DONMAR®

Study Guide for

# INADMISSIBLE EVIDENCE

## BY JOHN OSBORNE

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with additional material by **Sam Maynard**
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# CONTENTS

section 1

# Cast and Creative Team

## Cast (in order of speaking)

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |
| Al Weaver<br>Jones | Douglas Hodge<br>Bill Maitland | Daniel Ryan<br>Hudson | Karen Gillan<br>Shirley |
|  |  |  |  |
| Amy Morgan<br>Joy | Serena Evans<br>Mrs Garnsey | Alice Sanders<br>Jane Maitland | Esther Hall<br>Liz |

Other roles played by members of the company

# Creative Team

**JAMIE LLOYD - DIRECTOR**

Jamie is an Associate Director of the Donmar and the Associate Artist at Headlong.

**For the Donmar:** *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee, Passion* – Evening Standard Award, *Polar Bears, Piaf* - Olivier, Evening Standard Awards (also Vaudeville/Buenos Aires/Madrid) a concert performance of *Company* (Queen's), stage readings of *A House Not Meant To Stand, The Cocktail Party*.

**Theatre**: includes *The Faith Machine, The Pride* – Olivier Award (Royal Court), *Salome* (Headlong/Curve/Hampstead), *The Little Dog Laughed* (Garrick), *Three Days of Rain* (Apollo), *Eric's* (Liverpool Everyman), *The Lover and The Collection* (Comedy), *The Caretaker* (Sheffield Crucible/Tricycle), *Elegies – A Song Cycle* (Arts).

**SOUTRA GILMOUR - DESIGNER**

**For the Donmar**: *Polar Bears, Piaf* (Vaudeville/Buenos Aires).

**Theatre**: includes *Double Feature* (NT at The Paintframe), *Shadow of a Boy* (NT), *In A Forest Dark and Deep* (Vaudeville), *The Little Dog Laughed* (Garrick), *Three Days of Rain* (Apollo), *The Pride* (Royal Court), *The Tragedy of Thomas Hobbes* (RSC at Wilton's Music Hall), *The Lover and The Collection* (Comedy), *Our Friends in the North, Son of Man* (Northern Stage), *Last Easter* (Birmingham Rep), *Angels in America* (Lyric Hammersmith), *Who Is Afraid Of Virginia Woolf?* (Sheffield Crucible), *The Caretaker* (Sheffield Crucible/Tricycle), *Petrol Jesus Nightmare # 5* (Traverse/Kosovo), *Lovers and War* (Stockholm), *Hair, Witness* (Gate), *Baby Doll, Thérèse Raquin* (Citizens, Glasgow), *Ghost City* (New York), *When the World Was Green* (Young Vic), *Through the Leaves* (Duchess/Southwark Playhouse).

**Opera**: includes *Into the Little Hill, Down by the Greenwood Side* (Royal Opera House), *Anna Bolena, Don Giovanni, Cosi Fan Tutte, Mary Stuart* (English Touring Opera), *The Shops* (Bregenz Festival), *The Birds, Trouble in Tahiti* (The Opera Group), *Saul, Hansel and Gretel* (Opera North), *A Better Place* (English National Opera), *Girl of Sand* (Almeida).

**JAMES FARNCOMBE - LIGHTING DESIGNER**

**Theatre**: includes *Juno and the Paycock* (NT/Dublin), *Men Should Weep, Double Feature* (NT), *The Ladykillers* (Liverpool Playhouse/Gielgud), *Ghost Stories* (Liverpool Playhouse/Lyric Hammersmith/Duke of York's/Toronto), *Swallows and Amazons, Juliet and Her Romeo, Far Away* (Bristol Old Vic), *Lord of the Flies* (Regent's Park), *The Glass Menagerie* (Young Vic), *Twisted Tales* (Lyric Hammersmith), *The Village Bike, Wanderlust* (Royal Court), *Bomber's Moon* (Coventry Belgrade), *Plenty* (Sheffield Crucible), *Dancing at Lughnasa* (Birmingham Rep), *Like a Fishbone, The Whiskey Taster, 2000 Feet Away, Crooked* (Bush), *The Overcoat* (Gecko), *Breaking the Silence* (Nottingham Playhouse), *A View from the Bridge, All My Sons* (Octagon, Bolton), *Vincent in Brixton* (New Wolsey, Ipswich), *Osama the Hero, Single Act* (Hampstead), *A Winter's Tale* (Schtanhaus/Headlong), *The Great Game, Blues for Mr Charlie* (Tricycle).

**Opera**: includes *Kommilitonen* (Royal Academy of Music/New York).

**BEN and MAX RINGHAM - COMPOSERS AND SOUND DESIGNERS**

**For the Donmar**: *Les Parents Terribles* (Donmar at Trafalgar Studios), *Polar Bears, Piaf* (also Vaudeville/Argentina), *Phaedra*.

**Theatre**: includes *Painkiller* (Lyric Belfast), *My City* (Almeida), *American Trade, Little Eagles* (RSC), *Remembrance Day, The Pride, The Author* (Royal Court), *Racing Demon, Hamlet , An Enemy of the People* (Sheffield Crucible), *The Electric Hotel* (Fuel), *Salome* (Headlong), *The Little Dog Laughed* (Garrick), *Three Days of Rain* (Vaudeville), *Really Old Like Forty Five, Henry IV parts I&II* (NT), *Branded, All About My Mother* (Old Vic), *Contains Violence* (Lyric Hammersmith), *The Lover/ The Collection* (Comedy), *The Caretaker* (Sheffield Crucible/Tricycle/UK Tour), *Amato Saltone, What If...?, Tropicana, Dance Bear Dance, The Ballad of Bobby Francois* (Shunt), *The Pigeon* (BAC).

Ben and Max are associate artists with the Shunt Collective and are two thirds of the band Superthriller.

section 2

# John Osborne: His life and work

## Introduction

**John James Osborne** (12 December 1929 – 24 December 1994) was an English playwright, screenwriter, actor, and critic of the establishment.

His father, Thomas Godfrey Osborne, was a commercial artist and copywriting clerk. His mother, Nellie Beatrice, was a barmaid. He loved his father and hated his mother.

His father died in 1941, leaving John with enough money to fund a private education. He enrolled at Belmont College, a minor pubic school in Devon. John started at the school in 1943 but was expelled in 1945 after punching the headmaster who had caned him for listening to a forbidden broadcast by Frank Sinatra.

John returned to London to live with his mother. He got a job tutoring a junior company of touring actors. He gained a promotion to Stage Manager and then became a member of the acting company for Anthony Creighton's Provincial Touring Company.

# Osborne's Work and Influence

John wrote his first play, *The Devil Inside Him*, in 1949-50 with his mentor Stella Linden. Linden directed it at the Theatre Royal in Huddersfield in 1950.

## *Look Back In Anger*

Written in 1956, *Look Back In Anger* is still seen as the most significant of Osborne's plays. It caused enormous controversy when first produced, and is widely acknowledged to have changed the face of British theatre.

*Look Back In Anger* is strongly autobiographical. It is based on Osborne's time living with his first wife Pamela Lane in cramped accommodation in Derby. The action of the play takes place in the Porters' one-room flat in the Midlands, and centres around the conflicts between Jimmy and Alison, a young married couple. It contains a harshly naturalistic look at the tensions and difficulties of 1950s life.

The play didn't receive immediate success. It was sent to agents across London and returned almost immediately. Osborne writes in his autobiography; "The speed with which it had been returned was not surprising, but its aggressive dispatch did give me a kind of relief. It was like being grasped at the upper arm by a testy policeman and being told to move on."

The play was finally sent to the English Stage Company at the Royal Court Theatre. George Devine (Actor-Manager and Artistic Director) was in need of a success. The first three productions of the company had been flops. He took a gamble on John Osborne's play. He saw in it a searing expression of a new post-war voice.

Osborne was living in a riverboat on the Thames at this time, stewing up nettles to eat. George Devine rowed out to the boat to give John the news that he would like to produce his play.

The reviews were mainly terrible. BBC Radio's *The Critics* described the set of the play as

*Unspeakably dirty and squalid. It is difficult to believe that a Colonel's daughter, brought up with some standards, would have stayed in this sty for a day. I felt angry because it wasted my time.*[1]

When Stephen Daldry was Artistic Director of the Royal Court (1992-1998) he wrote:

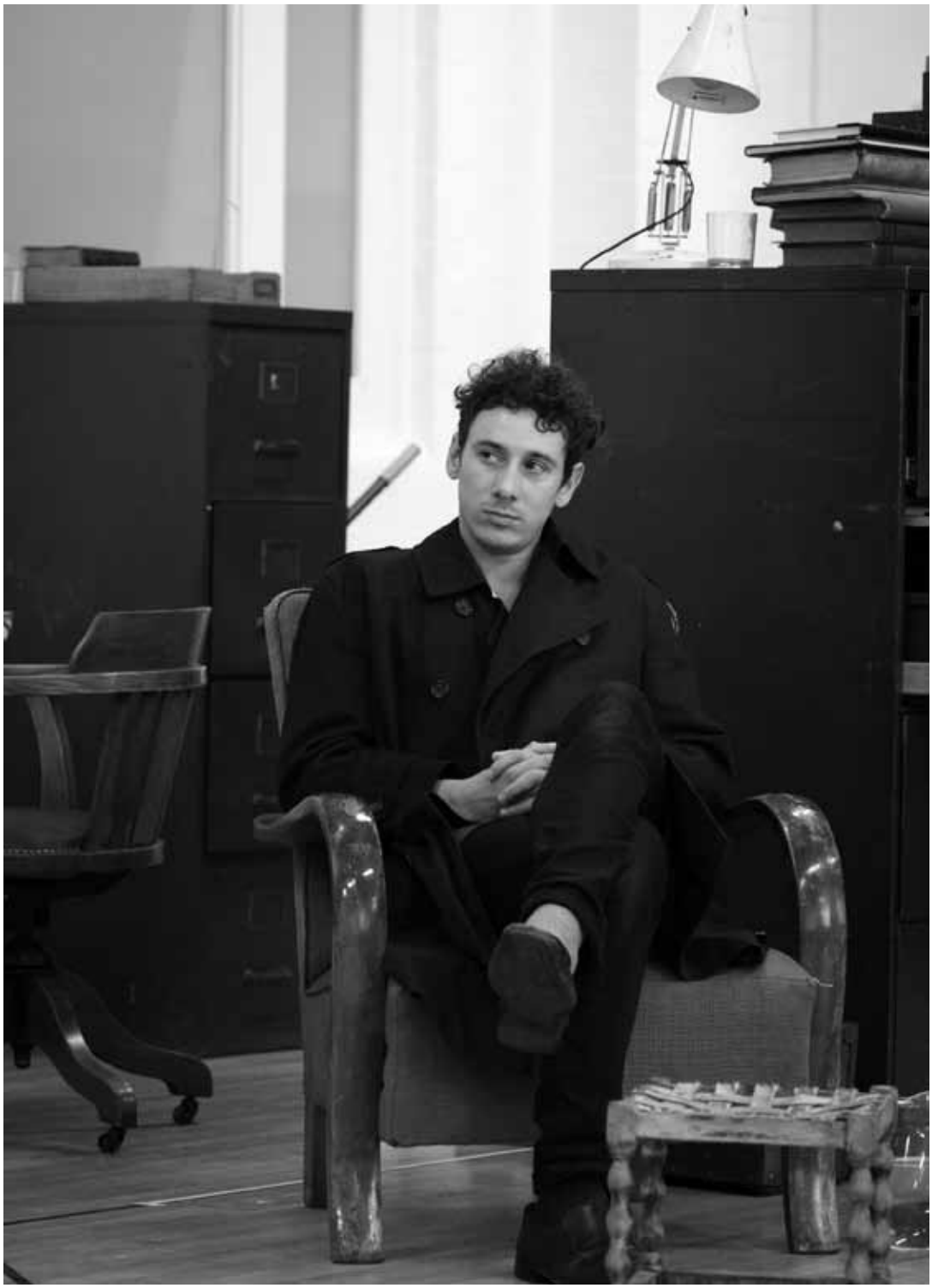
*"I have in our archives letters from members of the audience from the original production of Look Back In Anger demanding their money back. Had we honoured every one of those requests, this theatre would not have been able to survive"*[2]

But Kenneth Tynan, the most influential critic of the time, wrote in The Observer, *'I could not love anyone who did not wish to see Look Back In Anger. It is the best young play of its decade.'* He praised the play as a *'minor miracle':*

1 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Look_Back_in_Anger
2 Little, Ruth & McLaughlin, Emily (2007). *The Royal Court Theatre Inside Out.* Oberon Books; p.326

*'All the qualities are there; qualities one had despaired of ever seeing on the stage – the drift towards anarchy, the instinctive leftishness, the automatic rejection of 'official' attitudes, the surrealist sense of humour, the casual promiscuity, the sense of lacking a crusade worth fighting for, and underlying all of these, the determination that no one who dies shall go unmourned.*[3]

In 1958 the play was made into a film starring Mary Ure, Richard Burton and Clare Bloom and directed by Tony Richardson.



3 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Look_Back_in_Anger

## The Angry Young Men

A press-officer at the Royal Court named George Fearon, invented the phrase 'Angry Young Man', as a marketing tool. Fearon told John Osborne that he disliked *Look Back In Anger* and felt it would be impossible to market.

The term 'Angry Young Men' became applied to a group of playwrights and novelists whose work expressed disillusionment with the traditional English society. Their political views were usually seen as identifying with the Left, and they described social alienation. *Look Back In Anger* articulated the British working class' feeling of betrayal by political and social institutions.

Several 'Angry Young Men' refused to be associated with others. Many found themselves labeled by the press and denied the label.

This new realism - writing which was in step with national, working class feeling; urged into existence Harold Pinter, Arnold Wesker, Edward Bond, Alan Sillitoe, John Braine, Bernard Kops.

## 'Kitchen Sink' Realism

*Look Back In Anger* is thought of as the first 'Kitchen Sink Drama'. The term was coined to describe realistic plays which depicted the lives of working class heroes, often angry young men themselves, living in poor conditions and working manual jobs.

