



# WOYZECK AT THE OLD VIC

**TEACHING  
RESOURCES**

MAR 2017–JUN 2017

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Further details of this production  
[oldvictheatre.com](http://oldvictheatre.com)

# COMPANY

## **BEN BATT**

### **Andrews**

Theatre: *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *As You Like It* (Royal Exchange Manchester); *The Funfair* (HOME Manchester); *Making Noise Quietly* (Donmar). Film: *The Windmill*, *Slapper and Me*, *Despite the Falling Snow*, *Coach*, *Electricity*, *A Running Jump*, *Captain America: The First Avenger*, *Weekender*, *Salvage*, *The Edge of Love*. TV: *In the Dark*, *Prey*, *Barbarians*, *From Darkness*, *The Go-Between*, *The Village: Series 2*, *From There to Here*, *Scott & Bailey*, *Prisoners' Wives*, *Death in Paradise*, *Sirens*, *The Promise*, *Accused*, *Shameless*, *Wire in the Blood*, *Spooks: Code 9*, *Lewis*, *Casualty*.

## **JOHN BOYEGA**

### **Woyzeck**

Theatre: *Six Parties* (National Theatre); *Category B*, *Seize the Day*, *Detaining Justice* (Tricycle Theatre). Film: *Star Wars: Episode VIII — The Last Jedi*, *Imperial Dreams*, *The Circle*, *Attack the Block*, *Half of a Yellow Sun*. John won the 2016 BAFTA Rising Star Award and the Chopard Trophy at Cannes. His forthcoming films include Kathryn Bigelow's *Detroit*, *Pacific Rim: Uprising*, *Star Wars: Episode IX*.

## **CARLO BRATHWAITE**

### **Young Woyzeck**

Carlo studies acting, singing and dancing at Pineapple Performing Arts School. He's making his professional theatre debut.

## **NANCY CARROLL**

### **Maggie/Mother**

Theatre: *The Magistrate*, *After the Dance* — Olivier & Evening Standard Awards, *Man of Mode*, *The Enchantment*, *The False Servant*, *The Voysey Inheritance*, *The Talking Cure* (National Theatre); *Twelfth Night* (RSC); *Arcadia*, *See How They Run* (West End); *Moderate Soprano* (Hampstead); *Closer*, *The Recruiting Officer* (Donmar); *House of Games*, *Waste*, *King Lear* (Almeida); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Sheffield Crucible); *Mammals* (Bush Theatre); *The Astonished Heart/Still Life* (Liverpool Playhouse); *Hamlet* (Bristol Old Vic). Film: *Iris*. TV: *Will: Season 1*, *Father Brown: Series 1–5*, *Prime Suspect 1973*, *The Suspicions of Mr Whicher*, *Call the Midwife*, *Silent Witness*, *Lewis*, *The Gathering Storm*, *Cambridge Spies*.

## **DARRELL D'SILVA**

### **Doctor Martens**

Theatre: *Hedda Gabler* (The Old Vic); *Wendy & Peter Pan*, *Little Eagles*, *King Lear*, *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *The Drunks* (RSC); *The Rose Tattoo*, *Closer*, *Tales from the Vienna Woods* (National Theatre); *X* (Royal Court); *Dunsinane* (RSC/NTS world tour); *Making Stalin Laugh* (JW3 London); *Public Enemy* (Young Vic); *Children's Children* (Almeida); *Fall* (Traverse Edinburgh); *The White Devil* (Menier Chocolate Factory). Film: *The Throwaways*, *Closer to the Moon*, *Northmen*, *A Viking Saga*, *Montana*, *Show Pieces*, *Dirty Pretty Things*. TV: *Game of Thrones*, *Endeavour*, *Asylum*, *Father Brown*, *Top Boy*, *Playhouse Presents*, *Trial & Retribution*. Darrell is an Associate Artist of the RSC.

## **SARAH GREENE**

### **Marie**

Theatre: *The Cripple of Inishmaan* — Theatre World Award for Outstanding Broadway Debut (West End/Broadway); *Alice in Funderland* (Abbey Theatre Dublin); *Between Foxrock and a Hard Place* (Gaiety Theatre Dublin/Cork Opera House); *Phaedre* (Project Arts Centre Dublin); *Brian Friel Celebrations* (Ouroboros Theatre Company); *The Playboy of the Western World* (Druid Theatre Company). Film: *Burnt*, *Noble* — IFTA Award for Best Actress in a Supporting Role, *The Guard*, *Love & Savagery*, *Eden*, *My Brothers*, *Standby*. TV: *Penny Dreadful* — IFTA Award for Best Actress in a Supporting Role, *Ransom*, *Rebellion*, *Raw*, *The Assets*. Sarah won the IFTA Rising Star Award 2015.

## **REUEL GUZMAN**

### **Young Woyzeck**

Reuel studies acting at The Young Actors Theatre Islington. He's making his professional theatre debut.

## **ISABELLA MARSHALL**

### **GDR Citizen/Ensemble, u/s Maggie & Marie**

Theatre: *Caste* (Finborough); *Hamlet*, *All's Well That Ends Well* (Shakespeare at the Tobacco Factory); *Cinderella: A Fairytale* (Tobacco Factory/mac Birmingham); *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *Peter Pan*, *Vincent in Brixton*, *An Inspector Calls*, *She Stoops to Conquer* (Theatre by the Lake); *Flowers of the Field* (White Bear Theatre). Film: *Amygdala*. TV: *Grantchester*. Isabella graduated from the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in 2013.

## **CYRUS ODUKALE**

### **Young Woyzeck**

Cyrus studies acting at Theatre Peckham where his credits include *Ten in a Bed*, *Clown* and *Orlando and The Three Graces*.

## **STEFFAN RHODRI**

### **Captain Thompson**

Theatre: *The Hairy Ape* (The Old Vic); *The Mentalists*, *Absent Friends*, *Posh* (West End); *Abigail's Party* (Hampstead/West End); *This House* (West End/Chichester Festival Theatre); *Clybourne Park* (Royal Court); *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* (National Theatre); *A Mad World My Masters*, *Candide* (RSC); *Cyrano de Bergerac* (Theatr Clwyd); *The Kitchen Sink* (Bush Theatre). Film: *Under Milk Wood*, *Submarine*, *Ironclad*, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1*, *Ali G Indahouse*. TV: *Apple Tree Yard*, *Three Girls*, *The Hollow Crown: Henry VI*, *Cucumber*, *Under Milk Wood*, *A Touch of Cloth*, *Gavin and Stacey*, *Con Passionate*, *Cara Fi*.

## **DAVID RUBIN**

### **Landlord/Ensemble,**

### **u/s Captain Thompson & Doctor Martens**

Theatre: *People, Places and Things* (National Theatre/West End); *Five Guys Named Moe*, *Stomp*, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, *Godspell* (West End); also 14 productions for the RSC, eight for the National Theatre and others at Liverpool Everyman, West Yorkshire Playhouse, Birmingham Rep, Young Vic. Film: *Brooms*. TV: *Birds of a Feather*, *The Passion*, *Walking with Cavemen*, *EastEnders*, *Holby City*, *Dalziel and Pascoe*, *Sitting Pretty*, *Mysteries of July*, and as actor/presenter *Good Health*, *Watch*, *Zig-Zag*, *Playdays*, *Number 73*, *The DJ Kat Show*. David also writes and directs, and is an Education Associate Practitioner for the RSC and other UK theatres and educational establishments.

## **THEO SOLOMON**

### **East German Soldier/Ensemble,**

### **u/s Woyzeck & Andrews**

Theatre: *The Minotaur*, *My Father Odysseus* (Unicorn Theatre); *Karagula* (Styx Tottenham Hale); *Hamlet* (UK tour). Theo graduated from Drama Centre London in 2015.



