the rehearsal room. No mean feat in a 15 minute tea break! Then of course it all has to come back to the stage to start again in the morning.

Production week is where it all comes together and Stage Management is at its busiest in the hectic run up to opening night.

If you like cryptic puzzles (which rehearsal calls often are!), don't mind working fairly long hours and enjoy the company of often very lively and interesting people then this might just be the job for you!

This includes the Set, Costume, Lighting, Sound and Music Designers and Head of Departments from Construction, Workshop, Education, Marketing, Front-of-House, Box office, Accounts, Wardrobe, Wigs, Make-up - so a lot of people in one room

Deputy Stage Manager  
(always in rehearsals)

Assistant Stage Manager  
(mostly out and about)

The time actors arrive  
at rehearsals.

Daily times for actors to arrive  
and scenes to be rehearsed.

A copy of the script marked up with  
all moves, script changes, design  
decisions, lighting and sound  
information and scenery moves.

The basic movements of the  
actors on stage.

The outline of the set and stage  
marked on the rehearsal room  
floor with different coloured tape.  
Taken from the Designer's plans.

A model of the set and scenery  
within a model of the theatre  
itself - usually 25 times smaller  
than the actual theatre.

Items like food, drink, cigarettes  
consumed during the show.

Letters and documents.

The stage has to be emptied  
of the rehearsal set and  
replaced with the set of the  
current production.



LOUISE ORMEROD (STAGE MANAGER) AND ANDREW HALL (ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER)  
MARKING UP THE FLOOR OF THE REHEARSAL ROOM

"I take my inspiration from the design - the atmosphere and world created. I'll also listen to music from that period - Purcell, Vivaldi but this will not be a chocolate box pastiche. It will not be traditional - I'm not that kind of musician. It will have a bit of a twist to it."

**Olly Fox** Composer and Sound designer

"My considerations for this play is to add to the atmosphere already there in the set. I aim to cleanly help the atmosphere of the period and of the play. Time of day is very important as is whether a scene is inside or outside"

**Chris Davey** Lighting Designer

"I've never worked in the Main House before. It is not so much the scale of a space as the scale of the piece itself. There would be considerations if there were live music but as the music will be recorded, there are no major differences."

**Olly Fox** Composer and Sound Designer



LUCY SUTCLIFFE, LIGHTING TECHNICIAN  
AT THE ROYAL EXCHANGE THEATRE



GWEN THOMSON, SOUND TECHNICIAN  
AT THE ROYAL EXCHANGE THEATRE

# Extra Activities

## Why not .... ?

Look at Sir Wilfull's speech to Witwoud in act three scene one: "The fashions a fool; and you're a fop ... and the weekly bill, till of late days."

Try these two activities:

**?** **Rewrites** - rewrite a small passage in contemporary speech. If you were playing this character and the writer was in the room, what changes might you want him to make?

**?** **Talking Back - Break Sir Wilfull's speech into individual sentences.** What do you think Witwoud would like to say in reply to each of these criticisms? Write in his 'ideal' responses, then try performing the speech as a dialogue between the two men.

## web resources

For further resources and information on Restoration theatre and *The Way of the World*, why not try some Internet Sites:

<http://web.new.ufl.edu/~craddock/lonthe1.html>  
<http://www.bartleby.com/218/0517.html>  
<http://www.bartleby.com/218/0607.html>  
<http://www.bartleby.com/218/0606.html>  
<http://lupus.northern.edu:90/wild/th100/CHAPT13A.HTM>  
<http://www.britannica.com>

## further reading

Stratford Series - Restoration Theatre General Editors John Russell Brown & Bernard Harris  
Restoration & Eighteenth Century Comedy Editor Scott McMillin  
English Dramatists - William Congreve Editor David Thomas  
Restoration Comedy in Performance Editor J.L.Styan  
The Revels History of Drama In English - Volume V 1660-1750 General Editor T.W.Craik  
The Way of the World - York Notes Editors Professor A.N.Jeffares & Professor Suheil Bushrui

## exchange education

The Education programme of the Royal Exchange Theatre invites people of all ages to explore the processes and practice of theatre and discover their own creative potential.

We're committed to work which illuminates, reflects and informs our artistic repertoire and encourages everyone to take ownership of the unique Royal Exchange Theatre.

We offer:

- a year round programme of workshops, talks, courses and events for individuals, schools and colleges;
- teaching and learning materials to support selected productions;
- a partnership scheme, building closer links with local schools and colleges;
- membership of regular groups including theatre projects for young people and play reading sessions for the over 50s.

To find out more: call Amanda or Sarah-Jane on 0161 932 6720 / 6721 or email

[@royalexchange.co.uk](mailto:@royalexchange.co.uk)

Write to Exchange Education, Royal Exchange Theatre, St Ann's Square, Manchester M2H 7D

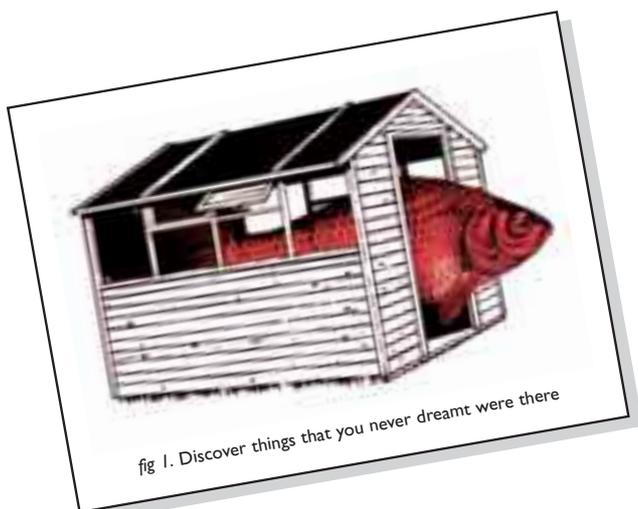


fig 1. Discover things that you never dreamt were there

### Produced by Exchange Education

Written and researched by Suzanne Bell and Exchange Education  
Edited by Richard Baker and Exchange Education  
Costume drawings reproduced by kind permission of Rae Smith  
Back stage photography by Joel Fildes  
With thanks to The Theatre Museum, London.

### Books consulted in the preparation of this pack include:

*The Revels History of Drama In English - Volume V 1660-1750* General Editor T.W.Craik (Pub. Methuen 1976)  
*The Way Of The World* by William Congreve. Edited and introduced by Trevor R Griffiths. (Pub. Nick Hern Books 1995)  
*Stratford Series - Restoration Theatre*. General Editors John Russell Brown & Bernard Harris  
*Theatre Studies* by Simon Cooper and Sally Mackey. (Pub. Stanley Thornes Ltd 1995)  
*The Theatre; A Concise History* by Phyllis Hartnell (Pub. Thames & Hudson 1985)