



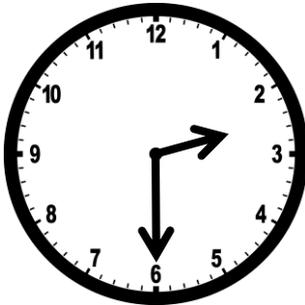
THE MIGHTY WALZER

Relaxed Performance
Tuesday 26th July, 2.30pm

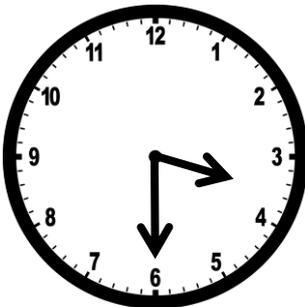
Today we are presenting what is called a Relaxed Performance. A Relaxed Performance is for everybody but we particularly want to welcome people who might sometimes feel anxious or worried about coming to the theatre, so we have tried to do a few things to make it feel fine. We hope you enjoy the show!

TODAY'S TIMETABLE

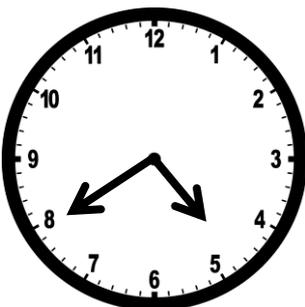
The play will start at 2.30pm



There will be an interval at 3.30pm which will last for about 20 minutes. This is so that the actors and the audience can have a break.



The play will end at approximately 4.40pm



DURING THE PLAY

During today's play there will be a relaxed atmosphere...

The lights will stay on, and the doors of the theatre will be left open so that you can go in and out if you want to.

If you want to get up and move around while the play is on then that is OK.

If you need to make a bit of noise while the play is on then that is OK.

If you want to go out of the theatre and have some time out then that is OK too.

In The Great Hall there are some chill-out areas where you can go and sit and relax. There are chairs, bean bags and sofas.

THE PLAY

THE MIGHTY WALZER is a comedy. It is based on a 1999 novel of the same name by Howard Jacobson. Simon Bent has written the play version. Howard Jacobson has said that the story is partly based on his own life as teenager growing up in a Jewish family in Prestwich, Manchester. The community in which the play is set is working class and most of the characters are Jewish. There is a strong sense of a community in the play and of humour, and many of the characters use Yiddish words and sayings when they speak.

Set in Manchester, the play is narrated by the character Oliver Walzer. Oliver is telling us about what happened when he was a teenager in the 1950s, and most of the play is made up of scenes from his life when he was a teenager. It is sometimes described as a 'coming of age' story. It is also about an older man looking back on his teenage years.

The teenage Oliver Walzer is a shy Jewish boy who doesn't really go out and instead stays in his room or in the toilet. His father pushes him to take up table tennis (sometimes called ping pong) and it turns out that Oliver is naturally a very good player. He starts playing with a local team, which is mainly made up of boys his own age and an older man called Gershom Finkel who used to be a champion player but stopped playing because he began betting on himself to lose matches.

The first half of the play introduces us to Oliver's family and the table tennis players he gets to know, and shows us his success as part of the team. It also explores his relationship with his mum Sadie, Dad Joel, his aunties Dolly and Dora who are twins, and his Uncle Motty who is married to Dora. Oliver thinks a lot about girls and wishes he had a girlfriend.

In the second half of the play, Oliver's parents tell him he mustn't start dating Sabine Weinberger, because she has 'a reputation' and his father doesn't want him messing with a Jewish girl. Oliver is 17 at this time. He meets another girl, Lorna Peachley, who plays table tennis with him. He is very keen on her (as are all the boys) but tends to lose matches when he's around her. Oliver goes to do a bit of work for his Dad who is trading in goods that are possibly stolen. Lorna tells Oliver he needs to escape from his life with his parents and he agrees. He gets a place at Cambridge University. Before he goes there he gets a job driving an ice cream van and his Dad's latest dodgy business falls apart and he is bankrupt.

At the end of the play we see Oliver coming home to visit his parents when they are older. His father uses a wheelchair and we learn that his Aunt Dolly is dead and his Aunt Dora has married Gershom Finkel. We learn that Oliver's last game of table tennis was in Manchester against Gershom Finkel. Oliver let Finkel win. Oliver is now working as tour guide in Venice, Italy.