Clockwise from top left: Carlo Brathwaite, Cyrus Odukale, Reuel Guzman, Isabella Marshal, David Rubin, John Boyega, Steffan Rhodri, Nancy Carroll, Sarah Greene, Theo Solomon, Ben Batt

# CREATIVE TEAM

## JACK THORNE

### Adaptor

Theatre: *Junkyard* (Rose Theatre Kingston/Bristol Old Vic); *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* (West End) — Olivier Award for Best New Play; *The Solid Life of Sugar Water* (Graeae Theatre Company/Edinburgh Festival/UK tour); *Hope* (Royal Court); *Let the Right One In* (West End/Dundee Rep/Royal Court); *Bunny* (Soho Theatre/UK tour/off-Broadway). Theatre (adaptations): *Stuart: A Life Backwards* (Edinburgh Festival/UK tour); *The Physicists* (Donmar). Film: *Warbook*, *A Long Way Down*, *The Scouting Book for Boys* — London Film Festival Best British Newcomer. TV: *National Treasure*, *The Last Panthers*, *Don't Take My Baby* — BAFTA, *Glue*, *The Fades* — BAFTA, *This Is England '90* — BAFTA, *This Is England '88* — BAFTA, *This is England '86*, *Cast-Offs*, *Skins*, *Shameless*.

## JOE MURPHY

### Director

Theatre as Director: *No's Knife* (The Old Vic); *What I Learned from Johnny Bevan* (Soho Theatre/UK tour); *Blink*, *Bunny* (Soho Theatre/UK tour/off-Broadway); *Incognito* (Bush Theatre); *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (Chichester Festival Theatre/UK tour); *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Midsummer Night's Dream* (Shakespeare's Globe/world tour). Theatre as Associate Director: *Wolf Hall* (RSC/West End/Broadway); *This House* (National Theatre); *Henry V* (Shakespeare's Globe/UK tour); *Ghost Stories* (West End/Moscow). Joe was Artistic Director of nabokov theatre company, 2010–15, during which time the company presented the work of 88 playwrights and 496 artists across three continents. He is The Old Vic Baylis Director 2016–17.

## TOM SCUTT

### Designer

Theatre: *King Charles III* (Almeida/West End/Broadway); *Constellations* (Royal Court/West End/Broadway); *The Deep Blue Sea*, *Medea*, *13* (National Theatre); *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Regent's Park); *Elegy*, *The Weir* (Donmar); *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (Donmar/Broadway); *Mr Burns*, *King Lear*, *Through a Glass Darkly* (Almeida); *East is East* (Trafalgar Studios/UK tour); *Hope*, *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas*, *No Quarter*, *Remembrance Day* (Royal Court); *Absent Friends* (West End). TV: *MTV Video Music Awards 2015 & 2016*. Tom is an Associate Artist of the Donmar Warehouse.

## NEIL AUSTIN

### Lighting Designer

Theatre: *Electra* (The Old Vic); *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* — Olivier & WhatsOnStage awards for Best Lighting Design, *The Goat*, *Travesties*, *Buried Child*, *Photograph 51*, *Shakespeare in Love* (West End); *Three Days in the Country*, *Rules for Living*, *Dara*, *The Silver Tassie*, *Liola*, *The White Guard* — Olivier Award for Best Lighting Design (National Theatre); *Henry IV*, *Julius Caesar*, *The Night Alive* (Donmar); *Birdland*, *The Faith Machine* (Royal Court); *Ink*, *The Treatment* (Almeida); *Hughie*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Evita*, *Hamlet*, *Frost/Nixon*, *The Seafarer*, *Red* — Tony & Drama Desk Awards for Best Lighting Design (Broadway).

## GARETH FRY

### Sound Designer

Theatre: *Richard III*, *Dancing at Lughnasa* (The Old Vic); *Othello*, *The Cat in the Hat*, *Waves* — Olivier Award for Best Sound Design (National Theatre); *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* — Olivier Award for Best Sound Design, *A Christmas Carol*, *The Prisoner of Second Avenue* (West End); *The Encounter* — Evening Standard Award for Best Sound Design, *The Master and Margarita*, *Shun-kin*, *Endgame* (Complicite); *City of Glass* (HOME Manchester/Lyric Hammersmith); *The Cherry Orchard*, *Wild Swans*, *Hamlet* (Young Vic); *Let the Right One In* (West End/Dundee Rep/Royal Court); *Black Watch* — Olivier Award for Best Sound Design (NT Scotland); *Fräulein Julie* (Schaubühne Berlin). Film: *Cla'am*. TV: *The Nutcracker*.

## ISOBEL WALLER-BRIDGE

### Composer

Theatre: *Seven Acts of Mercy*, *Hecuba* (RSC); *The End of Longing* (West End); *The Dutchman* (Young Vic); *Three Sisters* (Lyric Belfast); *The Damned United* (West Yorkshire Playhouse); *Kite* (London International Mime Festival); *The Hook* (Royal & Derngate Northampton/Liverpool Everyman); *King Lear* (Chichester Festival Theatre/BAM New York); *Neville's Island* (Chichester Festival Theatre/West End); *If Only* (Chichester Minerva Theatre); *Hope Place* (Liverpool Everyman); *The World Machine* (Lumiere Festival); *Incognito* — Best Sound Design, Off West End Awards (Bush Theatre). Film: *James* — Best Composer Underwire Film Festival, *Williams*, *Little Bird*. TV: *Fleabag*, *Secret Horse: Quest for the True Appaloosa*, *War & Peace* (Additional Music).

## **POLLY BENNETT**

### **Movement Director**

Theatre: *Don Juan in Soho*, *Doctor Faustus*, *The Maids* (West End); *People, Places and Things* – BroadwayWorld Award for Best Choreography (National Theatre/West End); *Travesties* (Menier Chocolate Factory/West End); *My Country: A Work in Progress* (National Theatre); *Junkyard* (Rose Theatre Kingston/Bristol Old Vic); *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Royal Exchange Manchester); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (RSC); *The Famous Victories of Henry V* (RSC/UK tour); *Yen* (Royal Court); *Pomona* (Orange Tree/National Theatre); London 2012 and Sochi 2014 Olympic and Paralympic Opening Ceremonies. Film as Assistant Choreographer: *Stan and Ollie*. TV: *Gareth Malone's Best of British*, *Fazer's Urban Symphony*, *The Queen's Coronation Concerts*.

## **BEN HART**

### **Illusion**

Theatre: *Impossible* (West End/world tour); *Paul Merton: Out of My Head* (West End/UK tour); *Wild, Darker Shores* (Hampstead); *Fatherland* (Gate Theatre); *The Exorcist* (Birmingham Rep); *Dr Faustus* (West Yorkshire Playhouse); *The Arthur Conan Doyle Appreciation Society* (Traverse); *The Vanishing Boy* (Edinburgh Festival); *The Outsider* (world tour). Short film: *The Egg Trick*. TV: *Killer Magic*, *Life Hacks Hoax*, *Now You See It*, *The One Show*, *Trick Artist*, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, *Stand Up to Cancer*, *Britain's Got Talent 2017*. A member of The Inner Magic Circle with gold star, Ben created the world's first virtual reality magic trick for the Royal Television Society.

## **RACHEL BOWN-WILLIAMS & RUTH COOPER-BROWN OF RC-ANNIE LTD**

### **Fight Directors**

Theatre: *The Boys in the Band*, *Dead Funny*, *The Mentalists*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *King Charles III*, *Bakersfield Mist*, *Mojo* (West End); *Common, Ugly Lies the Bone* (National Theatre); *The James Plays* (National Theatre/National Theatre of Scotland/Edinburgh International Festival); *Salome*, *Snow in Midsummer* (RSC); *East is East* (Northern Stage); *My Brilliant Friend* (Rose Theatre Kingston); *The White Devil*, *Imogen* (Shakespeare's Globe); *Red Velvet* (Tricycle/New York); *The Nap* (Sheffield Crucible); *Way Upstream* (Chichester Festival Theatre). Opera: *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Royal Opera House); *Tosca* (English Touring Opera). Film: *Heretiks*, *Genesis*, *Arthur and Merlin*, *Howl*, *The Seasoning House*.

## **JESSICA RONANE CDG**

### **Casting Director**

Theatre: *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead*, *King Lear*, *The Caretaker*, *The Master Builder*, Dr. Seuss's *The Lorax*, *The Hairy Ape*, *Future Conditional* (The Old Vic); *Running Wild* (Regent's Park); *Angus Thongs and Even More Snogging* (West Yorkshire Playhouse). Theatre (children casting): *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *The Sound of Music* (Regent's Park); *School of Rock*, *The Audience*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Made in Dagenham*, *Singin' in the Rain*, *Billy Elliot the Musical* (West End); *Matilda The Musical* (RSC/West End); *Bugsy Malone* (Lyric Hammersmith); *Caroline or Change*, *Baby Girl*, *Mrs Affleck* (National Theatre); *A Member of the Wedding* (Young Vic).