Working class characters had been depicted as archetypes or stereotypes in Rattigan or Coward. Now they took centre stage. Kitchen Sink Realism was in opposition to the 'well-made play' that had come before.

The term 'Kitchen Sink' derived from an expressionist painting by John Bratby which depicted a kitchen sink. An art critic, David Sylvester, wrote a famous article in 1954, called, 'The Kitchen Sink', which discussed contemporary English art. He argued there was a new interest in young artists on domestic scenes with a stress on the banality of life.

## *The Entertainer*

When Lawrence Olivier first saw *Look Back In Anger* he described it as 'unpatriotic' and 'bad theatre'. At the time, Olivier was filming *The Prince and The Showgirl* with Marilyn Monroe. She visited London with Arthur Miller (her husband) and Miller persuaded Olivier to watch *Look Back In Anger* again. Miller thought the play was extraordinary, and Olivier was impressed by Miller's response. He asked John Osborne to write a play for him. In 1957 George Devine sent Olivier a draft of *The Entertainer*. Olivier would play the central role of Archie Rice at the Royal Court and in the West End.

## Early 1960's

Osborne was enjoying a great degree of critical success and writing prolifically during this period. His play *Luther* (1961) transferred to Broadway and won a Tony award. In 1963 Osborne won an Oscar for his adaptation of *Tom Jones*.

### *Inadmissible Evidence*

The first performance of *Inadmissible Evidence* was at the Royal Court Theatre in London, on September 9th, 1964, for the English Stage Company. It was a resounding critical and popular success starring Nicol Williamson and would be made into a film in 1968.

Again, the play has been described as autobiographical.

*His central character may be a lawyer called Bill Maitland, but there is little doubt that he was ripped straight from the dramatist's own mind and heart, and set down on paper.*

*Indeed, a couple of years after the play was first produced, Osborne himself, cracked up like his hero, and ended up in hospital with a nervous breakdown. As Osborne's biographer, John Heilpern has written, '*Inadmissible Evidence *became an extraordinary act of prophecy for John Osborne.'*[4]

## John Osborne's role in shaping our theatre

David Hare said of Osborne at his funeral address in 1995:

*"The whole world knew that it was John who established the idea that it would be to the stage that people would look for some sort of recognizable portrait of their own lives. ... 'On that stage,' he said, of the little space behind the Proscenium Arch at the Royal Court Theatre, 'you can do anything.' John knocked down the door and a whole generation of playwrights came piling through, many of them not even acknowledging him as they came…. There is in everything John writes a love for the texture of real life, a reminder of real pleasures and real pains…*

4 'Inadmissible Evidence: Donmar Warehouse: Review; *The Telegraph*; Charles Spencer; Wednesday 19th October 2011

*John Osborne devoted his life to trying to forge some sort of connection between the acuteness of his mind and the extraordinary power of his heart. 'To be tentative was beyond me, it usually is.' That is why this Christian leaves behind him friends and enemies, detractors and admirers. A lifelong satirist of prigs and puritans, whether of the Right or of the Left, he took no hostages, expecting from other people the same unyielding, unflinching commitment to their own view of the truth which he took for granted in his own. Of all British playwrights of the Twentieth Century he is the one who risked most. And, risking most, frequently offered the most rewards."*[5]

5 A Lifelong Satirist of Prigs and Puritans, David Hare, June 1995, http://ds.dial.pipex.com/town/parade/abj76/PG/pieces/john_osborne.shtml

# The Women in Osborne's Life

**Nellie Beatrice (Mother)**. Nellie was a cockney barmaid. John described his mother as "hypocritical, self-absorbed, calculating and indifferent.' He believed that she taught him 'the fatality of hatred'. He wrote, 'She is my disease. An invitation to my sick room.' Reviewing a biography of Osborne, Michael Ardatti wrote that:

*'Nellie Beatrice, Osborne's barmaid mother, emerges as at once monstrous and pathetic, whether expressing her reluctance to attend her son's* Hamlet *because she had seen the play before and 'he dies in the end' or desperately seeking atonement for her maternal failings. Osborne maintained his implacable hatred of her all his life, publicly declaring in 1983, 'A year in which my mother died can't be all bad,' and breaking with his friend Eileen Atkins when she dared to portray her sympathetically in the TV dramatisation of the book. He did, however, support her financially, a pattern he followed in other relationships, pecuniary generosity being the only sort he was able to display'.*[6]

## Pamela Lane (First Wife 1951-1957)

Pamela Lane was born in Bridgwater, Somerset, the daughter of a middle-class draper and a mother who came from minor rural gentry.

John Osborne met Pamela while the two were both members of an acting troupe in Bridgwater. He describes his immediate attraction to her:

*'She had just recently shorn her hair down to a defiant auburn stubble and I was impressed by the hostility she had created by this self-isolating act… her huge green eyes which mock or plead affection… She startled and confused me… There was no calculation in my instant obsession."*[7]

John married Pamela Lane in June 1951. They were both 21.

It was "an impetuous, runaway marriage which later became the model for the murderous marriage of Jimmy Porter and Alison in *Look Back In Anger*."[8] John wrote the play on Pamela's portable typewriter in seventeen days sitting in a deckchair in Morecambe in 1956 while Pamela was having an affair with a dentist and John was performing in a badly reviewed rep show called *Seagulls over Sorrento*. Osborne's biographer, John Heilpern, wrote that:

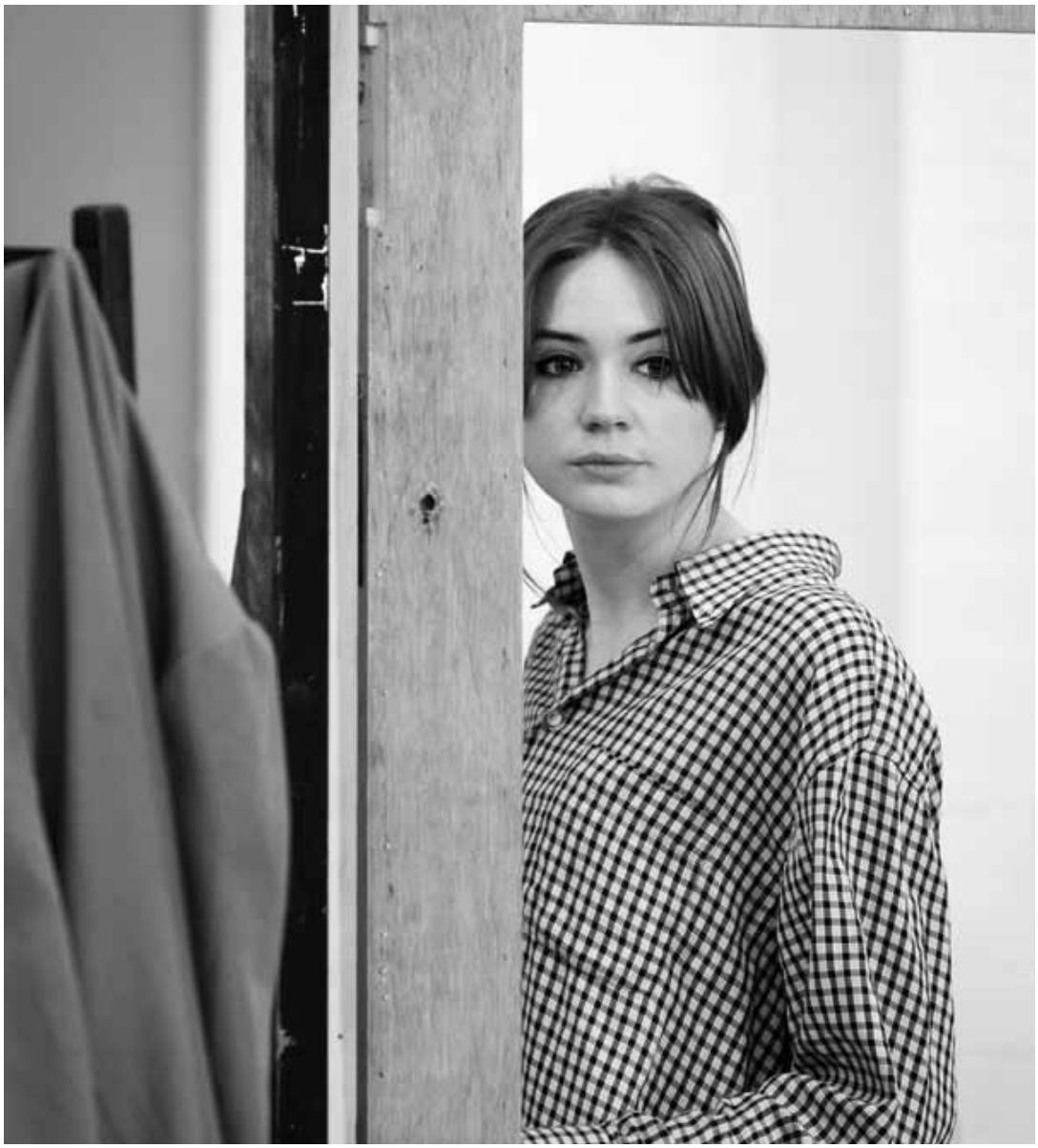
*"She was his ruling romantic fiction, the object of his bewildered infatuation. In the early days of their marriage, his nickname for her was squirrel – Osborne had a fey side – and hers for him was bear – as Jimmy and Alison are famously named in Look Back In Anger. But her cool enigmatic refinement obsessed Osborne in life exactly as Alison's measured middle-class way defeats the enraged Jimmy in his will to possess or destroy her in the play.*

6 *John Osborne by John Heilpern*; The Independent; Michael Arditti, May 5th 2006
7 *A Better Class of Person; An Autobiography; Volume I*; John Osborne; Penguin, 1982
8 *Pamela Lane Obituary*, The Guardian; John Heilpern; Sunday 21st November 2010

*When Lane saw Look Back In Anger early in its run at the Royal Court theatre in 1956, her marriage had ended ruinously two years previously, after three years. She had the surreal experience of seeing herself recreated, on-stage, by Osborne's future second wife, the film star Mary Ure, and living again with the fury of Osborne/ Porter in the bedsit battleground they had once shared. "Oh, no," she remembered thinking with a sense of dread even as the curtain rose. "Not the ironing board."*

*And yet she found herself admiring the autobiographical play that was written in the rhetoric of marital and class warfare. She felt it gave passionate voice to the brave, new causes of theatre they had often discussed when they were rep actors together. He was then a miserably failed jobbing actor and unknown playwright, she a beautiful RADA ingénue destined for stardom. But he grew to resent her early success the more she overshadowed him. To his seething indignation, he was even known at Derby Playhouse, where they both acted, as Mr Lane."*[9]

In 1957 Lane was granted a divorce from Osborne on grounds of adultery.



9 IBID

## Mary Ure (Second Wife 1957-1963)

Osborne began an affair with Mary Ure shortly after she was cast in the role of Alison in *Look Back In Anger* in 1956. Osborne and Ure moved in together in Woodfall Road in Chelsea in the same year.

John writes in his autobiography

*Mary was one of those unguarded souls who can make themselves understood by penguins or the wildest dervishes… I was not in love. There was fondness and pleasure but no groping expectations, just a feeling of fleeting heart's ease. For the present we were both content enough.*[10]

Ure and Osborne married in 1957. In 1958 Ure played the role of Alison in the Broadway production of *Look Back In Anger* and won a Tony Award for Best Actress. She reprised the role in the film, co-starring Richard Burton as Jimmy Porter.

In 1959 Ure began an affair with actor Robert Shaw, as she played opposite him in *The Changeling* at The Royal Court. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son and named him Colin Murray Osborne, despite his resemblance to Robert Shaw. Ure left Osborne and married Robert Shaw in 1963. Shaw adopted the baby and they brought him up as Shaw's son.

## Penelope Gilliatt (Third Wife 1963-1968)

Penelope Gilliatt was a novelist, short story writer, screen writer and film critic. She was born in London. Her parents were from Newcastle-Upon-Tyne. Her father was a barrister.

Gilliatt and Osborne met socially. Then Gilliatt interviewed Osborne for *The Observer*. Osborne describes this interview in his autobiography;

*It was not so much chastity that troubled me, but the withdrawal of feminine intimacy. And now, here I was, giving a routine interview to a young, animated woman, seemingly very informed and quick to laugh.*[11]

Gilliatt was married but she seduced Osborne. They carried out a secret affair until Osborne proposed to Gilliatt.

Osborne and Gilliatt were married for five years. They had a daughter, Nolan – Osborne's only child. Osborne grew annoyed by Gilliatt's passion for her work as a film critic and by her worsening problem with alcohol. Gilliatt moved to New York. Osborne began an affair. They were divorced.

10 *A Better Class of Person; An Autobiography; Volume I*; John Osborne; Penguin, 1982
11 *Almost a Gentleman: An Autobiography 1955-1966*; John Osborne; Faber and Faber; (1991); p.32

## Jill Bennett (Fourth Wife 1968-1977)

Jill Bennett was a RADA-trained actress, born in Penang in the Straits Settlements, educated at an Independent girls' school in Surrey. Their's was a "corrosive"[12] marriage. Osborne wrote in his notebook in 1971: 'She screams in restaurants, shouts me down, wants me as a prestige office boy…'[13], and eventually wrote that 'She was the most evil woman I have come across'[14].

When Bennett committed suicide by taking an overdose in 1990 Osborne described the act as 'one of the few original or spontaneous gestures in her loveless life.'[15] and expressed regret that he didn't 'shit in her open coffin.'[16]

## Helen Dawson (Fifth Wife 1978-1994)

Dawson was an arts journalist and theatre critic for *The Observer*. This marriage would last until Osborne's death. After Osborne died Helen committed herself to preserving his legacy. She became the '*Fierce guardian of his memory*'.[17]

She posted a list outside the door at his funeral of those who were not to be admitted; mostly theatre critics, and the playwright, Arnold Wesker.

