



HUSBANDS & SONS

A Royal Exchange Theatre and National Theatre co-production

BY D H LAWRENCE. ADAPTED BY BEN POWER.

19 FEBRUARY 2016 - 19 MARCH 2016

DIRECTOR Marianne Elliott
DESIGNER Bunny Christie
LIGHTING DESIGNER Lucy Carter
VIDEO DESIGNER Tal Rosner
MOVEMENT DIRECTOR Scott Graham
MUSIC Adrian Sutton
SOUND DESIGNER Ian Dickinson
FIGHT DIRECTOR Kate Waters

PERFORMED BY Joe Armstrong (Luther Gascoigne), Matthew Barker (Joe Gascoigne), John Biggins (Carlin), Cassie Bradley (Maggie Pearson), Louise Brealey (Minnie Gascoigne), Susan Brown (Mrs Gascoigne), Anne-Marie Duff (Lizzie Holroyd), Julia Ford (Lydia Lambert), Johnny Gibbon (Ernest Lambert), Tala Gouveia (Nellie Lambert/Laura), Lloyd Hutchinson (Walter Lambert), Philip McGinley (Blackmore), Martin Marquez (Charles Holroyd), Katherine Pearce (Gertie Coomer), Josie Walker (Mrs Purdy/Clara) and Sue Wallace (Grandmother).

Teacher Resource

This resource has been created with Key Stage 3, 4 & 5 Drama and English teachers in mind, but many of the activities can be adapted to suit other subject areas and age groups. The resource aims to enhance students' understanding of the HUSBANDS & SONS rehearsal process and to spark interesting conversations about the production.

For further information about our Schools' Programme, please contact Natalie Diddams on 0161 615 6750 / natalie.diddams@royalexchange.co.uk

OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES

- <http://www.experiencenottinghamshire.com/towns-and-villages/eastwood-p453521>
- <http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/shows/husbands-sons>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJ2MHIiGSPI>

PRODUCTION SHOTS



MINING MEN & WOMEN

"It's risky work, handlin' men, my lass. For when a woman builds 'er life on men, either 'usbands or sons, she builds on summat as sooner or later brings the 'ouse down crash on 'er head – yi, she does".

- Mrs. Gascoyne, THE DAUGHTER-IN-LAW

HUSBANDS & SONS is set in the village of Eastwood in the early 1900s. It is about men and women living in a coal mining community around the Great Brinsley pit (see figure 1), which can be seen on YouTube in the trailer for the black-and-white film version of SONS & LOVERS (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9WaL4BJI45k>).

Life in coal mining communities in the early 1900s was difficult for both men and women. The men worked as colliers down the mines, facing extreme danger on a daily basis and unremitting hard labour, which was generally paired with heavy drinking, sport and political action (through the Miners Federation of Great Britain, established in 1888).



Women, on the other hand, spent their days working in the home and looking after their families. There was a lot of social pressure

on women to keep their husbands and sons happy at all times, and to sacrifice their own needs and desires in order to do so! Mining communities were hyper-masculine and patriarchal, leaving women at a severe social and economic disadvantage and at risk of domestic abuse.

WIVES & DAUGHTERS

The title of the play: HUSBANDS & SONS, might make you think about men before it makes you think about women. However, playwright Ben Power (who adapted the script) and director Marianne Elliott wanted to place the experience of the female characters at the heart of the play.

The title therefore asks audiences to look at the world from the perspective of the wives & daughters of the play, whose lives revolved around their husbands & sons!

WHY NOT? Ask you class to consider the title of the play. Why might Ben Power and Marianne Elliott have decided to name the play this? What does the title tell you about gender inequality in mining communities from the early 1900s?

THE PHYSICALITY OF MEN & WOMEN

Movement Direction on HUSBANDS & SONS was provided by Scott Graham from Frantic Assembly (you can find out about Frantic Assembly here: <http://www.franticassembly.co.uk>).

Scott wanted to use movement to emphasize the differences between men and women in the play. He did this in rehearsals by splitting the cast by gender and challenging each group to create stylized movement sequences. The men focused on the aches and pains that their characters would have developed from working in the mine, while the women focused on movements connected to the housework their characters would have done each day.