## **HANNAH JOSS**

### **Baylis Assistant Director**

As Director: *Carry On Jaywick* (UK tour); *Eigengrau* (King's Head Theatre Islington); *The 11th Hour* (the egg, Theatre Royal Bath); *That Moment* (Crescent Arts Belfast). As Associate Director: *The Adventure* (Lyric Hammersmith). As Assistant Director: *Revolt. She Said. Revolt Again* (RSC); *Incognito* (HighTide/Bush Theatre); *The Teacup Poisoner* (Theatre Royal Bath); *The Ladykillers* (Watermill Theatre Newbury).



The Company

# CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

## **WOYZECK**

Woyzeck is a British soldier in his early 20s, posted to Berlin. He has previously served as a soldier in Belfast (Northern Ireland) during The Troubles. During his posting he went AWOL (Absent Without Leave), a situation which meant that other soldiers had to leave their posts to look for him, causing resentment and suspicion of Woyzeck.

Woyzeck has a baby with his Irish girlfriend, Marie. They cannot live in the army quarters as they are not married. To make ends meet, Woyzeck signs up for a medical drugs trial.

Woyzeck struggles with his mental health, as a result of the abuse that he suffered as a child. During the play, he experiences various flashbacks.

## **ANDREWS**

Andrews is a British soldier in his late 20s or early 30s. He begins an affair with Maggie, who is married to Captain Thompson. Andrews and Maggie use Woyzeck's flat to conduct their affair.

He is keen to manipulate Marie into having an affair with him too. Andrews is the only soldier who is willing to do patrol with Woyzeck, following his strange behaviour in Belfast.

## **MARIE**

Marie is an Irish Catholic who is in her early 20s. She met Woyzeck during his tour of duty in Ireland and became pregnant by him. Her mother threw her out of the family home and she has moved to Berlin with Woyzeck. They live together with their young child, in a flat above a Halal meat shop.



Sarah Greene and John Boyega

## **MAGGIE**

Maggie is a British army wife in her early 40s and is married to Captain Thompson. She also conducts an affair with Andrews, using Woyzeck's flat.

Maggie is very active in the army social circle and recruits Marie to help collect donations.

## **DOCTOR MARTENS**

Martens is a German doctor who finally agrees to allow Woyzeck to take part in his medical trial. He is unsympathetic when Woyzeck starts to behave unusually, and when Woyzeck asks to be part of additional trials to earn more money.

## **CAPTAIN THOMPSON**

Captain Thompson is British and a superior officer to Woyzeck and Andrews in the army. In some scenes, Woyzeck shaves him and gives him a massage, suggesting a strange and unbalanced relationship between them. Thompson is blunt and unsympathetic towards Woyzeck when he expresses his financial worries. Thompson is also unsympathetic to his mental health problems and odd behaviour in Belfast.

## **MOTHER**

Woyzeck's mother appears in various flashbacks throughout the play, often in silhouette. In this production, the same actress plays Maggie and Mother, representing Woyzeck's difficult emotional relationships with women.

## **YOUNG WOYZECK**

Young Woyzeck appears in various flashbacks throughout the play as he considers his past and the abuses that he suffered at the hands of his mother and her partners.



Left: Ben Batt, Nancy Caroll, Rewel Guzman

# SYNOPSIS

## ACT ONE

The action takes place in Berlin in 1981. At this time, East and West Germany are divided by the Berlin Wall. Woyzeck is a soldier in the Armoured Division of the British Army of the Rhine (BOAR). Throughout the play, references are made to Woyzeck's earlier time in Belfast which, from the late 1960s until the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, was in the midst of The Troubles in which the British Army supported the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) with the Unionist vs. Nationalist conflicts in Northern Ireland.

After seeing a Young Woyzeck in the Prologue, we are introduced to Woyzeck, a British soldier in his early 20s. His girlfriend Marie is Northern Irish. They exchange sexually explicit, poorly translated German phrases and are interrupted by their baby crying.

At the gate of the American Nuclear Missile Base, Woyzeck and Andrews (a British soldier in his late 20s/early 30s) discuss Woyzeck's dream about Marie and a stranger in a mask injuring him with a hammer and blade. The conversation moves to Andrews' encounter with a woman and Woyzeck complaining about his flat above an abattoir that smells, particularly when the weather is hot. Because he is not married to Marie, they cannot live in the married soldiers' barracks and are therefore forced to live in the only place that they can afford. Woyzeck asks Andrews to lend him £300. He is desperately short of money. Andrews is unable to help.

Scene three sees Woyzeck shaving Captain Thompson, a British soldier in his 40s. Captain Thompson expresses concern for Woyzeck and refers to a previous incident for which Woyzeck might benefit from some counseling. Woyzeck tells him that his biggest problem is that he is short of money, a situation that Thompson cannot or will not do anything about. The Captain mentions that he knows what happened to Woyzeck in Belfast. The audience do not yet know what this incident was.



Steffan Rhodri, John Boyega

Maggie, Thompson's British wife who is in her 40s, visits the flat that Woyzeck and Marie share. She has brought scones and wishes to recruit Marie into a fundraising project and Marie agrees, having asked for help getting a pram. Maggie refuses to be drawn on the subject, saying it is a matter for the husbands. When Woyzeck and Andrews enter, Maggie flirts with Andrews even though she is married to Captain Thompson.

A doctor (Martens) examines Woyzeck, who wishes to be part of his medical trial in order to earn extra money. He eventually accepts him on to the trial and Woyzeck agrees to the terms of the study. It requires him to take green pills and be examined every Monday.

Woyzeck takes Marie to the sixth floor of a multi-storey car park to see the lights in East Germany light up beyond the Berlin Wall that divides the two areas. Woyzeck has bought Marie a necklace, which he gives her. Whilst he is talking to Marie, his Mother (played by the same actress who plays Maggie) and the Young Woyzeck enter the stage – the audience becomes increasingly aware of the haunting effect of Woyzeck's childhood on his psyche.

Woyzeck and Andrews are on patrol again and discussing the minimum age of a child before they would consider shooting them for appearing to be a threat. Andrews refers to what happened in Belfast, but we still don't know the full details of the incident. This makes Woyzeck seem particularly vulnerable and he clearly cannot escape his past. Andrews then asks Woyzeck for the use of his flat so that he can continue his affair with Maggie. He reveals that seeing Omo (a brand of washing powder) in the window of an army home gives a clue to a wife's infidelity. At the end of the scene, Woyzeck tells Andrews that he has talked with his daughter (who is a baby) and hopes that she takes after her mother rather than taking after him. He is clearly troubled.

In scene eight, we see Andrews and Maggie as Woyzeck sits alone in his flat. At the same time as Woyzeck takes one of his green pills, Marie has been approached by their landlord who is demanding money for rent and damage to the flat. Woyzeck returns to Dr Martens and asks for more money or the chance to participate in another trial in order to make more money. Woyzeck's mother appears in the shadows once again.



John Boyega, Sarah Greene

## ACT TWO

Marie tells Woyzeck of the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II. The conversation reverts back to the landlord demanding money from Marie as she walked up the stairs and she complains that he was looking at her inappropriately. Marie is an object of desire for several of the men in this play who make no attempt to hide their interest.

Woyzeck admits to Marie he is going to pretend that he has lost his gun, and will then sell it to obtain extra cash. Marie expresses concern that these actions will land him in jail. The relationship between Marie and Woyzeck sours as they argue about calling each other names such as “thick” and “whore”. It is clear as they calm down that they both come from homes in which their mothers were beaten, and the psychological/physical abuse has continued through the generations. Marie is upset and intimidated by Woyzeck’s intensity and asks him to look after the baby whilst she goes for a walk. She becomes more frightened when he begins to bang his head against the wall.