*'They were an odd couple: he lanky, elegant, gentle (despite his unjustified "angry" reputation), insecure; she short, wiry, waspish, seemingly unglamorous, feisty – but "two peas in a pod', she often said.'*[18]

12 *A Sense of Failure; The Guardian*; John Heilpern; Saturday 29 April 2006
13 IBID
14 *Almost a Gentleman: An Autobiography 1955-66*; John Osborne; Faber and Faber; (1991); p.443
15 IBID
16 IBID (p.259)
17 'Helen Osborne'; *The Independent*; Monday, 19th January 2004
18 IBID

## Nolan Osborne Parker (Daughter)

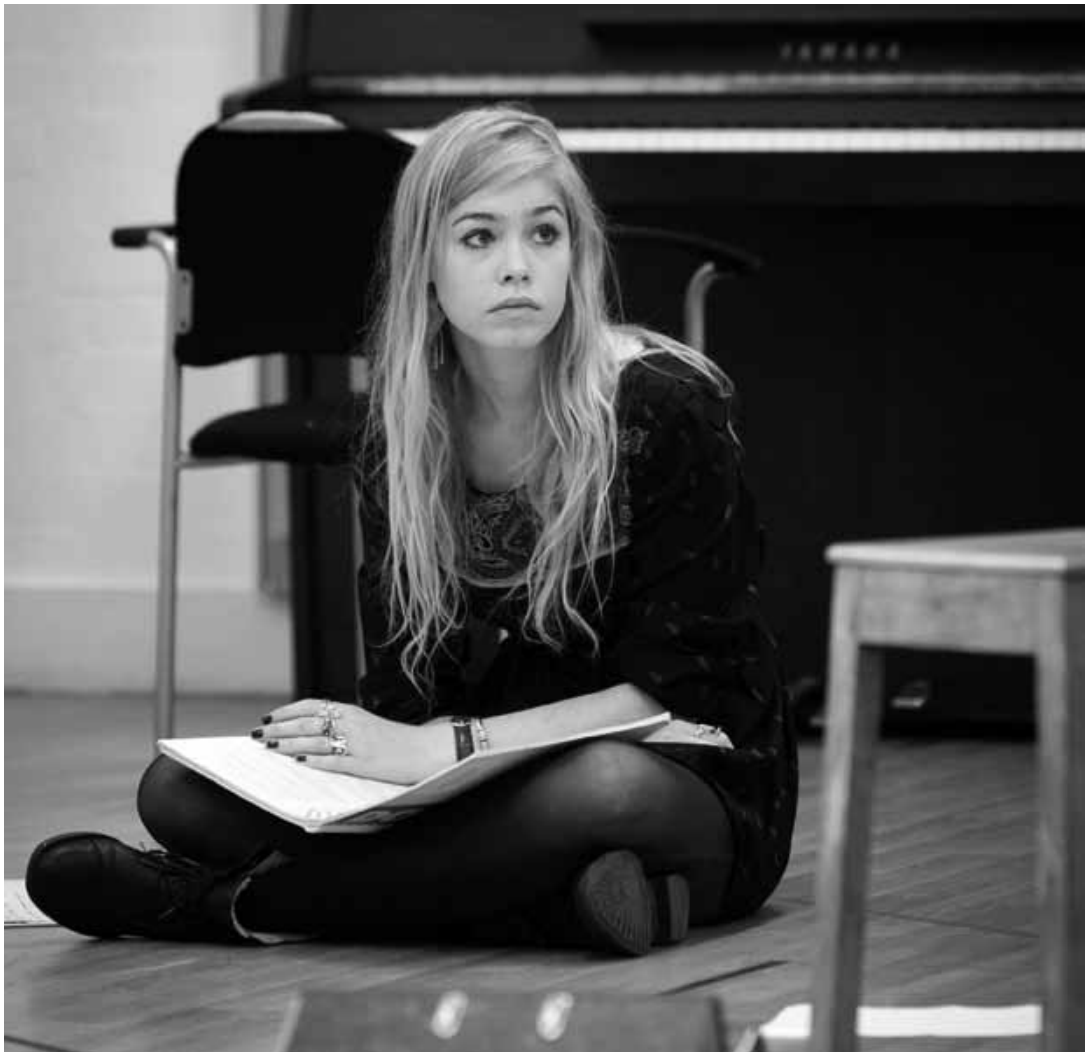
Osborne adored Nolan as a child. But as she grew she engendered feelings of confusion and ultimately hatred within Osborne. When Nolan was seventeen Osborne threw her out of his house and they never spoke again. He wrote her letters in which he attacked her as '*insolently smug, very suburban, and very unpleasant,' 'trivial'* and '*coldhearted*'.[19]

Nolan describes the relationship;

*'Yes, he was incredibly rude and hurtful, but that was the way he was with so many people – like his mother, his wives and some friends. He seemed to revel in this rudeness.'*[20]

She did see her father once again in 1987:

*'It was a rainy evening and I'd just come out of my office. I bumped into this man who I think had just come out of the Garrick club. It was my father. We both looked at each other but neither of us spoke. But I don't regret not speaking to him then. Time had already moved on and even then I had no grudges.*[21]



19 'Stunned Daughter Reveals the Cruelty of Osborne', *The Times*, 5th March 2006
20 IBID
21 'Osborne Child Looks Back Without Anger', *The Sunday Times*; 5th March 2006

section 3

# Context to the play

## Key events of 1964

| | |
|---|---|
| **11 January** | Teen girls' magazine *Jackie* first published. |
| **21 February** | £10 banknotes are issued for the first time since the Second World War. |
| **10 March** | The Queen gives birth to her fourth child, a son, later named Edward. |
| **30 March** | Violent disturbances between 'mods' and 'rockers' at Clacton beach. |
| **6 May** | Joe Orton's black comedy *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* premieres at the New Arts Theatre in London. |
| **6 July** | The Beatles' first film, *A Hard Day's Night*, is released. |
| **10 July** | More than 300 people are injured in Liverpool when a crowd of 150,000 people welcome The Beatles back to their hometown. |
| **15 September** | *The Sun* newspaper goes into circulation. |
| **15 October** | The general election is held. The Labour Party defeats the Conservative party. Harold Wilson becomes Britain's first Labour Prime Minister in thirteen years, replacing Alec Douglas-Home, having gained a majority of 5 seats. |
| **2 November** | ITV soap *Crossroads* airs for the first time. |
| **9 November** | The House of Commons votes to abolish the death penalty for murder in Britain. The last execution took place in August and the death penalty is set to be officially abolished before the end of 1965. |
| **24 December** | The Beatles are Christmas Number One for the 2nd year running with *I Feel Fine* (their 6th UK Number One). |

## Legal and Social Change in the 1960s

INADMISSIBLE EVIDENCE was first performed in 1964, at a time when Britain was on the verge of a series of legislative changes that would revolutionise life in the country. The sixties was a decade of profound social, economic and political change across the globe, and this was reflected in the art of the time. In 1964, certain crimes were still punishable by hanging, acts of homosexuality between consenting adults were illegal and vigorously prosecuted by the police, the Lord Chamberlain's office had the right to censor plays, and women needed to prove that their husbands had been unfaithful or cruel in order to obtain a divorce. Yet, by the end of the decade, parliament had passed legislation changing all these practices, in perhaps the greatest series of liberal reforms ever to be passed by a British Government. INADMISSIBLE EVIDENCE portrays a Britain on the edge of a legal revolution.

## Divorce

**BILL**: *Is it the women? Only? When I say only, as far as the law is concerned, that's quite enough.*

Divorce had been legal in Britain since the mid nineteenth century for all men and women. Prior to this, it had been limited to the very rich and powerful, (famously, Henry VIII), but the 1857 legislation allowed ordinary people to petition for divorce, provided that they could provide evidence of adultery. Until 1923, women were required to provide evidence of 'aggravated adultery', which involved proving that a husband had not only committed adultery, but was also guilty of sodomy, incest, bigamy, cruelty or desertion. The law was altered in the 1930s to include cruelty, desertion for over three years, or insanity, to the list of possible grounds for divorce. However, divorce was still an extremely difficult and complicated process.

In 1964, when INADMISSIBLE EVIDENCE was written, both men and women were still required to prove infidelity or cruelty in order to obtain a divorce, and it was still very possible for one partner to block the other from successfully divorcing them, as long as they took care not to provide evidence against themselves. This led to absurd cases of staged adultery, and made no allowances for marriages breaking down through no particular serious fault or misdemeanour on either side.

Although the laws on divorce were riddled with problems, it was not until 1969 that legislation was changed. The Divorce Reform Act of that year enacted the recommendations of reports by both the Law Commission and the Church of England , allowing couples to divorce following the irretrievable breakdown of a marriage, rather than following the committing of a 'matrimonial offence' by one partner. This Act paved the way for current divorce law, although there have been many significant changes to legislation in the forty years following the 1969 Act.

## Homosexuality

**MAPLES:** *I know you think I haven't tried. I can't make any more effort, any more. I want to plead guilty.*

The plight of Maples in INADMISSIBLE EVIDENCE is typical of the experiences of many homosexual men in the period following the Second World War in Britain. Sexual acts between men had been officially illegal in the United Kingdom since its formation, and had been punishable by death until 1861. Sexual acts between men were regularly and vigorously prosecuted, with many homosexuals spending time in prison. The 1950s was a time in which homosexuals were persecuted with particular force by the British police, forcing gay men to become ever more secretive and clandestine about their relationships.

The 1950s also saw, however, a number of landmark court cases which set in motion a chain of events which would eventually see homosexuality legalised. Following the trial and conviction of three men, Peter Wildeblood, Michael Pitt-Rivers and Edward Montagu, in 1954, there was outrage in some sections of the British press, and an inquiry was launched into the legislation covering homosexual offences. Reporting in 1957, the Wolfenden Report recommended that homosexual acts between men should no longer be a criminal offence.

However, in 1964, at the time of the premiere of INADMISSIBLE EVIDENCE, little progress had been made to enact these recommendations into law. It was only after a decade of campaigning that, in 1967, the Sexual Offences Act decriminalised sexual activities between men over the age of 21, although there were still many restrictions maintained. This change, though, allowed homosexual men to declare their sexuality openly for the first time without fear of retribution from the law, although discrimination and prejudice against homosexuals would continue for many years in Britain, even to the present day.

## Theatre Censorship

**CLERK:** *You are accused of having unlawfully and wickedly published and made known, and caused to be procured and made known, a wicked, bawdy and scandalous object.*

While censorship of the theatre does not appear directly within the play INADMISSIBLE EVIDENCE, an understanding of the context of censorship in which the play was written is vital to a true appreciation of the daring of Osborne's play. While today we live in a society in which theatres can stage plays without fear of interference by government, until the 1960s the state exercised strict controls over what could, and could not, be depicted on stage. The Lord Chamberlain, who was appointed by the monarch rather than by parliament, acted as theatrical censor for plays that appeared across Britain. Words, phrases, stage

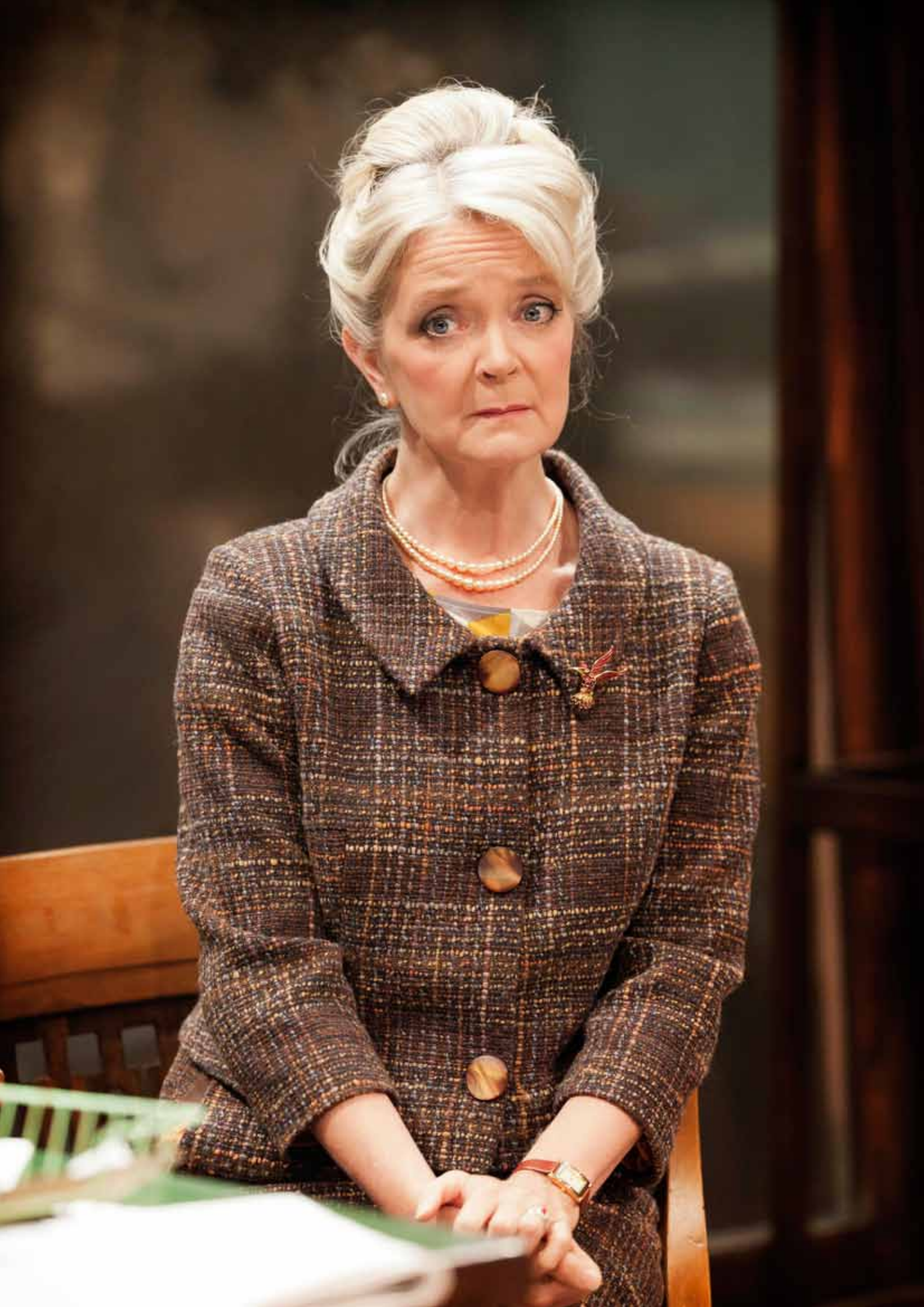
directions and even entire plays were often banned from appearing on stage by the Lord Chamberlain's office, and many of the decisions that were made seem extraordinary to the modern theatregoer; an apparently innocent comment or reference might be struck out as a coded reference to homosexuality, and references to God onstage were frowned upon.