The actors and the characters they play

At the start of the play today the actors will come on stage and introduce themselves so that you know who they all are. Here are some photographs of the actors and some information about the characters they are going to be in the play:



This is **Elliot**. He plays the part of **Oliver Walzer**. THE MIGHTY WALZER is the story of Oliver's teenage years. At the start of the play, and at times throughout, he talks to the audience as an adult, remembering times from his youth. During the rest of the play, we see scenes from Oliver's teenage life as a very good ping pong player and a boy who is growing up, being obsessed with girls and sex, and wanting to escape his family life and grow up.



This is **Jonathan**. He plays the part of **Joel Walzer** who is Oliver's dad. His character is a bus driver at the start of the play but we soon find out he has lots of business ideas and ways to try to make money, most of which are 'dodgy'! He has affairs with lots of women and is impatient and overbearing with Oliver. He ends up bankrupt.



This is **Tracey-Ann**. She plays the part of **Sadie Walzer** who is Oliver's mum. She is quite a negative and pessimistic character but also supports Oliver at times. She has her hands full trying to manage Oliver's dad. She, like all of the Walzer family, is from a working class Jewish background.



This is **Daniel**. He plays three parts in the play! He is **Uncle Motty** who speaks in a strong Lancashire accent, **Louis Marks**, one of the table tennis players who we learn later is killed when he crashes his car, and **Royboy** who plays against Oliver and wins when Oliver 'gives the game away'.



This is **Ilan**. He plays the part of **Aishky** who is one of the boys Oliver becomes friendly with through playing ping pong. He is crazy about the game and knows a lot about the history of tournaments. He is also very interested in girls and sex. He is also Jewish. We learn that later he got his fingers blown off.



This is **James**. He plays the part of **Twink**. Twink is another member of the ping pong playing group of boys. He is also very interested in the history of the game and in girls and sex. He tells Oliver about Gershom Finkel's downfall – how he bet on himself to lose his matches. We learn that he is later called up to do National Service.



This is **David**. He plays the part of **Gershom Finkel**, the ex table tennis champion. He is an unscrupulous and rather unpleasant character all round and gets referred to as a 'cheap cheat'. He has a romance with Oliver's Auntie Dolly but then proposes to her identical twin, Dora – whom he later marries. We learn that in later life Oliver is living off a small inheritance from Gershom's estate.



This is **Joe**. He plays the part of **Sheeny Waxman**, a sharp dresser who likes to 'hog the limelight'. He's full of himself and doesn't always tell the truth. He keeps butting into the story to try and get all the attention and often enters the story with 1950 rock songs playing, impersonating singers like Elvis Presley. He works as a dodgy salesman for Oliver's dad Joel, and ends up offering him a job when he's bankrupt.



This is **Ann**. She plays the parts of both **Dolly and Dora** – the identical twin sisters (who we are told do everything together, but they are never seen together!) Dolly and Dora are the sisters of Oliver's mum, Sadie. They are also from a Jewish, working class family. Oliver tells us his father describes them as 'shrinking violets who wouldn't say boo to a goose.'



This is **Lily**. She plays the part of **Lorna Peachley**. Lorna is described as having 'eyes like Greek olives' 'a prancing pony tail of platinum blonde hair' and 'thighs that fizzed like Lucozade'. The ping pong boys are all crazy about her. She plays table tennis, her parents are doctors – she is from a middle class family, unlike the other characters. She and Oliver have an 'on/off' relationship.

Things to look out for in the play

1. Table Tennis!

A lot of the play takes place around games of table tennis – look out for how the director and the actors help us to imagine the games of ping pong.

2. Being 'in the round'

At the Royal Exchange, the Theatre is seven sided, like a fifty pence piece, and there are seven doorways that the actors can come in and out of. Wherever an actor stands they will have their back to someone. Wherever they stand, they are also very close to the audience.

3. Dora and Dolly – and Uncle Motty, Louis and Royboy

One actor plays the part of both twin sisters, and one actor plays the parts of Uncle Motty, Louis and Royboy. Imagine you were that actor! See if you can notice how they play the different parts to make them seem like different people.

4. The 1950s

Most of the play – the story of Oliver as a teenager – is set in the 1950s. See if you can notice ways in which the play and the production help the audience to imagine we are in the 1950s. Think about the music, the costumes, and some of the objects that are in the play.

With thanks to Manchester Airport, Headline Sponsor of THE MIGHTY WALZER