Marie reveals that after falling pregnant with Woyzeck’s baby, her mother wanted her to terminate the pregnancy, despite her Catholicism, because of what people might think. Instead Marie packed her bags and moved to be with Woyzeck, despite the poverty and isolation in which she must live.

Woyzeck confides in Marie that the reason he went AWOL in Belfast was not because he had been frightened by a bomb as everyone had assumed, but because he saw the ghost of his mother. Marie becomes frustrated during the conversation because although he has moments of lucidity, Woyzeck’s behaviour and conversation is becoming erratic and frightening. Despite discussing hope it is clear that Marie does not always feel safe or loved with him.

Throughout this scene, the audience gain more insight into Woyzeck’s early life and the possible explanations for the person he has become. Put into care by his mother at the age of 4, Woyzeck has clearly experienced psychological and physical abuse before his mother died when he was 12 years old. He tells Marie, “I need to save you because you saved me”. Marie once again expresses concern for Woyzeck who is experiencing trouble sleeping and hearing noises that aren’t there.

The scene changes to Maggie and Andrews in bed together. Andrews tells Maggie about Woyzeck going missing in Belfast and that he is the only person who will now do patrol with Woyzeck. Marie has to enter the room to find the baby’s toy bear – an awkward situation that Andrews seems to relish. He suggests to her that she use Omo washing powder, knowing full well the connotations of this being seen in her home. When Woyzeck enters, Andrews is nonchalant about the fact he is using the flat for his affair with Maggie and even suggests Woyzeck joins him for a drink.

In the Captain’s quarters, whilst Woyzeck is massaging him, Captain Thompson admits that he finds Woyzeck’s psychological state and illiteracy fascinating. He also shares his concerns about the role that the Army is playing in Berlin, within the context of the various demands currently being made on the British Army. He reveals a particularly cruel side to him as he sarcastically offers to write down the situation for Woyzeck, who he has just exposed to the audience as being unable to read.

Thompson’s wife, Maggie, enters and pretends not to know who Woyzeck is. After she leaves, Thompson tells Woyzeck that he is aware of his difficult upbringing in which he was sent back by three of his seven foster families for being a disruptive influence.

Woyzeck’s visit to the doctor reveals that he is feeling extremely unwell. The doctor tells him that he has been hearing rumours about what he has done in the past. He also threatens to remove Woyzeck from his trial because he has been unable to cope with the side effects of the pills that he has been taking.

Alone in the flat, Woyzeck looks at his baby and his mother stumbles on to the stage and speaks to him abusively. Young Woyzeck emerges from the crib and is dragged away by his mother. Marie enters to find Woyzeck still talking to the baby, but in a way that disturbs and frightens her: he has mistaken the baby for a boy.

Stood up by Maggie, Andrews is in the flat with Marie. He gives her a box of Omo. He describes the odd and vivid dreams that Woyzeck has been having, and Marie becomes aware that he is regarding her in a very animalistic way. After he tells a story of a dancing monkey, and dances provocatively, Marie insists that he leaves the flat.

Alone in the street, Woyzeck shares the stage with Andrews and Maggie/Mother who are in bed together. Suddenly the image changes to Marie with Andrews instead. The extreme paranoia now being felt by Woyzeck becomes

increasingly clear. The constant changing of the baby's gender throughout the scenes also indicates the unbalanced worldview that Woyzeck now holds.

Captain Thompson finds Woyzeck alone at his post, and accuses him of being drunk due to his strange behaviour. He does not wish to help Woyzeck but is more concerned about the job he is trying to do with poor equipment and potential invasion from the Russians.

In a lecture theatre, Woyzeck is being discussed by Dr Martens, who speaks in German, which Woyzeck does not understand. He is disorientated and confused. He thinks that Martens has thrown a cat across the stage.

Maggie arrives at Marie's flat and is pleased that Andrews has failed to show up for their latest rendezvous. There is evidence that Marie is packing to leave. Maggie accuses her of skimming some of the money that she has collected for charity for her own use, which Marie denies.

Woyzeck finds the box of Omo that Andrews has given Marie. Surrounded by people asking things of him, he begins to pour the powder into his mouth. Later, Dr Martens and Captain Thompson find Woyzeck asleep and watch him until he stirs. When he leaves the doctor's office, he sees Maggie in the street who then merges into his mother.

Andrews appears and is concerned by Woyzeck's behaviour, urging him to lie down. Woyzeck becomes incoherent and difficult to follow as he accuses Andrews of sleeping with Marie. They fight, and Andrews reveals that he only befriended Woyzeck in order to feel a sense of superiority. He beats Woyzeck repeatedly. Woyzeck's mother appears once again.

Marie is frightened when Woyzeck drags her across the stage by her hand. He is carrying a gun, which he should not have with him. This frightens Marie and he accuses her of never understanding the way in which he loves her. Marie tells Woyzeck that she is leaving and will be going to live with her mother in Ireland.

Woyzeck becomes violent and starts beating Marie as she is pinned to the floor. He accuses her of sleeping with Andrews. He strangles Marie, claiming that he is doing it because he loves her. Realising what he has done, Woyzeck shoots himself.

The Young Woyzeck returns to the stage, and sings as the curtain falls.



Rewel Guzman, Sarah Greene, John Boyega

# THEMES

**MENTAL ILLNESS** In this production, Woyzeck's paranoia could be put down to the pills that he takes as part of the medical trial. However, it is highly likely that his condition is also related to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Woyzeck, like many British soldiers, has moved to Berlin after a tour of duty in Belfast, during which time riots, murders and beatings were regular occurrences.

**VULNERABILITY** Many of the characters in the play are vulnerable to outside sources. Marie is vulnerable as an unmarried mother in many ways. She has moved away from her home in Ireland, and is dependent on Woyzeck, although she is not necessarily a victim: she has to work harder than other women may have had to as army wives. They cannot live in Army quarters because they are not married. Both Woyzeck and Marie have suffered abuses in their domestic lives and ultimately are also very vulnerable to Andrews' manipulation.

**DOGMA AND RELIGION** Throughout the play, characters are subjected to the demands of various belief systems. This ranges from religion (Marie's Catholic upbringing) to Captain Thompson's struggle for equipment and support from the Army to fulfil his role in Berlin.

**PRIVILEGE VS. POVERTY** Setting the play in Berlin has allowed the production team to literally place Capitalism and Communism side by side. Woyzeck's poverty is exploited by Doctor Martens, by Maggie and Andrews and his request for help from Captain Thompson is turned down and called vulgar. Many of Woyzeck's decisions stem from the need for money, and ultimately it contributes to his downfall as he loses Marie, his child and, ultimately, his life.



Steffan Rhodr, Sarah Greene

# WOYZECK: AN INTRODUCTION

There is very little evidence to be found about the real Woyzeck. In 1821 Johann Woyzeck was arrested in Leipzig for killing his lover. He was sentenced to death the following year but spoke to a clergyman and claimed to have experienced visions and voices that urged him to commit the murder. Woyzeck was subsequently examined by a doctor who confirmed his opinion that Woyzeck was sane and therefore fit for execution. Woyzeck was executed in 1824.

The real Woyzeck was orphaned aged 3 and lived an itinerant life, working as a waiter, a farmer and enlisting as a soldier in various armies. Eventually he settled in Leipzig and worked as a barber. He developed a relationship with Frau Woost, a widow who was also his landlady. He stabbed her because he realised that she had been seeing other men as well as him. She died from her injuries.

George Büchner was a contemporary of Woyzeck, having been born in 1813. He was extremely intelligent; having obtained a doctorate aged 22. He also became

involved in politics and was a member of a political group who urged the working class to demand additional rights by force. Many of those involved were arrested but Büchner was able to escape to Switzerland.

When Büchner died aged just 24 in 1837 he left behind an unfinished manuscript based on the case of Johann Woyzeck. The papers were a little unclear and so the definitive order of scenes has never been confirmed. Each scene is self-contained and to some extent the order is open to interpretation. There have been several different translations of the play, each with slightly different interpretations.

Büchner died of typhus in 1837, leaving behind *Leonce and Lena*, *Danton's Death* and translations of *Lucretia Borgia* and *Mary Tudor* by Victor Hugo. Another play, possibly *Pietro Aretino*, has never been found despite him writing to his fiancée to tell her that it was almost complete and ready for publication. It is thought that Minna Jaegle destroyed the manuscript following Woyzeck's death.