With the birth of the English Stage Company at the Royal Court Theatre in 1956, and, particularly, with the growth of the movement of playwrights known as the Angry Young Men, of which John Osborne was a leading figure, British theatre had begun to react vigorously against censorship in the theatre by the 1960s. Osborne was a particularly outspoken critic of theatre censorship, and in particular his two plays Inadmissible Evidence and A Patriot for Me saw Osborne firmly take on the establishment. Luc Maurice Gillieman has written of these two plays that:

*'Both* Patriot *and* Inadmissible *were mileposts in the ongoing battle with theatre censorship in which Osborne played a leading role. Nearly every line from* Inadmissible *had to be defended. Though many concessions inevitably had to be made, the play that reached the stage was for its time remarkably frank about sexuality and courageous in its attacks on outmoded laws regarding divorce and homosexuality'*[22].

Osborne continued his fight against censorship right up until final victory in 1968, testifying before a House of Lords committee in 1966. In March 1968, the Theatres Act removed the Lord Chamberlain's powers to censor the theatre. In an article for *The Times* following the passing of the Act, George Strauss MP wrote that '*Dangers are inherent in all freedoms. It is better to face them, if they should arise, rather than to retain the shackles of restriction*'[23]. The end of censorship changed the face of British theatre, and John Osborne played a significant role in bringing about that change.

22 Luc Maurice Gilleman, *John Osborne – Vituperative Artist: A reading of his life and work*, Routledge, 2002, p.124.
23 George Strauss MP, 'Theatre censorship: exit the Lord Chamberlain' *The Times*, 24 March 1968.



section 4

# Inside the Rehearsal Room

## Extracts from Resident Assistant Director Simon Evans' Rehearsal Diary

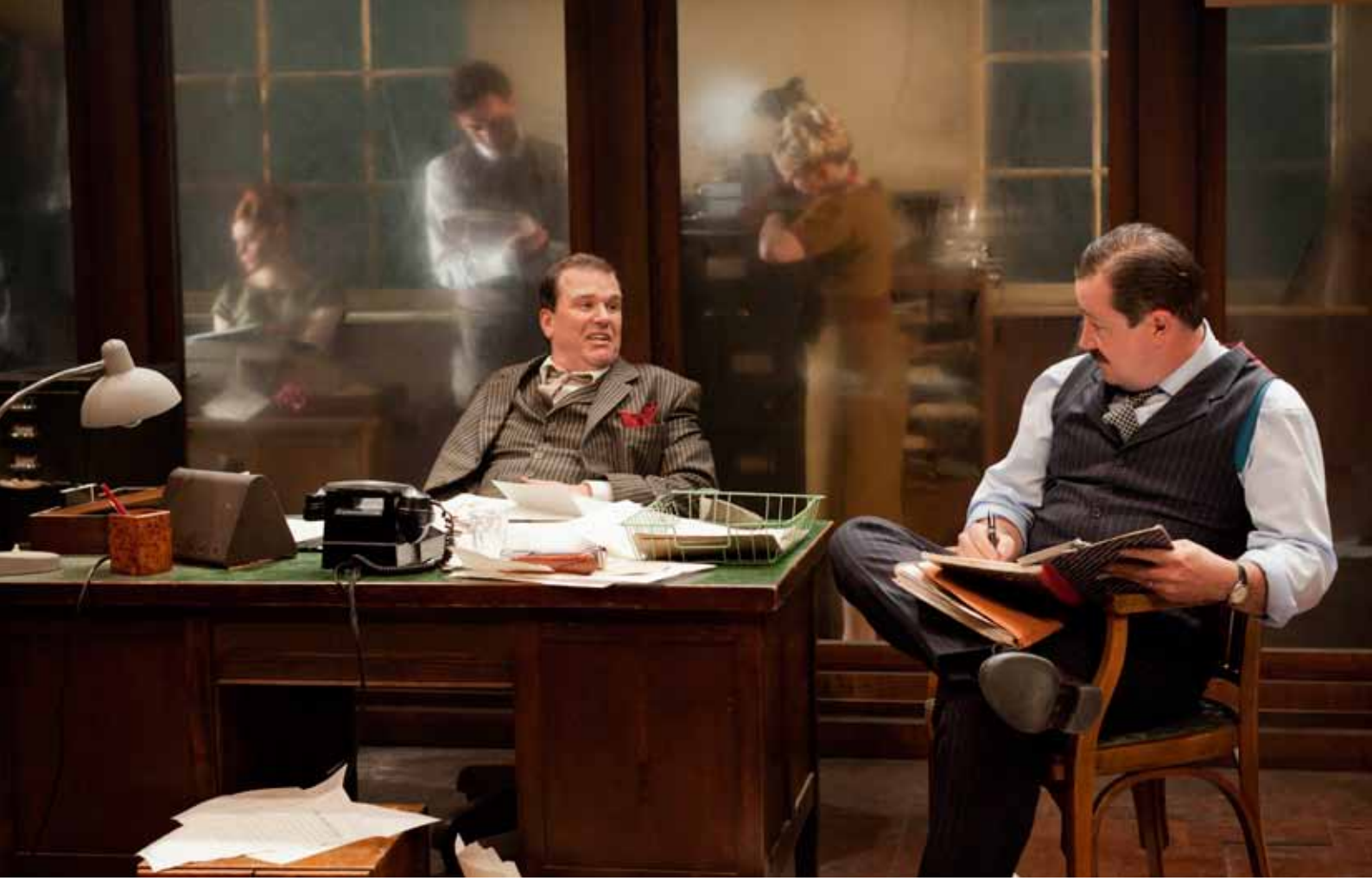
### Week One

*"John James Osborne, you are accused of having meticulously and maliciously published and made known, and caused to be perpended and made known, a confusing and pleonastic object, hereinafter called INADMISSIBLE EVIDENCE. Intending to bewilder and exhaust the minds of eager assistant directors of the Donmar Warehouse, to fill their days with complex reading and empty their nights of sleep. How do you plead? Guilty or Not Guilty?"*

John Osborne has not made my life an easy one over the past month. In the weeks between the press night of a show and the beginning of rehearsals for the next, I take it upon myself to read and re-read the script in question highlighting (in a clever pre-arranged colour code) any obscure words, phrases, quotes or ideas the author has made use of. I then roll back my sleeves and spend diligent days compiling a (rather grandly titled) Encyclopaedia which contains definitions, explanations, images and whole Wikipedia pages to clarify all these alien terms. For the last four shows this document has always been between 20 and 30 pages, however for INADMISSIBLE EVIDENCE, it took me 65 pages to adequately explain all of Osborne's legal phrases and literary insertions.

You can therefore imagine my trepidation at the meet-and-greet, and I downed coffee after coffee under the assumption that the first read-through would surely be an unbelievably soporific affair as a group of actors, so recently excited by Jamie Lloyd's welcome and Soutra Gilmour's model box, suddenly found themselves wading through page after page of monologue, soliloquy and obscure legal phraseology.

Thankfully we had one thing very much on our side for that first read-through and the days that followed, and that was Douglas Hodge. There's not an actor in the company that I couldn't praise to the heavens (and knowing me I will as the weeks go on) but in the first week I can't help but mention Douglas (who, as BILL MAITLAND, possesses 99.99% of the lines at least). In his hands this complicated and sprawling role, so difficult to access on the page, suddenly came alive. In the read-through we all listened in taut silence as he made this dense language not just interesting but gripping and, as the week went on and we moved through the whole show section by section, discussing then staging, it seemed more and more that my ability to define "vitiate" at the drop of a hat wasn't as necessary to the success of the production as I'd once thought. Whether or not Douglas knows the difference between common law and civil law, he is already, under Jamie's precise but liberating direction, allowing an audience complete and engrossing access to this fascinating character and play, whether or not they've completed their bar exam.



And so it is, with Jamie's careful process and this phenomenal company, that we've staged the entire show in a week (albeit briefly)! I've thrown in explanations and definitions here and there (and even blue-tacked a Wikipedia page and a photo of Wormwood Scrubs to the wall) but, more importantly, gained a fairly monumental respect for Messers Hodge and Lloyd. That, and a nickname of "Dictionary Corner" from Jamie.

## Week Two

After our efficient beginning to the rehearsal period, blocking (roughly) the entire play in the first week, we've filled our second week following what I've come to regard as the Donmar™ Rehearsal Plan, returning to the beginning of the play and revisiting the first act plotting in details and tightening the staging.

Jamie Lloyd's practice is built on perception, a keen eye for detail and a profound understanding of the play and performers. While this is all well and good considering the results produced, it offers little in the way of amusing anecdotes and certainly none of the diverse and original techniques I had hoped to use one day to fill the virgin pages of *The ABC of "…or not to be: Simon Evans' Bumper Book of Making Theatre.*

However, to the delight of the varied publishers knocking at my door, this second week has been marked by a few less familiar, but incredibly well chosen, rehearsal methods which have genuinely unlocked moments and brought us all to a more thorough understanding of Osborne's play. So, in a scene between Douglas Hodge's BILL and Karen Gillen's SHIRLEY, the actors switched roles in a reading, the better to really "hear" what the other character was trying to say. The results were extraordinary as both actors became instantly attuned to the other character's words. At another stage Douglas Hodge, who has a few extended monologues speaking to an unseen and unheard character on a telephone, asked

me to compose and type up the other character's lines (fitting them in with Osborne's outline of BILL's responses). Jamie then asked Serena Evans to read in the newly created lines with Douglas, even going as far as giving Serena a mobile phone and sending her out of the room with the instruction to phone Douglas' mobile and actually have the conversation across the telecommunication ether. While it may sound like an amusing procrastination, Douglas' subsequent delivery took on so many more colours and so much more poignancy as he responded not to silence (or his own imagined sparring partner) but to real emotion and anguish on the other end of the line.

It struck me that, to clarify my earlier statements, the skill of those directors of Jamie's ability, is to develop and hold onto a library of little tricks and devices which, though hardly ever used, can be brought into the rehearsal room if and when absolutely required to unlock a moment or add a further layer of development. It was a wonderful thing to see the actors, so accustomed (from our first week) to a methodical approach, respond to these ideas and get so much from them.

## Week Four

By the beginning of our fourth week the show has found its rhythm, shape and flow and the company, familiar with lines and staging, could really begin relaxing into it, starting to bed things down. It's always a very freeing time and everyone thrives on the energy the show seems to magically inherit over the Week 3 - Week 4 weekend.

That said, at the top of the week we were only just over halfway through our rehearsal time (with three weeks down and two to go), so we continued to hone and perfect as we moved through Act 2. Jamie's approach, at each subsequent pass through the play, is to run longer and longer sections, halting the action at some suitable moment (the entrance/exit of a character or climax of an important moment) to offer notes and suggestions. We then rerun the section and press on further halting again at some suitable moment (Douglas Hodge's brain in danger of exploding or Al Weaver needing the bathroom) for more notes. At the end of each morning/afternoon session we run everything we've been drilling and, if the company do it well they're allowed to have lunch/go home. If they don't then (I imagine) Jamie would punish them with rehearsal room imprisonment allowing only flapjack bites and Doug's litany of anecdotes for sustenance.

Thankfully, we've only ever felt the rewards of this carrot and stick technique as the show is in such exciting shape. At the beginning of the week Jamie invited the company to start training themselves to perform to a space the size of the Donmar (rather than our more modest rehearsal space) and the results were extraordinary. Doug's performance is utterly brilliant, the kind of force of nature that an audience will hurry back from the interval for, eager to listen, open-mouthed, to what eloquent bigotry will spew forth next. The rest of the company too surround and support Doug wonderfully, allowing and facilitating the poignancy and tragedy which slowly, inevitably closes in.

As week five approaches we're preparing (mentally) for both open and closed runs and I'm confident, with performances like this, that it's going to go down a storm. That said, I'm not going to be able to take my eyes off whatever audience we have, eager not to miss the reactions.

# Interview with Jamie Lloyd, Director

**BILL**: *Sometimes I think you're my only grip left, if you let me go, I'll disappear, I'll be made to disappear, nothing will work, I'll be like something in a capsule in space, weightless, unable to touch anything or do anything, like a groping baby in a removed, putrefying womb.*

## Why *Inadmissible Evidence?*

It's never really revived. The last production was in 1993. Not many people saw that production. It didn't have a very long run. It was at the Lyttleton with Trevor Eve as Bill Maitland and directed by Di Trevis. It is, I think, John Osborne's finest play. Other than *Look Back In Anger*, which is always revived, his other plays have been neglected. Just as Rattigan has been rediscovered over the last few years, I was excited by the idea of rediscovering a major playwright through a lesser-known play.

It contains some of the most amazing words ever written. It taps into an other-worldly quality so it's not just kitchen sink drama. It goes into the metaphysical and the subconscious and deals with the way your mind perceives things when you're in the midst of a breakdown.

I liked the idea that it was rooted in the every day; in the mundane routine of a solicitor's office in a bleak 1964 setting but also tapped into something off-kilter and dream-like. It is John Osborne's dream-play.