These stylized sequences do not appear in the show, but elements of them can be seen in the way each actor moves. Scott asked the actors to repeat the sequences as a warm up each day and then use them as inspiration for developing their character's physicality.

WHY NOT? Have a go at this exercise, which will help your class create gendered movement sequences like the ones used in rehearsals for HUSBANDS & SONS:

- Split your class into 2 groups (you could do this according to gender, or not if that is not appropriate for your group).
- Give each group one of the monologues in APPENDIX A and some time to read it aloud.
- Once they are familiar with the monologues and they have talked a bit about the characters, ask each group to think of 5 movements for their character. You could ask them to think about their character's aches and pains or their working style if that helps.
- Once each group has 5 movements, challenge them to link them together to create a smooth sequence that can be repeated and performed to music.
- Ask each group to perform and then reflect on the differences between the sequences. What do the sequences tell you about the different lifestyles of men and women in the play? How did those lifestyles affect their bodies?
- Return to the monologues and challenge a couple of students to perform the monologues, trying to imbue their movement with the ideas developed in their movement sequences.
- As an extension discussion activity, you could ask your class to think about the ways that men and women move today. What are the pressures on men and women today, and how do those pressures affect our bodies?

3 PLAYS FOR THE PRICE OF 1!

HUSBANDS & SONS cleverly interweaves 3 plays by writer DH Lawrence, written in the early 1900s. The 3 interwoven plays are:

THE DAUGHTER-IN-LAW - Mrs. Gascoigne is an imposing matriarch whose eldest son, Luther, has recently married a young woman called Minnie. Mrs. Gascoigne does not approve of her new daughter-in-law and is intent on bringing her down a peg or two.

When Mrs. Gascoigne finds out from a neighbour that Luther has been having an affair with another woman, she sees an opportunity to humiliate Minnie.

The play, which was DH Lawrence's re-imagining of Shakespeare's THE TAMING OF THE SHREW, presents a battle of female wills.

THE WIDOWING OF MRS HOLROYD - Mrs. Holroyd is married to a loutish miner, who drinks, sleeps with prostitutes and is prone to violence. When a gentlemanly neighbour makes romantic advances to her, she wishes her husband dead. Sooner than she hoped, her wish comes true - when her husband dies in a mining accident.

When Charles Holroyd's body is brought home from the mine, we see for the first time the other side of the relationship between Mr and Mrs. Holroyd - now, when it's too late.

A COLLIER'S FRIDAY NIGHT - A refined mother has transferred her emotional needs from her brutish miner husband to her sensitive student son, Ernest, resulting in a churning rivalry between the mother and Maggie, Ernest's shy girlfriend.

This play is centered on the habitual Friday night activities of a miner's family, such as counting out the pay and baking bread. When Ernest and Maggie accidentally let the bread in the oven burn, Ernest's mother blackmails her son into an acknowledgement that she is first in his heart.

ADAPTING THE PLAYS

Initially, writer Ben Power and director Marianne Elliott simply wanted to revive THE DAUGHTER-IN-LAW and started talking to the National Theatre about it. But when THE WIDOWING OF MRS HOLROYD and A COLLIER'S FRIDAY NIGHT were brought to the table as other options, they found it difficult to make up their minds!

They decided to run a workshop, where all 3 plays would be read side by side. Marianne explained: "hearing them together, I felt a great connection, but also a real sense of yearning, loneliness and loss in all 3 plays".

Even though the plays are very different in terms of story, there are a number of themes that run through all 3, such as:

- Love (between mothers and sons in particular)
- Men versus women
- Old versus young
- Alienation and loneliness
- The effects of drink
- The dangers of mining
- Religion

By placing the plays alongside each other, Ben and Marianne found that it was possible to highlight the themes and illuminate each different story. For example, they decided to place the scene in which Blackmore and Lizzie Holroyd – potential lovers – finally embrace alongside the scene in which the mother and son of the Lamberts embrace to emphasize the theme of love between mothers and sons.

They also noticed that by bringing the 3 plays together, they could get a lot of action and a lot of atmosphere in one package. HUSBANDS & SONS was born!