Joe Murphy, John Boyega

# REHEARSAL DIARY

BY HANNAH JOSS, BAYLIS ASSISTANT DIRECTOR WOYZECK

## WEEK ONE:

The first week of any rehearsal process is a huge mixed bag of activity and feelings. At the meet and greet, the company refer to it as being the 'first day at school'; everyone is almost rigid with nerves whilst desperate to make a good impression, and we so often forget that everyone feels the same as we do. As the company gets to know one another, those nerves dissipate, and our rehearsal room becomes a creatively open and socially easy space.

The director, Joe Murphy, approaches the scene work with actors in a particular way. After the first couple of days spent reading each scene and discussing the script with the whole company, the rest of the first week is spent with particular actors going back over these scenes in more detail. However, rather than engaging in minutely detailed text work involving hours of discussion of each narrative beat, Joe is encouraging the actors to immediately get up on their feet and navigate the scene physically as well as verbally.

Complementing the scene work is a series of different workshops from the Voice Coach Charlie Hughes-De'Ath, the Movement Director Polly Bennett and the Composer and Musical Director Isobel Waller-Bridge and Candida Caldicot.

At the end of week one, we have staged scenes one to seven, learnt a couple of songs and the company has developed into a positive and hardworking one.

## WEEK TWO:

Week two focusses heavily on making key decisions about Woyzeck's character arc, which requires detailed work on the text and a good deal of research.

A choice that has emerged, as a result of the work from week one, is that John will play Woyzeck as a man trying to stay sane, rather than a man going mad. This choice is in response to the fear that 'mad acting' can look generalised and therefore ineffective and uncommunicative. Jack has written a complex character, and it is key that our work to build him is specific and thorough.

With this in mind, John has been researching how exactly taking human growth hormone affects the body and mind. He has also been looking into the effects of traumatic events in childhood and, in particular, videos of children having tantrums and breaking down. This type of research can be upsetting, but with such multifarious and intricate material, it's vital. As the week went on, I could see a real change in the level of detail John brought to rehearsals; both physically and psychologically.

The first act is predominantly made up of vignettes that show Woyzeck interacting with people he has relationships with; Marie, Andrews, Captain Thompson. He also introduces two characters who will, later on in the play, have a distinct effect on him; Maggie and Doctor Martens. As the play unfolds, the perspective of his breakdown is told through his interactions with the people he knows.

Woyzeck's relationship with Marie is the one that we are rooting for, right from the beginning of the play. It was noted that we should, right up until the end of the play, really be rooting for them for them to succeed. Jack has purposely not written Marie as a victim; particularly by showing that she came to Germany of her own agency. They are a young couple in love, who perhaps don't know each other that well, despite having a baby and living in a foreign country. But their love for each other is evident and valuable.

Again, Woyzeck's relationship with Andrews feels precious, in terms of his lack of friendship in Germany, or even Belfast and beyond. Andrews is promiscuous, which mildly troubles Woyzeck, but then he also cares enough about Woyzeck to be the only soldier who will still go out on patrol with him. Jack spoke about the inspiration for Andrews; he said that he noticed, growing up, that the boys from his school who signed up for the Army weren't the hard boys, or the Captain of the Rugby team, but the boys who were bullied and felt they had something to prove. They joined the army, built their bodies to be big and strong, and 'fought the enemy', whilst always feeling remnants of not being good enough.

Some more discussion about Woyzeck's relationship with love and sex, entirely driven by his damaging relationship with his Mother, has provided a touchstone for John in terms of Woyzeck's systematic breakdown and removal from reality. The arrival of Maggie, a highly sexed older woman, triggers feelings from Woyzeck's childhood – and combined with the human growth hormone – his fixation on infidelity, love and the dynamic between men and women increases.

### WEEK THREE:

This week has been a combination of looking back over material we have already covered and staging new scenes.

Tracking back over Act One, and a few scenes from Act Three, has enabled the actors and director to begin pinning down creative decisions, and in turn, adding specific details to the scenes.

Joe's approach has been to tread lightly in terms of directorial input on the choices made by the actors, and instead has urged them to repeat the scenes a number of times to see what they find in each reading. We have the luxury of an expertly written play by Jack Thorne, meaning that extensive text work - picking apart the scene line by line - usually employed by directors isn't necessarily beneficial in our rehearsal room. Jack has the talent of writing how people speak in real life, and

the actors have all commented that they feel liberated to trust their instincts and use Jack's writing as a sturdy foundation from which to play.

By returning to the scenes with some time passed, the actors gain perspective on the scene, and are therefore able to grab hold of their preferred choices, and start building detail into their performances.

Another focus this week is the question of how to stage Woyzeck's psychosis. A lot of work is done with Polly Bennett, the movement director and Isobel Waller-Bridge, composer, to stage the large ensemble scenes that communicate exactly what is occurring in Woyzeck's mind. We understand, from the text, that Woyzeck's psychosis manifests itself as hallucination. With this in mind, Joe has peppered the scenes following Woyzeck first taking the pills from 'Trial P', with a series of repeated images that play on his complicated relationship with sexuality, adultery and love. These images then culminate in the full ensemble movement sequences which are designed to show the audience what Woyzeck sees when he is hallucinating. Throughout the week we revisit the sequences to modify and build on the images to see if we could pursue bolder and theatrically more challenging choices. Much like revisiting the scenes from Act One and Act Three, the process enables us to re-tackle the work with clarity and really test our previous ideas.



Ben Batt, Nancy Carroll, John Boyega, Joe Murphy, Sarah Greene

## WEEK FIVE:

As we edge even closer to tech week, we spend the majority of our afternoons this week running the whole play, and then working notes the following morning. The benefit of being in such good shape before we head into the theatre is that we have the space and time to rework moments as well as get a clear perspective of the production as a whole.

The repetition of running the play numerous times has thrown up some interesting things. Unsurprisingly, as the actors become more comfortable with the material and the shape of the production, they are able to play more within the scenes. It is imperative to be in a position, at this point in rehearsal, where the company are generally comfortable with the logistics of the play. This enables them to focus predominantly on creative choices, rather than worrying about where their entrance or exit is or how they strike a prop from a scene.

During working notes in the mornings, the director Joe is sure to deliver notes lightly so to allow the actors to discover new elements within the scenes themselves. It is important that the actors are still free to experiment and create, particularly as the whole company begin to feel the pressure of sharing the play with an audience.

This week has also seen the creative team joining us in rehearsals; bringing the work they have been undertaking behind the scenes. We have been able to layer in music from the composer, and the actors have been able to use actual props and pieces of costume when running the play. It is key for the creative team to be present during this important week, so to ensure that all the different components of the production - design, costume, lighting design, music, sound - work together harmoniously. This work, as well as technical week, is a culmination of months of conversations between the director and the members of the creative team.

## WEEK: SIX

This week is tech week. All of our creative team - director, designer, lighting designer, composer, sound designer - pile into the theatre to put the production together over the course of four days.

Bringing together numerous moving parts with precise cohesion is the job of the director, and Joe had ensured, during the prep and rehearsals periods, that he has continuously communicated with all of the creatives. Without this communication, we would have inevitably come unstuck during our technical rehearsal period.

We had the luxury of a relatively long tech, meaning that creatives felt empowered to question and test decisions they had made, and no one was frightened to change their choices. The benefit of this approach, enabled by the culture of openness established by Joe early on, was that we never 'settled' on a choice but pushed ourselves to discover the best option for the production.

Technical rehearsals can be a testing time for the actors too. It is the time in which they can become a secondary focus for the director, but also they have to ensure that they are completely comfortable and assured in their tracks around the stage; from both a safety and creative perspective.



John Boyega, Steffan Rhodri

# INTERVIEW

## WITH JACK THORNE, PLAYWRIGHT *WOYZECK*

**The original play is set almost 200 years ago. What led to the decision to use 1980s Berlin, and the specific time (1981) of the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II?**

It was two things really – one, I wanted to do it about soldiers but didn't want to set it now – and that period in history – the idea that we were an 'occupying' force – just seemed so odd to me. Then I did my research and found out about the Pope's assassination and it all seemed to fit together.