I think it's a warning for everyone to live absolutely as a member of the human race, not to live in a place of separation. Bill Maitland pushes people away from him through his incredibly vicious, incredibly misogynistic words, or forces people to abandon him. Throughout the evening we watch as systematically one-by-one these characters peel away from him until he lives in complete isolation. And really, there's only one place he can go from this place of isolation, and that is death. The message is: Live with your other human beings and Love Thy Neighbour because this is what happens if you don't. If you are horrendous to people around you, you are going to end up incredibly lonely. He is the ultimate solipsist. And I found that idea very bleak. But at the same time very hopeful because by the end you feel either he will collapse and die or there will be a kind of rebirth: that he will start again, and enter the world as a fellow human being.

**Do you see a chance for redemption for him?**

I would like to think so. Some people watch it and feel that he can only die: whether that's suicide or living in a complete state of abandonment. Or you could say that everything has gone and so only now he has the chance to begin again; a phoenix out of the ashes. I hope he realises he could begin again. He spends the whole play saying, 'I can't begin again.' But perhaps once everything has been destroyed, it can be rebuilt.

**Is the play a dream?**

It definitely starts off as a dream. The Courtroom at the very beginning is absolutely a dream. I think John Osborne has written that section at the beginning because it acts as a kind of subtext to the play. We absolutely understand in that dream who the real Bill Maitland is: an incredibly vulnerable, lost soul in desperate need of love. That's his real tragedy. He knows that he is a horror; he knows that he is terrible to people and pushes people away but what he really wants is to connect to those people. You see that in the first scene.

The way that Doug plays the role means that Bill Maitland charms the audience. He looks very vulnerable. He looks like a lost child. You understand that his coruscating wit and the awful things he says to people – the way he treats women in particular – is all really just a mask, a carapace to cover his vulnerability.

The dream allows us inside his head. Then we go into a place of reality. Then much of Act Two goes off on almost an absurdist track with the appearance of the three women who are the same woman (Mrs Garnsey, Mrs Tonks, Mrs Anderson) and Mr Maples who is actually Mr Jones. In the script Osborne expresses this not just as an actor doubling but as one character *being* another character. It can be quite funny. It is like an absurdist drama. It can make you laugh but it is also incredibly tragic because you realize how far gone he really is in terms of his psychosis. You start to feel incredibly sorry for him.

The amazing thing about the play is that because it does deal with the subconscious and this dream-like state, you are plunged right into the very fabric of being Bill Maitland yourself. Therefore despite his cruelty, you understand and sympathise with him. By the end you do care about him. That's the brilliance of

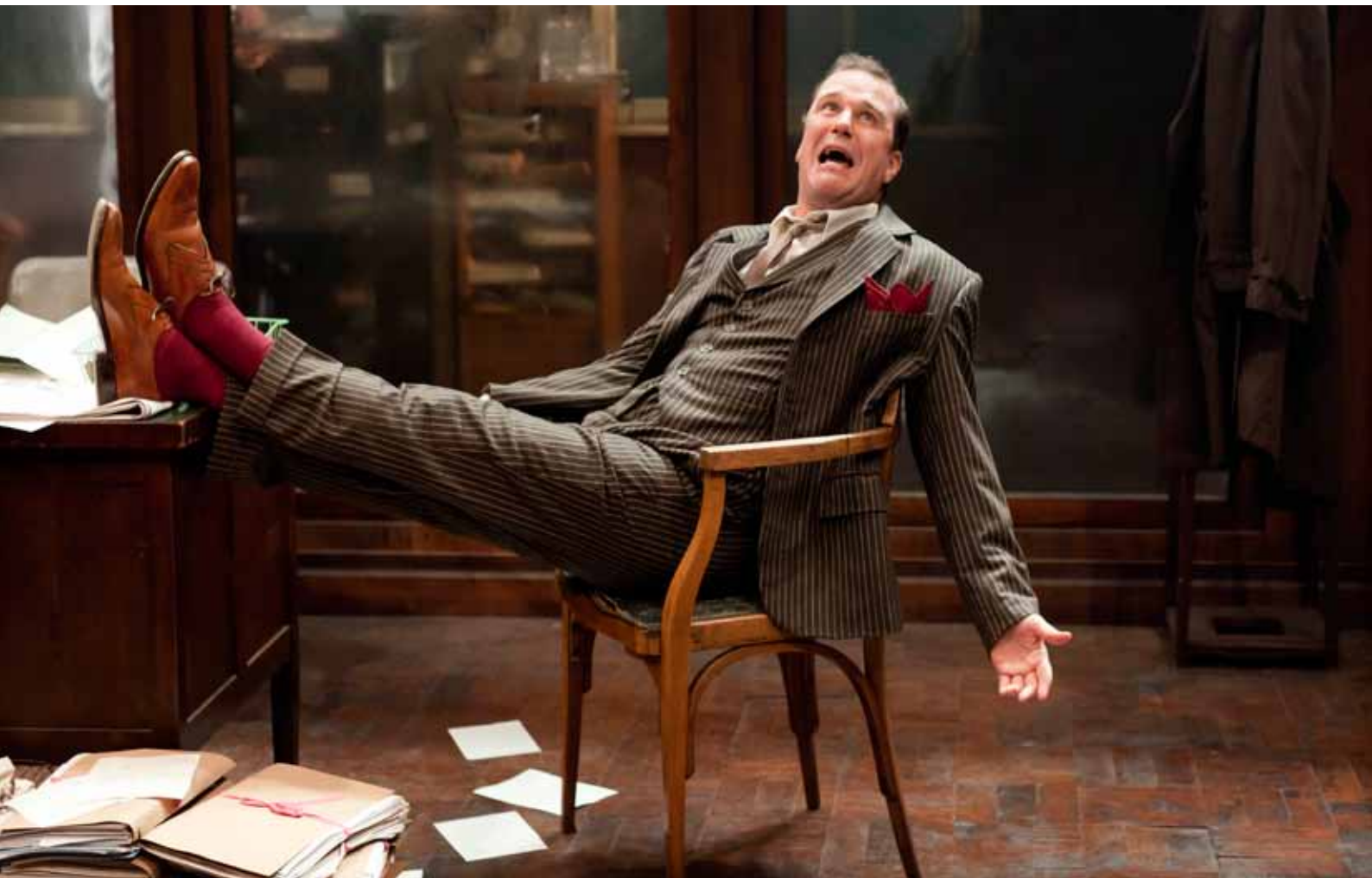
the writing. It's also the brilliance of Doug's performance. You fall in love with him. He makes us laugh and we really empathize with him.

**Where do you start with creating a design for a play like this which is on one hand set specifically in an office in 1964 and on the other hand in someone's mind?**

We went for the naturalism of it. It's a naturalistic set. You could almost argue that it's hyper-real so it's almost too real. It is a slice of 1964. It has a real atmosphere to it. There's perhaps a little bit too much dust, too much grime on the windows. The way that James Farncombe has lit it, it has this spectral quality. It's a heightened naturalism.

That is like all good dreams. You could be walking around a swimming pool and walk through a door and you're on the moon and it's incredibly real to you in your dream. Everything you dream is tangible. The experience is surreal but the actual environment in which it exists is based in your own truth. So it's not a wibbly wobbly jelly world.

We extended the sense of the Courtroom out into the space. I didn't want to have a big clunky set and big set change into the office. It makes it very clear it's a dream at the beginning when we have the judge sitting on a filing cabinet and the clerk standing up on a footstool. It's plausible. Somewhere in his head his office and the Courtroom have been combined. The acting is incredibly true. They're not doing weird dream versions of a judge and clerk; they just happen to be sitting on a filing cabinet and footstool.



### What has changed in previews?

For the first time ever really, very little has changed. Our secret weapon is Doug Hodge and he's so brilliantly specific and tests out every moment thoroughly. Also we did a lot of runs in the final week of rehearsals to get it up to pace. We've mainly been making tiny little calibrations in previews. For example, starting with a slightly lighter touch at the beginning to allow the audience to laugh a little bit more; maybe not pushing it quite as hard or fast. When you've got a very long and wordy part, you tend to want to push it through at a fast speed otherwise the fear is that people will get bored. Whereas, I think what Doug has learnt is that if you take the time that it takes, it actually helps us be able to connect to each moment. Previews have been about fine-tuning the performances with tiny specific notes. Those notes can be about one word, one sentence, one thought. More than anything I've ever directed, it's about these hundreds and thousands of little moments, these tiny little stitches in this massive canvas. Each thought is so particular and the syntax of each line is so particular so Doug has to get his mouth around it and his brain working as quick as we all do, at the human speed of thought. That's what makes the performance so thrilling.

### Where is the humour in the play?

The audience find Bill Maitland's behaviour terrifying, rude, absolutely not PC but strangely very witty. He does it with such élan, and with such a smile on his face and such naughty, schoolboy cheekiness that we can't help but laugh at him slapping a girl's bottom and telling her to go and put some lipstick on. That's partly Doug's performance. John Osborne was a big fan of an old music hall comedian called Max Miller. You can see that in his play, *The Entertainer*, which is about a music hall comedian. That type of humour and rhythm is absolutely in this play as well. Maitland is sometimes like a stand-up comedian in his long comedic arias. Doug being such a skilled comedian is able to tap into that. With a twinkle in the eye, he can make something so brutal be so fun.

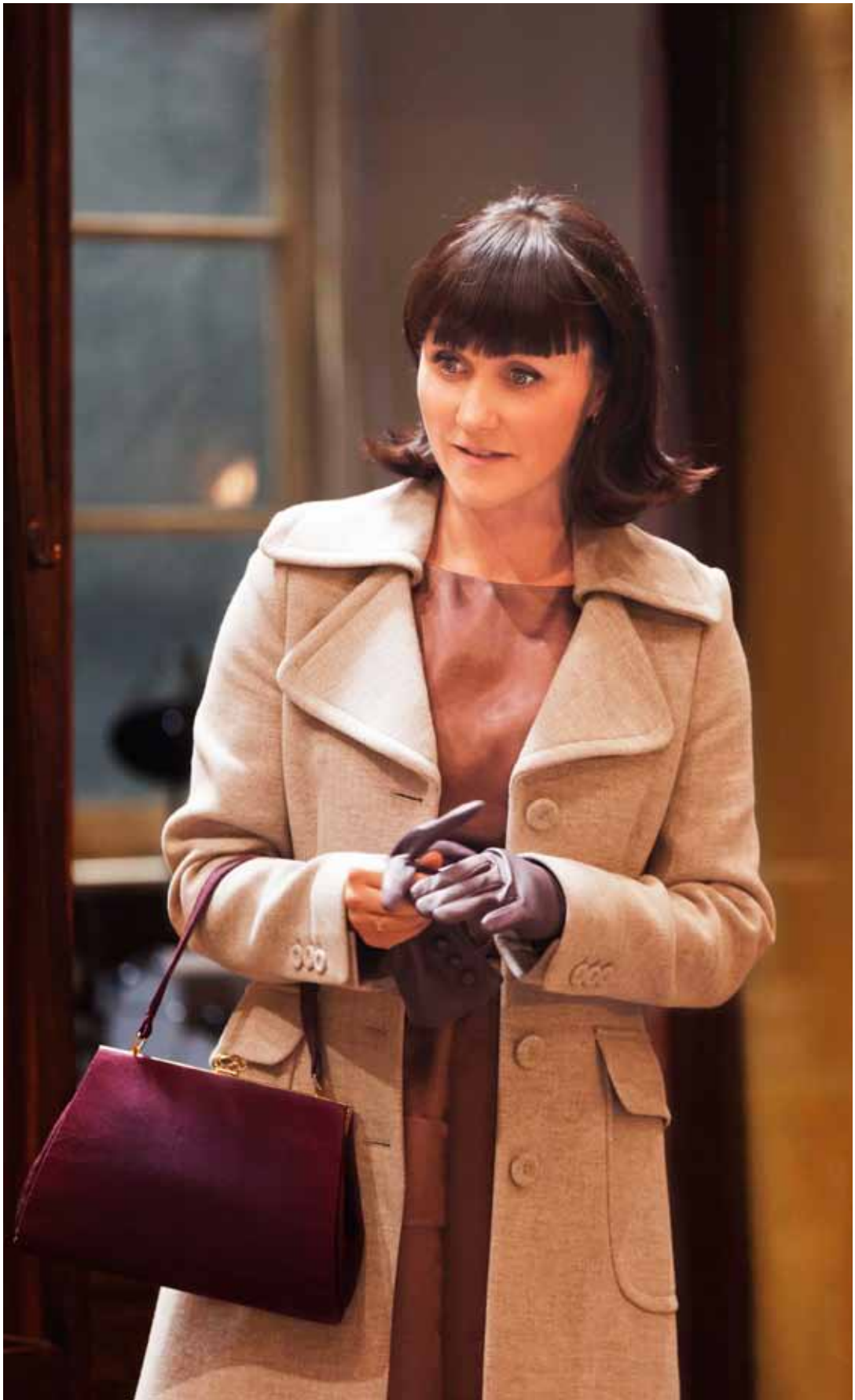
I think the play is a warning. Maitland's behaviour destroys him and the play absolutely isn't condoning that kind of behaviour – especially towards women – it isn't advocating it as a lifestyle choice!

Some of the phrases are great too. For example, when he says to his wife, '*Must you always say 'mistress'? It's a very melodramatic word for a very commonplace archetype… you make it sound like a pterodactyl who gives you lung cancer*'. They are incredibly brilliant verbal constructions. People are impressed by his words.

### What does the play have to say about how we live our lives now?

I worry that we are increasingly living in this place of separation. Some people might argue that being on Facebook or Twitter is communicating with other people but it's not face-to-face. We are entering a place where we are so separate. We're not actually engaging with each other. I think if we all lived in a place of non-separation we'd be a lot happier. If we knew that we were one race. It always amazes me when we're on the Tube we don't even look at each other. We bury our heads in our books, we have our iPods on, our newspapers cover our faces. You can literally be standing on a Tube with your face in someone's armpit – you never get as close to people physically in the rest of your life as the way that you do on the tube – and yet somehow, all of these people are in completely different headspaces. There's no connection at all. That worries me because that is only

one step away from great conflict. That's what I think the play is saying and why I think it's a timely revival. It's saying, come on everybody, reach out to each other, and get through this life as a big global team.