WHY NOT? Ask your class to get into groups and read the extract from the script in APPENDIX B. What themes are emphasized by the way the different stories are brought together? Are there any other theatrical techniques that could be used to illuminate each story?

THE DESIGN

Trying to collage the material from all 3 plays was a challenge, but it quickly became clear that the village of Eastwood needed to be at the heart of the project and placed onstage in as full and rounded a way as possible.

This was the main factor that influenced the design (created by set designer Bunny Christie), which you can see below. By placing 3 kitchens on stage, the plays are able to run alongside each other in different 'worlds' whilst also making it easy for the characters to speak to each other and pop up in each other's stories.



WHY NOT? Look at the picture of the set (there is a larger version in APPENDIX C). Ask your class to discuss: why did Bunny Christie focus her design around 3 kitchens? What does the colour palate from the design tell you about the atmosphere of the play? What might be the challenges/advantages of performing on this set?

HAIR & MAKE-UP

In theatre, an actor's hair & make-up is just as important as their costume and props. Hair & make up can tell the audience a lot about what kind of character they are playing.

WHY NOT? Ask your class to design the hair & make up for an actor playing a medieval beggar and then an actor playing a 1920s gentlewoman. What are the differences? As an extension activity, you could ask your class to get into pairs and analyze what their partner's hair and make-up says about them... or think about the way they wear their own hair (& make up, if they wear it).

Below, you will see photographs of Johnny Gibbon (who plays the character of Ernest in HUSBANDS & SONS) and Cassie Bradley (who plays the character of Maggie).

These hair styles were created by our Head of Wigs and Make-Up, Jo Shepstone. Jo worked with the actors to try out lots of ideas, and these were the ones the designer chose out of all the different options. Jo also had to work with the actors on their make-up, to make sure it worked for each character.

WHY NOT? Show your class pictures of the hairstyles and ask them to create a character profile inspired by the hair styles. What kind of characters are Ernest and Maggie? What might their hobbies be? What might they like to eat? See how far you can go with the questions!

As an extension, why not ask your students to design hair styles for other characters in HUSBANDS & SONS, such as Mrs. Holroyd or Minnie Gascoigne.



APPENDIX A - MONOLOGUES

MONOLOGUE 1

MINNIE GASCOIGNE (*aloud, to herself*):

Ah, but these clouds. Always on a washday. How am I to get anything dry? Great heavy clouds. (*Quiet*) It'll rain and wash us all away... (*Shaking her head*) A foolish thought in an idle brain.

(*Looking at the clock*) Five on a Friday and all of them late. If he once gets seated in the Ram there's no telling when he'll come. And the boy will be back soon.

(*Looking in the oven*) There's the casserole done. The soup. And the pudding. What else?

MONOLOGUE 2

CHARLES HOLROYD (*talking to his wife, Lizzie*):

What! You think you're something special, since your uncle left you that money. I can see your little game. I'm no fool, I tell you. I'll show you who's gaffer, though. I tell you, I'm goin' to put a stop to it.

(*He brings his fist down on the table with a bang.*) It's going to stop.

(*He bangs the table again.*) I've put up with it long enough. Do you think I'm a dog in the house, an' not a man? Do you? We'll see who's the dog.

(*He bangs the table.*)

APPENDIX B

Scene 13

LYDIA LAMBERT watches through her window. MINNIE comes to the doorway and watches. MRS GASCOIGNE eyes her.

MRS GASCOIGNE: That'll be Charles Holroyd carrying on.

MINNIE: Ay.

MRS GASCOIGNE: She can't manage him.

Scene 14

LIZZIE rushes towards HOLROYD's body.

LIZZIE: Oh, what has he done to himself?

BLACKMORE Tumbled over himself.

HOLROYD struggles to stand, cursing.

LIZZIE: Aren't you going to get him up?

BLACKMORE: What for?

LIZZIE: But what shall we do?

BLACKMORE: Let him go to hell.

They look at each other; then, at the same time, turn away. Silence descends.

Scene 15

LYDIA comes back from the window and looks at the clock.

LYDIA: He should be here by now. Staying out in the cold all night.
WHERE IS HE?!

Silence. Still no ERNEST.

APPENDIX C