**Woyzeck and Marie are desperately trying to escape the poverty in which they have found themselves. Do you think there is any optimism to be found in this play?**

Not much optimism, no I'm afraid. I also think Andrews is a tragedy of his own yet to happen.

**What research did you do before/whilst writing your version of Woyzeck?**

Well, I tried to read as much as I could, understand as much as I could of that period. I also worked with a researcher who tried to get in contact with as many people as possible who lived through that period and served in Germany. Things like the soldiers being called 'Grunts' or the fact that 'OMO washing powder' was a clue to infidelity – they could only have come from on the ground questions!

**Woyzeck's history in Belfast is also important in terms of his own sense of self, and his reputation amongst the soldiers. Belfast is another area where walls and divisions were significant in the 1980s. Can you expand on that? Do you think religion plays a large part in this play?**

I think religion does play a part yes, but more than that dogma does – the idea that things have to be done a certain way – that the army wants things a certain way – that the medical profession wants things a certain way – and as long as things are done that way (sometimes even if they aren't) - then everything is fine.

**Did you do much research into the real Woyzeck who inspired Büchner's original text?**

Yes, of course, though there's not a huge amount available on him, a truly tragic case.

**Walls are very much in the news at the moment. Indeed you preface the script with a 2004 quotation from John Berger. Was this a very conscious decision given current politics, or was the symbolism a key element to the play pre-Trump?**

It wasn't about Trump – it was more trying to work out how geography can play into your mind. The Berger quote was actually something director Joe Murphy found – and he and designer Tom Scutt have taken the walls theme and transformed it into something quite spectacular.

**Büchner's text for Woyzeck was unfinished at the time of his death, and uses a very disjointed, montage structure. As a playwright, and working in the 21st century, what challenges did this create for you?**

Huge challenges, but I saw it as a provocation – maybe he didn't want to finish it in a conventional form. People see it as an interrupted play, but perhaps it was always intended as such.

**Do you consider Woyzeck to be a tragic hero?**

I think hero is a problematic word, I see his story as a tragic one.

**How collaborative has the writing process been with Joe Murphy (director)?**

Really collaborative. This is the third time we've worked together, so we know each other very well and can be honest with each other.

**What are the most challenging scenes to stage, and why?**

That's a question for Joe! The most challenging scenes to write were all in Act 3 for me. How do you show madness?

**The character of Woyzeck himself is highly complex and disturbing. As the audience leave the theatre, what do you want them to have experienced in how they relate (or not!) to Woyzeck?**

It's a play about vulnerability. I hope they feel his vulnerability and sympathize with it. It is a plea for compassion in some ways. But not just for him – for Marie, Andrews and Maggie.

**What is your reasoning behind the roles of Maggie and Mother being played by the same actress?**

I wanted the play to feel mad. For the same reason as the baby's gender alters. You need to feel how crazy it goes.

**The way in which the men in the play relate to women can be quite uncomfortable. Can you expand on the role women play in the story of Woyzeck?**

They're soldiers, I wanted to be true to that, and they don't speak about women well. But one of my aims in writing the play was to alter the way Marie's character has been represented. In the original, she is unfaithful, and there's not a huge amount of rationale as to why – so we cut that – and tried to find a way to make her as real as possible.

**Who is your favourite character and why?**

That's like asking for my favourite kitten! I feel very close to Andrews – I think he's horrible – and I pity him for it.

**Songs play an important part in the play. Can you expand on the role of song in the play?**

They're all army songs that I found, and I liked what they added to the play.

**Can you say more about the significance of the young Woyzeck and how he influences the audience's perception of the adult he's become?**

Woyzeck was made – he was created – and it felt important to tell the story of his creation – and as the abuse he suffered comes out I wanted to contrast the child he was with the adult he became.



Joe Murphy and John Boyega

# INTERVIEW

## WITH POLLY BENNETT, MOVEMENT DIRECTOR

### **You are credited with ‘Movement Director’ for this production. What does this mean in a show such as Woyzeck?**

My job as a Movement Director is to focus on how movement can contribute and potentially highlight the creative vision of a play. Movement Directing is about working with text that already exists and needs to be transferred to stage, rather than choreography that often needs to be invented. Sometimes my work can be generating specific actions at a certain moment in a play like a dance, ritual or ceremony, or it can be something more abstract like expressing physical metaphors in the play; in some cases it is simply strengthening the physical awareness of the performers in order to create an instinctive, bold ensemble ready to meet the demands of doing seven shows a week. In any case, movement can have a huge impact on how a play is received and a story is translated.

### **What process do you go through in deciding the movement sequences/ requirements for a play?**

Before rehearsals I attended creative meetings where I got to understand the ideas of the director, designer and listen to the music ideas of the composer. As my job starts with the actors' bodies it is always hard to guess what will happen before they are standing in front of me in a rehearsal room, but using the ideas of the other creatives as stimulus, I came up with ideas to access the play through movement. For example because I knew that there would be walls moving in and out of the space, I thought of ways I could help the actors travel the stage dynamically to match the movements of the design. There was going to be a 1980s inspired soundtrack – could Woyzeck's mental state be echoed by computer game like movements that live in that aural world? What if the characters Woyzeck meets move in repetitious tracks like a game of Pacman or SuperMario. How could I transfer this idea to the company?

I also spend a lot of time with the play looking for physical clues. I make lists of locations, characters, relationships and any actions that may need exploring. For example I knew from the text that Woyzeck, Andrews and Thompson are soldiers so I ask the question, how do soldiers move, stand and hold guns and figure out what exercises I could do to help the actors learn this rather than speak about it? Woyzeck and Marie are clearly in love – how do they touch and hold each other? There is

a sex scene in the play between Andrews and Maggie. How can I make actors feel ok with touching each other intimately onstage?

By looking for anything physical that may need support and preparing ways to activate them in rehearsals my work starts to blend with that of the other creative and soon a physical language takes hold of the text.

### **Which particular scenes have used movement and how have you approached this?**

The biggest question we had when we started rehearsals was how you show madness on stage. Jack Thorne, the writer, took the army march from Büchner's original text and placed an army song in his text to mark Woyzeck's psychosis; as soon as Woyzeck takes one of the Doctor's pills, his world shifts and skews and a song in his head starts. Taking inspiration from the song and the electronic music that Isobel, the composer, was generating, we worked on the computer game idea and found tracks of each character Woyzeck encounters that could be repeated in the space. We made two sequences where each track – the Landlord asking for money, Marie trying to give away all her envelopes, Andrews and Maggie romping, a soldier marching and the Doctor - intersected and repeated over and over again, replaying but never meeting. We experimented with these characters rewinding, getting stuck in a place and never completing an action when Woyzeck was near.

Like most ideas it was all very complicated at the beginning, but gradually through rehearsals the work got simplified. On stage we had to factor in how a movement idea integrates with other elements like the set, lighting and other technicalities of backstage space. Having a full set of walls to play with (we sadly couldn't fit 25 massive flying walls in the rehearsal room!) meant that sequences got refined in response to how they changed the space. They are rightly very imposing, so we discovered that actually single tracks of dynamic movement through walls worked better to hold our attention than longer sustained pieces of action without them. We also realized that Woyzeck was plunged into turmoil too early in the play and as a result a whole sequence got taken out of the show during previews. This is not unusual but the work is still in the actor's bodies having explored and enjoyed it and now we are left with neat, bold, concise presentations of our protagonist's harrowing hallucinations.

## How does movement help communicate elements of character in this production?

There are a lot of locations in the play but very little signifiers of the space, so I have been keen to help the actors find a different physical activity in each location: how you act on guard will be very different from how you operate in a room with a baby asleep in it for example. I also worked with John and Steffan on their massage scene, working out how good Woyzeck would actually be at massage as a character and how could the action of massage be used to help tell the story of Woyzeck's mental state and Thompson's potentially homoerotic urges? I don't think the body ever lies so there is a physical story to be found in every scene. By watching Joe's rehearsals and keeping an eye on how the actors are using their bodies, I have been able to drop in ideas that keep the actors aware of the space their character takes up, explore feelings of longing, solitude and love physically and expose how their proximity and attention to their scene partners is helping or hindering the narrative.