# Interview with Ben Ringham, Co-composer and Sound Designer

### How do you begin to write music for a play?

The process varies with different directors. We will tend to read the script, then meet the director and talk about their vision. Then we will sketch out a number of ideas of what the world sounds like. We will take inspiration from as many different sources as possible, objects spoken about in the text, instrumentation of the period and sounds of the time. For example, for *Inadmissible Evidence* we have taken the sounds of typewriters and used them to create rhythms working off each other.

When we worked on *Phaedra* at the Donmar, the set contained many elements; fire, water, sand. So we took that as a starting point and used those elements as instruments and began to explore what sounds those elements made; crackling fire, water and so on.

The first show we worked on with Jamie Lloyd was *The Caretaker* (at Sheffield Crucible) and there was a lot of paper on the set and so we used paper to make different sounds.

Our starting point is to try and find what sounds are integral to the show, rather than beginning with melodies.

### What is the sound world like for *Inadmissible Evidence*?

The play is set very much in an office in the sixties. There aren't many external sounds at all. The typewriters gives a sense of the period but the music we've created for the piece isn't sixties London. It is more abstract than that, while the other elements of the production, the actors' performances, feel very real.

To underpin the dream world we are going to amplify the space using reverb and microphones to bring the space more to life. This should bring the space to life more and offer a sharp contrast between the dream world and the office world in a simple way.

It is really important as a sound designer/composer to get into the rehearsal room. You can judge a lot from the performances. You can see you'd be over-baking the cake if you went too far. Doug Hodge is so brilliant; you just want to watch him. It is vital you don't take away from the actors' performances. Sometimes your job can be to help something along, if the writing isn't quite there, but often it is about curtailing that wish to have as much of yourself onstage as possible. And it can be hard because your name's on it. So your ego can get in the way. But you always have to remember it's not about any individual. It's a collaborative process.

### This is your tenth production working with Jamie Lloyd. What is it about that collaboration which works so well?

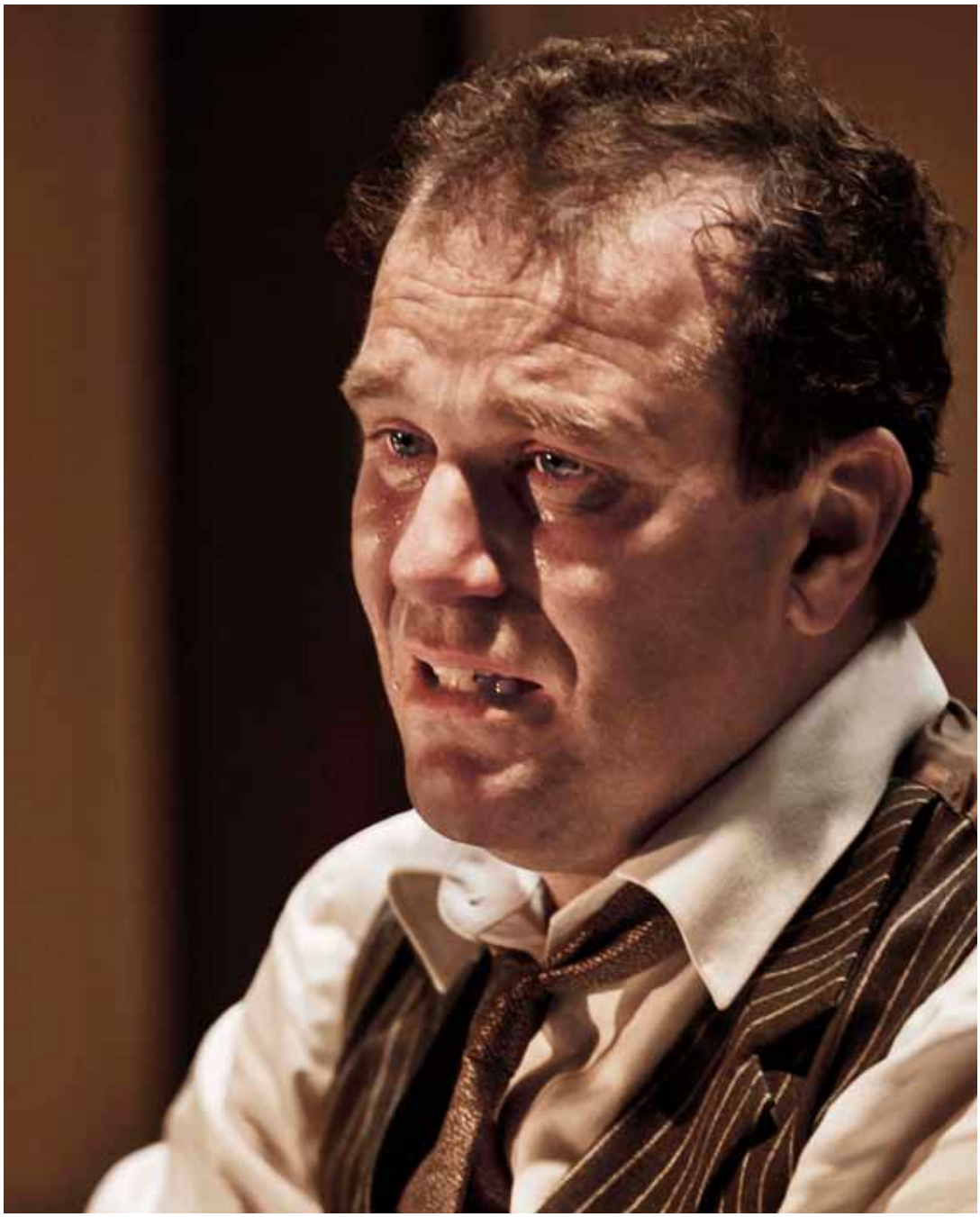
Working with Jamie is brilliant because he is very clear about what he wants. He has a clear and concise vision but he will hear your ideas and be inspired by your ideas. We will bring him lots of ideas for the show and he will listen to them all and tell us where he thinks they can be used. So our approach to creating the score is genuinely collaborative.

## Interview with Douglas Hodge, playing Bill Maitland

**BILL:** *I've not been feeling so good lately. I think maybe I need a bit of a rest.*[24]

### How is it going?

I'm too close into it to know. I'll be able to tell you in a week's time. I feel a bit beaten up. It's really intense. We had a totally different audience reaction on Saturday night to what we had on Friday night and I can't quite tell if that's me or if they were different because I'm too close to judge at the moment.



24 *Inadmissible Evidence*; John Osborne; Act Two; p.86

### What drew you to the play?

If I'm honest, when I first read it, I was very worried that it was just too much. Too wordy, and that it wasn't alive enough. I could see that it was a phenomenal part but I was worried about it being boring. And then I let my partner read it and she thought it was astonishing. Then my daughter read it, and she just thought it was audacious. She found the period incredibly shocking; that you could say things then that you simply can't any more.

And then I slowly fell in love with him and found a way to understand him. He is terrified of being abandoned. He tests people to the point where they will leave him. And then says, 'There you are, I told you so.' I think that's good drama.

I think he's right on the edge of a breakdown, right from the first word. I find that daunting every night. I don't look forward to messing about with my psyche.

### How did you approach the character?

I've been creeping up on it for a long time. I knew I was going to do it 6 or 7 months ago. Every now and then I would read it through. Each time a different part would stand out to me as something I would recognize or would be familiar to me from people I knew. Really, it was all to do with words. The syntax is so messed up. It's almost as if he was drunk when he wrote a lot of it, or recorded himself speaking. I've never known anything so difficult to learn. The tenses change within a sentence. And sometimes it seems not to make sense. But it makes sense if you go at it as a great flood.

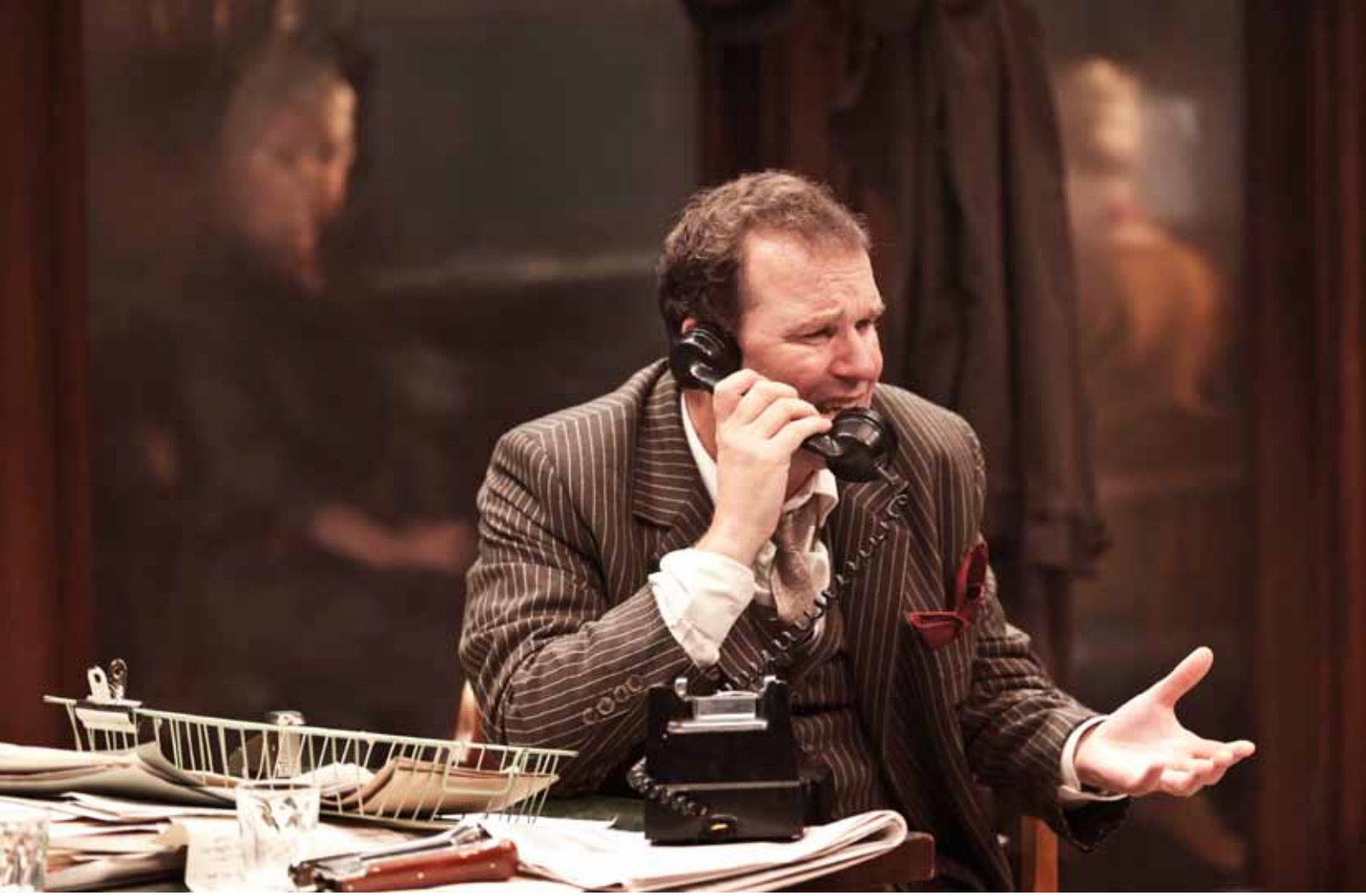
I began to find the rhythm of the way he spoke. Then I started to look out for people in life who are a bit like that. A couple of weeks ago I saw someone who made a big speech and was rude to everyone and I thought that's who I'm playing essentially.

### How do you interpret the blend of dream and reality in the play?

There are points when you're doing the play when it feels like the whole thing is a memory. There are times when he completely mistrusts his own ability to know what's real and what's not. I think when you go slightly bonkers you do lose sight of who you are. Sanity is knowing yourself, I think. Each step you take away from knowing yourself is a step away from sanity; you can not know yourself very well but you're not insane, you're fragile. Then there are people who have literally lost track of who they are, or what is around them or who is talking to them. They have utterly severed that tie to reality. I think he's right on the brink of that. He can wake up and go into the office and not be sure if he is still dreaming or if that's really just happened. Those realities are beginning to blur for him.

Someone the other day came to see the play and I said, 'what did you think of the dream sequence at the beginning?' and he said, 'what dream sequence? I thought that was the future.' I thought, 'well I suppose it is.' It may be he imagines that he will put himself on trial and he will be saying, 'I'm useless, I'm stupid, I'm not clever and I'm slow. I've depended on other people and I can't trust people. '

I didn't realize how clever it was until we started rehearsing it – Mrs Garnsey coming back as Mrs Tonks and Mrs Anderson. Jamie has made her exactly the same. So she really is a manifestation of Bill's imagination. I think what Bill starts to do is he starts to mimic what he thinks normality is like. So he tries to look as if he is absolutely there and talking to someone while really in his head he is



distrusting that any of it is real. To him she is the same as Mrs Garnsey and yet she is talking to him as if she were a different woman. He has to fight to stay sane. Rather than he slowly unravels, he has to really try to stay together. It's a better thing to act.

**How have the audience reacted to the values expressed in the play, such as the chauvinism?**

I think the women are genuinely shocked at how much things have changed. You hear women saying things haven't changed that much. But they have. And it's quite shocking. When I say, 'Nice arse. Don't get much on her face.' There is always this disapproving gasp.

One of the other major reasons for doing the role was that I thought it was the perfect milieu for the audience that comes to the Donmar. I think a lot of lawyers come here and people from that class and a lot of slightly older generation who do remember that period. On the first preview we definitely had a lot of the law society in the audience who recognized reading endless law books and falling asleep, talking dismissively about clients. That male, clubby world exists still. It's just that people have to pretend that it doesn't exist.

That whole world of being in an office is pretty intense. Most people go to an office and stay there for years, working with the same 4 or 5 people. The average business in England employs 5 people. The change within that will be pretty minimal. You could work in one office with the same girl and the same boy all through your life. Most people in England do go to an office – so that hasn't changed much.

There's a huge fear in the play of being left behind. This is hard for us to appreciate now. I think Bill really feels part of the fifties. And the sixties are coming. There's Harold Wilson and there's mini-skirts and not wearing make-up and there's girls

on the pill. And there's equality and marches and CND and it was first time any of these things had ever happened. It was revolutionary. I think he feels that his world of the fifties (the kind of *Mad Men* world) is being absolutely toppled. This is part of his paranoia and terror. There is no place for him in the future. Therefore any contribution he's made is useless. At this point of crisis in his life, he can't see any value in himself whatsoever.

He makes this big speech about computers coming in and making lawyers redundant. He has a terror of these computers. We don't any more have this kind of advancements. We have retrospective developments now. If you look at the eighties, nineties, noughties – there hasn't been a brand new Teddy Boy culture or a brand new cultural identity, just a mix of old cultures. There isn't the same revolutionary aspect to that.

**John Osborne is known for being an 'angry young man' looking forward but in *Inadmissible Evidence* he finds himself looking back.**

He had been an angry young man. But he is writing later in his career and writing as a parent. There was this whole flood of culture completely alien to him. That speech to his daughter is a massive aria; 'you don't need to wear make-up any more and yet you are more beautiful than any of the women I've ever known.' That new generation of being dismissive or slightly contemptuous of the older generation was so ostracizing to him.

Osborne's story with his daughter is extraordinary. They separated and he never ever spoke to her again. Harold Pinter did that too. He had a son called Daniel. He wanted to be a writer and was terribly fragile. At a certain point in Harold's life he decided never to speak with Daniel again. It's unthinkable to most people to make that kind of cut from your child but Osborne did it first.

Some of the letters he writes to his daughter are unbelievable; Don't ever, ever come near me. Don't beg for money from me. Don't knock on my door.

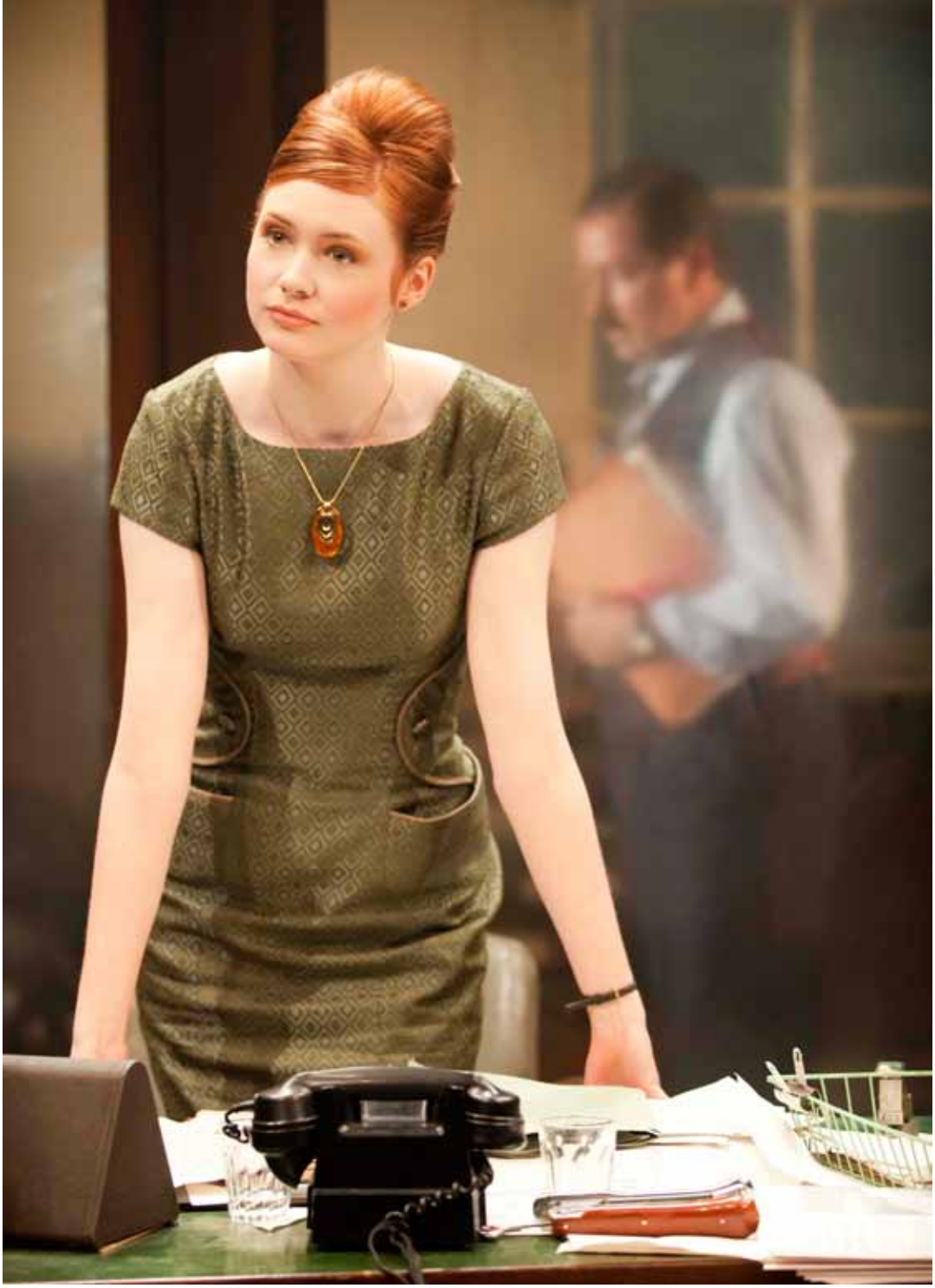
**Why did he break with his daughter?**

He was a misanthrope. He was drinking almost half a bottle of brandy before he'd had breakfast. He'd wake at 6am and drink. When his fourth wife Jill Bennett committed suicide, the things he wrote about her were so vitriolic. It's just a terrible, terrible place to be. Everything revolved around him. For me, it's a fairly daunting, despicable world to inhabit all of the time.

**Do you see any redemption in the play?**

There isn't much redemption in it. At the end of it he says I think it's better for all of you if I am left well alone. I think at the end he goes off and hangs himself… if he's got the guts.

At a certain point kids have to kill off their parents and go out on their own and make their own way through life. The play is partly about that. It happened as a period in the sixties, and as a movement and as a sort of familial thing.



## Interview with Karen Gillan who plays Shirley.

**BILL:** *Oh, for God's sake, throw off that half-baked, cheap, show-girl act and listen to me.*

**What excited you about the play when you first read it?**

I instantly loved the writing. That's what struck me first; John Osborne's ranting, hateful writing! I don't know why. I instantly loved Bill Maitland. Which is weird because he's not the most likable character in the world. But having seen the way Doug performs the character, I think you'll end up really liking this guy and feeling incredibly sorry for him. So the writing struck me first because it's all jagged and strange and you have to investigate it to understand it. It's not there on a plate for you.

I loved the character of Shirley. She has an amazing scene. It's a massive showdown scene in the play where she has this triumphant exit. I thought it was a really interesting scene. There's so much going on that's beneath the surface.

### Can you describe Shirley?

She's a really interesting character to me because I find her really vulnerable. She's a young girl trying to find her way in the world. She finds herself in a situation which is quite awful. She's pregnant and she's in love with Bill Maitland but Bill has many women on the go. It's a horrible position to be in because she's gone and fallen in love with him. On top of that she's described in the play as this 'half-baked cheap showgirl'. So what I like about her is that you can see how skilled she is in covering up her emotions. She puts on this over-the-top showgirl act like a defense-mechanism but that's not really what she's like. We catch glimpses of what she's like.

### What is your take on the attitude to women in the play?

I find it really strange that women accepted that. It's not like that these days at all. So it's something that all of the girls in this play have had to wrap our heads around. I do find it really weird but also really interesting that that is how it was.

### What was the rehearsal process like?

It's been amazing working with Jamie. He's so clever and so detailed and so good at provoking things in you. He encourages you to play around with it and try new things out all of the time. So it feels quite free. Sometimes we played the scene purely on the level of what the subtext was. And then towards the end of the rehearsals, we put this layer of what Jamie describes as 'topspin' on it. So the subtext is underneath, and on top is the character that she's created. And that's how she presents herself to the world and how she deals with it. But underneath all of that is still the subtext that we spent so long working on. It has been incredible, from start to finish.

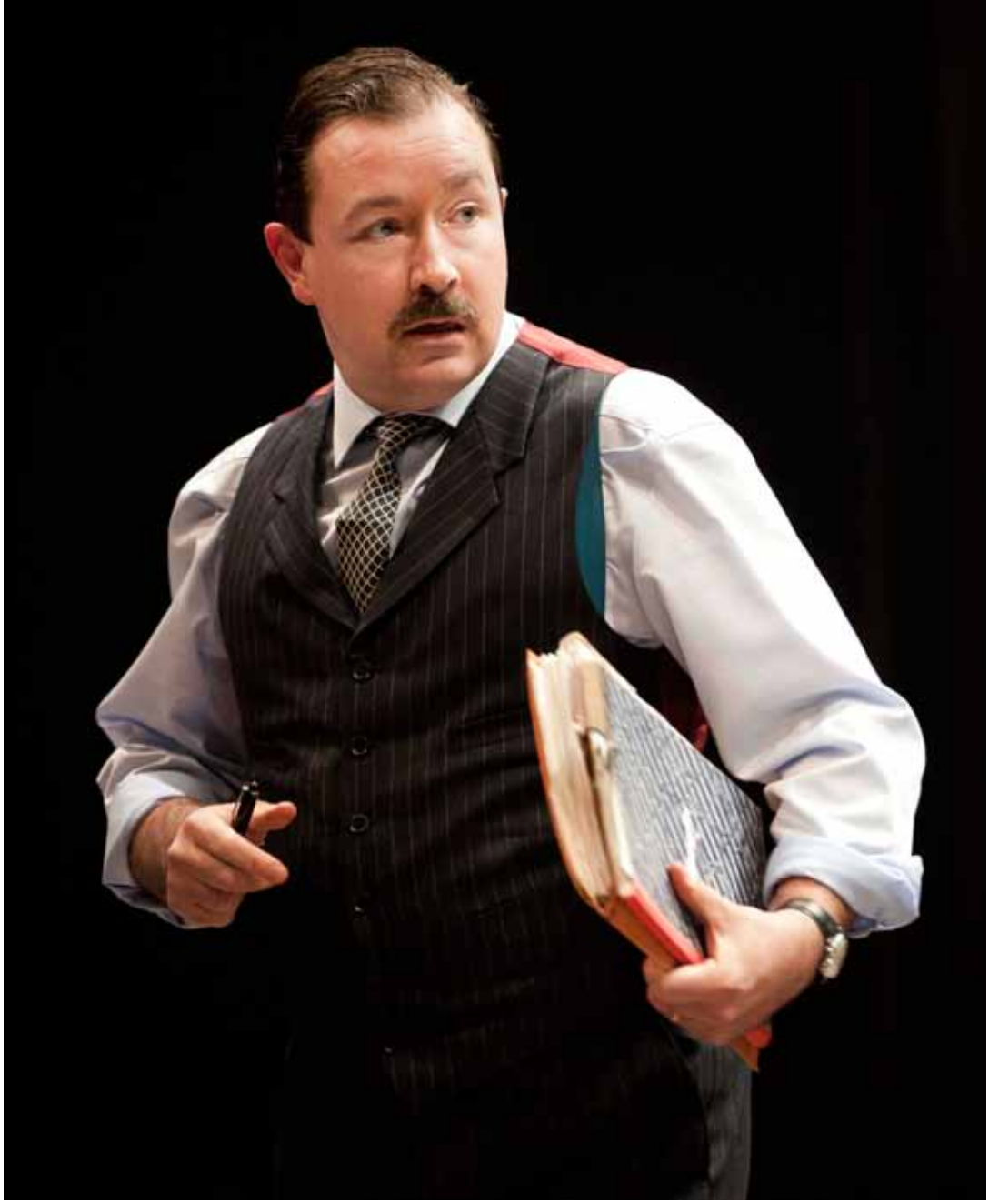
## Interview with Daniel Ryan, playing Hudson

**HUDSON:** *[…] So long as you're reasonably interested in what you do. You mustn't ask for too much.*

### How do you relate to the play?

I think it's one of the most complex plays I've ever been involved with in terms of the writing. The way of everybody speaks is not necessarily real. It's not how we all talk day to day. And certainly, the construction of some of the sentences is very complicated. It comes from the fact that Osborne sat down and recorded himself – so he's copied things down verbatim. It hasn't been as refined as a lot of playwright's work. There's not been a lot of editing.

When I auditioned for drama school, I auditioned with a speech from *Look Back In Anger*. I don't think actors do any more because it's become a bit of a cliché. I was an Osborne fan as a teenager. I studied him when I was doing my O Levels. And therefore he was an obvious choice for me to use to get into drama school. The opportunity to get to perform one of his very rarely performed plays was incredibly exciting.



**Can you describe your character, Hudson?**

The play is written and set in 1964 and so many things are changing in the world; the music everyone's listening to and the freedom all the kids have. The Bill Maitland character is angry that he's not part of it. He would have loved the opportunity to have listened to that music, had that freedom, that sexual freedom. He's obsessed with the idea that the kids don't know they have it so good. Whereas Hudson says in the play, 'You mustn't expect too much.' He's happily married, he's happy in his job; he's happy with his lot. Yet he goes to work with this man who is raging against everything that's going on around him. Hudson comes from an older school, a more forties/fifties post-war mentality. He's there as a foil for this man who's completely unhappy with what he's got.

It's a very interesting part to play because you don't get to show off. There's no bells and whistles, no emotional turmoil. He's a grounded person. But the audience need him so they can see how far Bill Maitland has gone in his hatred for everything. Without him we wouldn't see what normality was.

**How did you bring the office environment to life?**

There are a lot of exits and entrances into the inner office where the action of the play is set. What is stunning about the design for the show is that we see the outer office. We get to see what people are doing when they're not onstage.