## What has been the most challenging scene/moment in the piece?

I think the whole team has wrestled with the songs the most because they could have been ANYTHING! Jack gave us an impossible task! But don't get me wrong, impossible tasks are exactly why I do this job.

Over previews these moments took on a whole new exciting physical life. In the rehearsal room we had a few costume rails to mark the walls but of course we could never facilitate how they operate – sliding in and drawing down. As soon as the sequences we had made hit the stage and lights were on them and sound was ramped up, they morphed and changed. New

opportunities were seen and explored and we worked together to deliver a much simpler but much more effective response to these song moments. This story is a lot more complicated than it seems and Woyzeck's journey throughout the play is fundamentally traumatic; we need to see it happen. I have loved trying to work it out and, whilst what you see onstage is only a slither of the work we did in the rehearsal room, the creative team all merged together to honour Jack's stage directions and tell a complicated story simply.

## What advice do you have for students who want to use movement in their own staging of this complex play?

When I just started movement directing I was advised by a very experienced movement practitioner that if my work ever stands out as a "movementy bit" or gets a round of applause, I would have failed. This has been a massive earworm for me ever since because she's right, the best ideas serve the play's narrative, not create a new one. The challenge of using movement is to always make sure you understand the narrative of what you are making and why and don't be precious if you miss the mark – simple is always better. But simple is surprisingly hard to achieve.

If you don't know where to start, think about how you'd like the audience to feel. For example I started this process by generating answers to this sentence - "madness feels like..." Imagine the following and explore the physical response you might have; "madness feels like speaking under water" or "Madness feels like my heart is my head." How does that make you feel? How does your body respond? Explore the physical responses. Listen to your body – it will tell you the truth and something magical will happen.



Left: John Boyega, Sarah Greene Right: Theo Solomon, David Rubin

# PLAYING AT WAR

## PRESENTING THE SOLDIER'S EXPERIENCE ON STAGE

**Depicting the soldier experience on stage is nothing new. From World War 1 dramas such as *My Boy Jack*, to active duty in Iraq in *Black Watch*, the psychological impact of war is increasingly the focus of playwrights and directors.**

Whilst most other plays depict moments of active warfare on stage, *Woyzeck* finds himself in Berlin, where there is nothing much to do other than wait. This lack of action contrasts sharply with his tour of duty in Belfast, in which ambushes, riots and shootings were frequent occurrences and which subsequently haunt him.

Often called the first working class tragedy, this production of *Woyzeck* highlights wider issues that soldiers experience beyond the acts of warfare for which they are trained. *Woyzeck*'s previous experiences and behaviour cause him to be treated with suspicion by his fellow soldiers. He is shunned for patrol by all but Andrews. His domestic roles as a partner and father are at risk because of his deteriorating mental state, and as a result of the poverty in which he finds himself living. It is no wonder that he questions his own identity, desperately trying to please all people, including the ghost of his abusive mother. The conflict that we see in this play is more internal: we enter *Woyzeck*'s own mind as he becomes increasingly paranoid. There is an irony that the only person he kills (before taking his own life) whilst on active duty in Berlin is his own girlfriend – an innocent civilian whose only mistake was to love him.

David Haig's 1997 play *My Boy Jack* tells the true story of Rudyard Kipling's son John who was killed during World War 1. Both *Woyzeck* and John are highly influenced by their upbringing. *Woyzeck* is a vulnerable man. He is poor and comes from an abusive home and a chain of unsuccessful foster homes. In sharp contrast, *My Boy Jack* is set during World War 1 and present characters of privilege and class. It is Kipling's political connections that enable his myopic son to be accepted into the army in the first place, and which sets his untimely death in motion. It is worth considering how parental influence is responsible for the roles that these men take during active service. Whilst John becomes responsible for his regiment and acts as a father figure despite being only 18 himself, *Woyzeck* is forced to consider selling his gun and his health in order to fulfill his own paternal responsibilities. Although their class couldn't be more different, both of these soldiers are haunted by parental expectations and responsibilities.

The audience knows from the outset that his entry into the Army is John's death sentence in *My Boy Jack*, having seen the entire Kipling family in action. It is easy to understand why John complies with his father's wishes: during the play Kipling gives a rousing speech, urging his audience to fight in order to protect Britain from the German enemy. Compare this to Captain Thompson's speech to *Woyzeck* in which he bemoans the lack of appropriate equipment, the wrong tanks and the way in which the Northern Ireland conflict is overshadowing their own operations in Berlin.

Perhaps it is easier to identify with this more realistic portrayal of life in the military than the more distant time frame of patriotism and propaganda that we see in *My Boy Jack*. Most compellingly, however, is the fact that everything the audience sees in *Woyzeck* is from the point of view of *Woyzeck* himself. From the constantly changing gender of the baby, to the sounds and hallucinations that he experiences, *Woyzeck* is perhaps unique in presenting a very specific, first person account of what it can mean to be a soldier.

Both *My Boy Jack* and Thorne's version of *Woyzeck* also allow us an insight into the lives of key women in soldiers' lives. Sexual and gender politics are allowed significant stage time rather than the repressed setting of the battlefields and trenches of World War 1. Emotions are allowed to run riot, and to reach their destructive endpoint in a domestic and military setting. In *My Boy Jack*, however, the Edwardian setting and the distance of time mean that a contemporary audience may have less patience with the women who have little voice in the politics of the time. In *Woyzeck* we see how the women must depend on their own charms and wiles to survive their own tour of duty. Not everyone survives.

Perhaps the nearest thing to this new production of *Woyzeck* in terms of psychological intensity is *Black Watch*, first performed by the National Theatre of Scotland in 2006. Much of the dialogue is provided by verbatim sources following interviews with soldiers involved in Operation Telic in 2004. Based in Iraq, this play split its time between Camp Dogwood and back in Scotland, following the death of three soldiers by a checkpoint car bomb. Physical theatre in this production was particularly important in emphasising the long lasting impact of active duty on relationships and mental states, particularly following the death of fellow soldiers.

*Woyzeck* and *Black Watch* both utilise traditional army songs to intensify the audience experience, as well as an original score. Music has the power to create a more subtle yet tangible sense of mood and atmosphere more than relying on pyrotechnics and sound effects of explosions. It can be used to create juxtaposition, as well as locating a play within a specific time and place. From traditional army songs to political or propaganda pieces, sound is one of the most effective ways to access the emotional responses of one's audience. Sound recordings, from the Radio 4 report on the Iraq roadside bomb by John Humphries to the multiple voices heard in the mind of *Woyzeck* can be more effective than ten scenes of physical violence.

Warfare has changed beyond recognition since Büchner left *Woyzeck* unfinished when he died in 1837. Society is becoming much more aware of the psychological impact of war on soldiers and civilians alike. It is no wonder, therefore, that modern audiences are being asked to consider the true physical AND mental cost to those serving their country.

### **DISCUSSION POINTS:**

- What are the pros and cons of transposing *Woyzeck* to such a specific time period? Does this have a particular impact on the amount of empathy the audience feels for all of the characters, not just *Woyzeck*?
- How can music be used in a play about conflict to help highlight particular mood, atmosphere and themes?
- If you were staging your own production of *Woyzeck*, what music would you use as motifs for particular characters?
- What are the differences between war – themed plays that have been written by former soldiers (such as R.C. Sherriff's *Journey's End*), verbatim accounts such as *Black Watch* and those that have been researched in depth (*My Boy Jack*, based on the experience of the family of a well-known writer, and *Woyzeck*). What are the advantages and disadvantages of each approach?

# PRACTICAL EXERCISES

**These task-based exercises are designed to assist students in their approach to the text and their understanding of the themes and relationships within the play.**

## **WARM UP – 10 MINUTES**

Choose a member of your group to be in charge. They should insist on high standards, and set the following challenges for the group:

- Running on the spot, 'high knees' to hip level
- Jumping jacks
- Press ups – particularly for anyone not complying with the expected standard!
- Sit ups – non-stop for one minute
- Marching in formation, in silence.

An extension of this would be to 'plant' someone who keeps trying to leave or undermine the activities. Observe how other people respond to them. Do they become frustrated by them, or are they easily led by him/her? How might this relate to Woyzeck's behaviour in the play?

## **ROUTINE – 20 MINUTES**

The play moves through several different spaces: military (on duty), Woyzeck's flat, Captain Thompson's office/quarters, the doctor's office, and in an auditorium with the doctor.

Create a physical sequence that depicts 'a day in the life' of Woyzeck, marking the differences in his movement between on duty (military, strict posture, carrying weapons and challenging suspicious people), to being in a more domestic setting with a child and his partner. Develop a 3-minute sequence that shows the changes in his role (soldier, father, boyfriend etc.).

To develop this, consider Woyzeck's mental state. At which points is he able to maintain his role, and where will you start to show cracks in his demeanour? How will you start to show madness? For example, you could introduce repeated behaviours, sloppy posture which he suddenly alters etc.). Using split stage, play both the 'normal' and more disturbed versions side by side. How might this be an effective staging device in the play?

## **SHOWING DIFFICULT EMOTIONS – 30 MINUTES**

Discuss what is considered 'mad' or 'unusual' behaviour, in public and in private. For example, repeated behaviours such as checking locks or checking that no one is following you. How might we create a sliding scale of madness so that the audience can see the deterioration of Woyzeck's behaviour? How can we prevent the different levels of his paranoia changing too quickly? Using the script as a guide, how will you show the deterioration in his mental state? For each scene, give a mark out of 10 to indicate his mental distress and confusion and develop physical gesture, mannerism and movement to demonstrate it.

## APPLY THESE IDEAS TO:

- Act 1 scene 2 – Woyzeck and Andrews on duty, establishing his character and relationship with Andrews
- Act 1 scene 3 – Woyzeck shaving Captain Thompson, showing his relationship with a superior officer in contrast to his relationship with Andrews
- Act 1 scene 8 - during Woyzeck's interaction with the doctor
- Act 3 scene 2 – Woyzeck's dialogue with Captain Thompson during his massage
- Act 3 scene 7 – the doctor's lecture, which Woyzeck cannot understand

## FEMALE RELATIONSHIPS – 30 MINUTES

Maggie and Marie are two very contrasting characters, and in this version of *Woyzeck* the actress playing Maggie also plays Woyzeck's mother. Using Act 1 scene 4 in which Maggie visits Marie in the flat, examine how the two women try to assert their authority and personality. Use the following 'actioning' statements to help you direct the scene:

- I patronise you
- I thank you
- I undermine you
- I implore you
- I flatter you
- I doubt you
- I question you
- I inform you

Although Maggie is in Marie's home, it is Maggie who dominates this scene. How can you use space to help demonstrate some of these actions, as well as in your use of voice and facial expression?

## IMPROVISATION – 20 MINUTES

The relationship between Woyzeck and Captain Thompson is a strange one, with various tensions and ambiguities. In one scene we see Woyzeck shaving him, whilst in another he is massaging Thompson. Improvise the conversation between Thompson and Woyzeck where Thompson requests these services. How might Woyzeck respond? Embarrassed? Subservient? Suspicious?

## IMPROVISATION – 15 MINUTES

Captain Thompson mentions several foster families who returned Woyzeck to care because of his unusual behaviour. Improvise one of these incidents and Woyzeck's interaction with anyone who tries to show him compassion.

## CREATING A MOVEMENT SEQUENCE – 45 MINUTES

There are several points in the play during which movement sequences could communicate even more of Woyzeck's internal suffering.

"All of the other characters in the play suffer their own isolation. Whilst some of the characters are married, others are in some kind of relationship and are all part of the Army institution, they are also all isolated and lonely in some way."

Using this statement as a stimulus, create an ensemble movement sequence which emphasises the loneliness of these characters despite belonging to the same army military institution.

## **UNDERSTANDING BELFAST: POETRY STIMULUS FOR SPLIT STAGE WORK – 30 MINUTES**

Read Belfast Confetti by Ciaran Carson (available through any online search engine). Then read Act 2 Scene 1 of Woyzeck. Experiment with juxtaposing Carson's account of experiencing a riot in Belfast, with Woyzeck's account of why he really went AWOL in Belfast.

### **SET DESIGN: PRACTICAL EXPLORATION – 1 HOUR**

i) Jack Thorne's script explores how Woyzeck is trapped by his traumatic past and the rules and regulations he must follow as a soldier. Using chairs, rostra, tables, floor markings etc., create a maze-like structure in your performance area.

**Now use this set in key scenes within the play in which you think Woyzeck and/or Marie feel particularly trapped.**

ii) You can extend this by looking at the different locations that are depicted in the play. Using only the items that you have used for the above task, change the layout to represent the different settings in *Woyzeck*. Then, using carefully choreographed transitions between scenes, link two scenes together to demonstrate the physical and mental changes that Woyzeck undergoes as he moves from one place to another.

To extend this, consider how music and/or sound effects might enhance these transitions.

# A DAY IN THE LIFE OF

## JOE WHITE FINANCE ASSISTANT

### **What does your job involve?**

I work in the finance department. We basically take care of anything to do with the movement of money within and outside of the Theatre. My job in particular is called a 'Finance Assistant'. In a nutshell, I look after the Trust accounts (the main company and charity) and make sure that all invoices we get are paid in a timely fashion and chase up on the invoices we send out if they aren't paid on time. I also make sure that what is on the bank statements at the end of the month matches what we have on our software. Meaning that the information we give to line managers on a monthly basis is on time, true and should allow them to make better decisions from a financial point of view.

### **What do you do on an average day?**

I collect invoices and make sure to put them on our system. If we need to chase invoices that haven't been paid, I will get in touch with the companies or individuals and try to get payment or work out a time when it will be paid. I also talk to our suppliers and also managers and staff within the theatre with any financial questions they may have. The end of the month is the busiest period for us guys in finance, so mainly my day to day work is a build up to those dates making sure we don't have it all to do when we hit month end.

**Have you always worked in a theatre?** I have been here for nearly three years now and this is my first job out of University so yes my career to date has always been in a theatre. In 2013 I was given a summer job helping to reduce backlog for a period of a month. This turned into 4 and then once I finished my final year at university a position became open and I got the job. Loved it ever since!

### **Which part of your job do you most enjoy?**

Believe it or not...not the numbers! I really enjoy the huge spread of personalities you find in a place like this. From us number crunchers, to creatives, to the crew. There is such a diverse range of cultures and personalities. It can be a little dysfunctional at times, but there is definitely a family vibe here. You look forward to coming in in the mornings.

### **Which part of your work is the most difficult?**

For me personally, it would be my commute. I come from Canterbury in Kent every day and it can take it out of you sometimes.

### **What is your best memory of working at The Old Vic so far?**

Probably seeing *The Crucible* when I first started. I had never been a big follower of the theatre before I joined and when I got told it was 3 hours I nearly cried. But I sat down, with mouth open, in awe for the duration. 3 hours felt like ten minutes. It's not like a movie and for me it's hard to explain but it's very organic, raw and that's what I have come to appreciate about it all.

### **If you were to offer a young person wanting to get into the industry some advice, what would you tell them?**

I mean it's a little difficult for me to give an answer here because my profession isn't really exclusive to theatre. But if were to give out a pearl of wisdom in life and work. BE BOLD, don't always accept what is in front of you, and challenge the norm. As long as you deliver this in a constructive manner and put yourself across in a thoughtful way. People will notice. I would also suggest that in life and work you are only as valuable as your integrity, never lose that!

### **What is the best piece of advice you've ever been given?**

The best piece of advice I have been given was actually by my dad. It goes something like 'Conflict doesn't always have to be an argument. Conflict stimulates debate and debate brings new philosophies.' Wise man!

### **What is the biggest misconception about working in a theatre?**

I was never told to watch out for anything in particular. In my head I had built actors and actresses to be scary larger than life people, but in reality they're just like everyone else. When I got over this I became more confident in talking to them and they are fascinating people. As I said before; be bold.

### **Did you have any theatre heroes when you were growing up?**

Actually no, I mentioned before I wasn't really into theatre before coming here. So I'm going to go with Frank Lampard!

# BIBLIOGRAPHY & FURTHER READING

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