So you totally believe that this office is active. The girls are typing, they're on the phones, there's filing going on. When you go offstage, you're still onstage – there's another acting area. It just gives a whole life to what's going on. We play the conceit that you can't really see through the glass but you can hear some things through it. So for example, in the scene where Karen Gillan's character, Shirley, comes in to tell Bill Maitland exactly why she's leaving, the audience observe that the other three people who are working in that office can hear almost as much as they can, so they are listening to the fact that she's saying she's pregnant and that it's obviously his baby. So then as well as it all falling apart, the audience know the other characters all know how much it's falling apart. It gives an extra impetus to them all leaving him; who would work with this guy? It sounds wrong to say it's in 3D but it does give it an extra dimension. If we were making the film of it, you could cut away to show the other characters listening at the door but you get to see it this way with this design which I think is an absolute coup.

**What have you learned about the play during previews?**

This play starts with a trial and in the trial there are witnesses, and there are many references to bearing witness in the play. The testimony of Bill Maitland at the start of play where he describes how he's gone wrong in his life made a lot more sense in front of an audience, where there were 300 people listening to what he was saying, and being invited to witness the downfall of this man. It made sense to me; that what we were doing needs to have witnesses.

I love these days of being in the theatre when you're up and running because you know what's working and you know why an audience isn't quite reacting to a certain line as much as they should and it can simply be down to where you are on the set in relation to the other actor or in relation to the audience. I love the fine-tuning. I love rehearsing on the stage and having the knowledge of what it is like to do it when there are people sat there.

## Interview with Al Weaver, playing Jones

**BILL:** *He's a tent peg. Made in England. To be knocked into the ground.*

**Describe your two characters.**

Jones works in the office. He's the Article Clerk and has been there for five years but he still does all of the dogsbody work and will until he passes his exams. He gets bullied by Maitland. He puts up with it. But then he fights back. At the end when Bill is losing everybody, he loses Jones too. And Jones shops him to the Law Society, we assume. It's not stated in the text but it's implied.

Maples is one of the clients. As Bill starts losing his mind, the play gets quite bonkers; Maples tells Bill the story of how he's been arrested for following a Cop into the toilets to do naughty things. Each character that comes in affects Bill. Everyone who comes in adds something else so he loses it a bit more and a bit more.

I play the role very still and very contained. He's not allowed to be overtly homosexual because of the period and because he has a family.

**How do you create a character?**

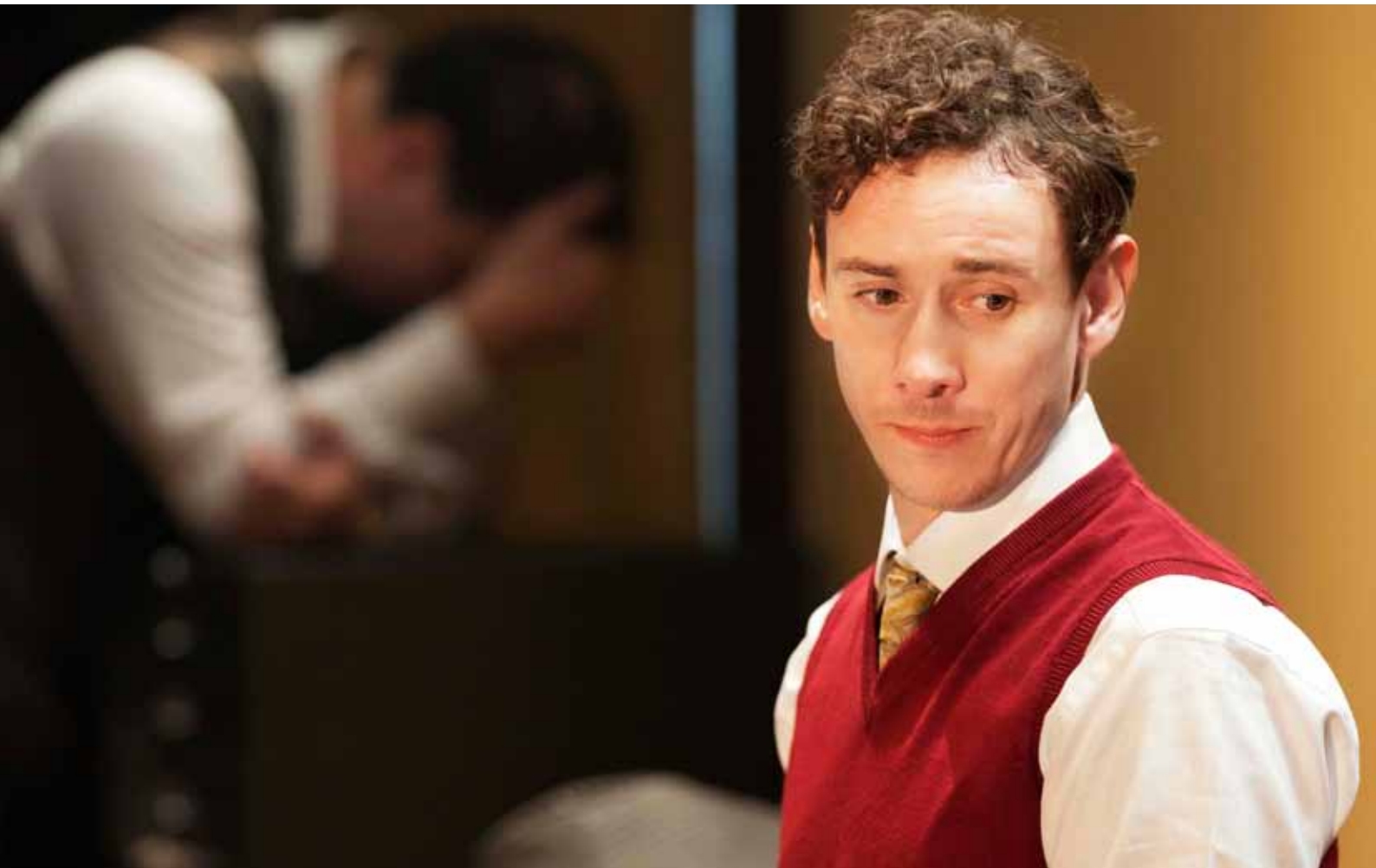
Each one's different. You have to invent and there are certain choices that you make but when the play is as well written as this it all comes from the text. If you're playing Bill, straight away you've got to start understanding the thoughts and the lines because it's so huge. The way I worked on this was to spread out the work over the five weeks so that I kept myself busy throughout rather than just do it all in the first week. It was a slow, easy, organic process.

**How much did the 'dream' element of the play affect your process?**

The first act is a dream. Then there is reality. Then the second act of the play is ambiguous. I think, as the audience, you're not quite sure what's going on. For Maples, my character, I have to play that I am there and that I'm not seeing a man going bonkers in front of me. But there are effectively two realities in one space. Most of the second half of the play is a dream. Joy is always there. Liz is there at the end, Maitland's mistress. But the other characters who appear aren't real. They are an extension of his insanity. Which makes it more interesting because I didn't get that when I first read it.

**What have the audience taught you about the play in previews?**

You learn when it's funny. The laughs change - you mustn't predict the laughs. You have to keep it fresh, and you have to ride the laughs when they do come. The first night I didn't expect Maples to be as funny as they found him. There was lots of laughter. I was so nervous. I was terrified. And you're learning how to work the space, how to relate to the audience, what you need vocally to play it.

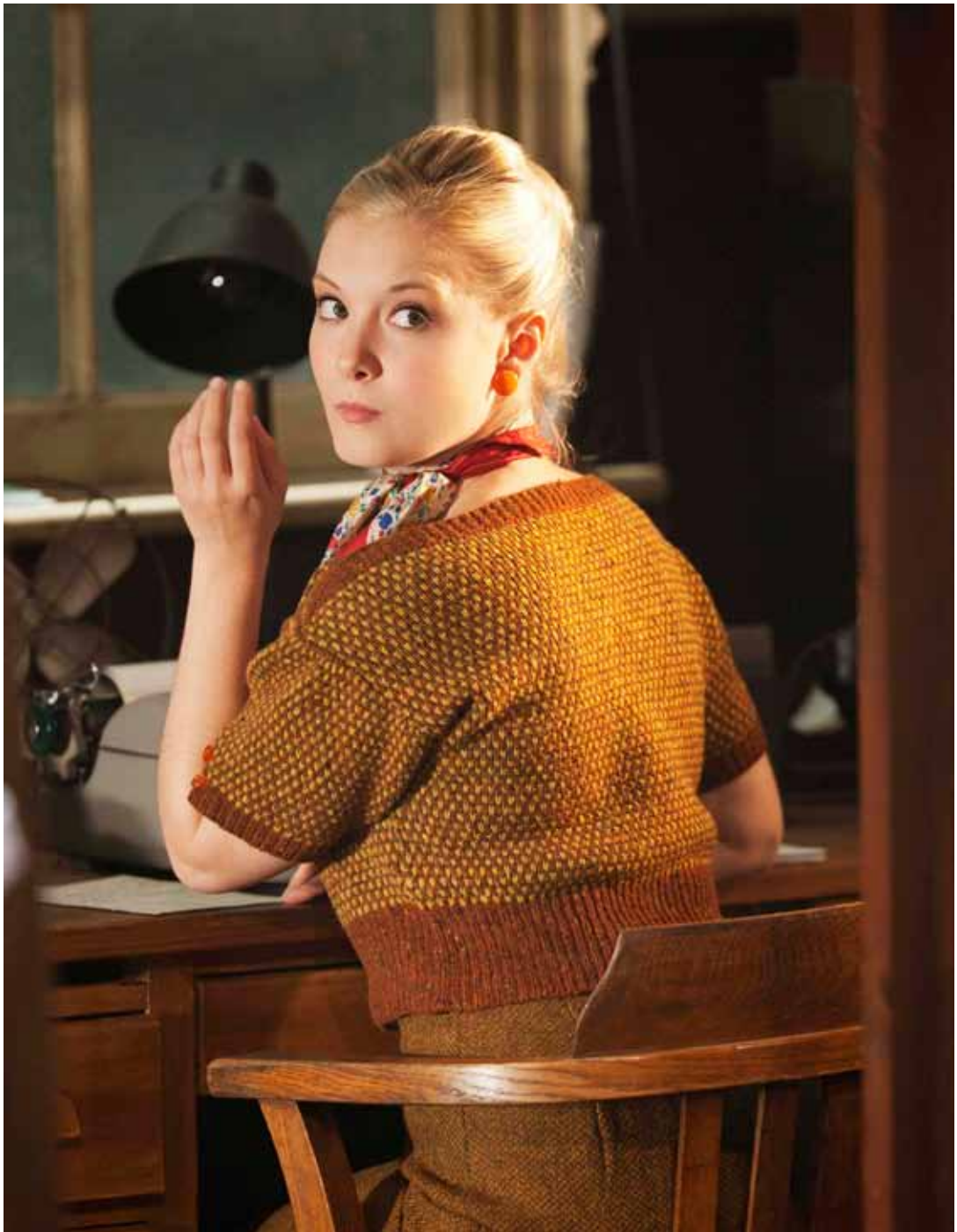


## Interview with Amy Morgan, playing Joy.

**BILL:** *When are we going to have an orgy together?*
**JOY:** *You can't have any orgy with two.*
**BILL:** *No, but you can make a start.*

### Can you describe your character?

I play Joy. I pop in and out all of the time because I'm Bill Maitland's secretary. My character is having a sexual revelation. She's discovering herself. She's really enjoying meeting blokes and having sex with them. She doesn't want relationships with them. She just wants to have sex with them. She feels very guilty about this. I suppose women still do but at that time it was far more taboo.



She is the only woman in the play who understands Bill Maitland on that level. All the women come and go but she's the only one who really understands his sexual desire and need.

She's more working class than Bill or Mr. Hudson but she does like to think of herself as very respectable, although she has this dirty secret that she really enjoys having sex with men! That's really fun to play.

Joy and Bill end up having sex one night in the office and she comes back in the next morning and she just needs to make it clear to him that she doesn't want a relationship. He finds this really refreshing. I don't think he's ever come across a woman like that. She leaves him shell-shocked and then carries on with her work.

### How did you approach the character?

I read the script a couple of times. I wrote down what other characters said about Joy, what she said about herself and I wrote a list of questions to go into rehearsals with. From the start Jamie said to us, 'There's no such thing as a stupid question' which is really nice. And it encourages you to ask everything: where did she live? I like making the back-story for a character. Most scripts would offer some kind of character breakdown on the first page, but there's nothing in this at all. You have to create your character's story yourself, which I like doing.

I started rehearsals with Joy having an RP accent but then we found that was making her a bit too starchy and upright so we moved towards the London accent. I've been watching Barbara Windsor and Sylvia Syms in the *Carry On* films. I was worried about making her a caricature. But she does have a big personality. She is the tart with a heart!

Jamie would tell me to make sure I brought a new energy into the room every time with all of my entrances. He talks about inner energies and tempos. Joy has a quick tempo.

### What is it like keeping the action going upstage?

We did research to make the office as real as possible. I am Bill Maitland's telephonist. Shirley is his secretary. The secretary runs the office. She knows more than all of the solicitors put together. The telephonist only takes the calls. Joy would have quite a lot of time in between calls. So, I thought, what would Joy be doing? So I'm filing my nails and I've got magazines. When we were given our typewriters I went online and downloaded a guide on how to use that specific typewriter. I imagine Joy is going to night school to become a secretary, so she's learning to typewrite properly.

# Interview with Serena Evans, playing Mrs Garnsey, Mrs Tonks and Mrs Anderson.

**MRS GARNSEY:** *And the more people have been good and kind and thoughtful to me, the worse it's been for him. I know. And now. Now: I'm doing the same thing. The children hardly notice him. And now it's me.*

**MRS TONKS:** *That the respondent is a man of excessive sexual appetite who has habitually and constantly made sexual demands on the petitioner which he knew she regarded as inordinate or revolting.*

**MRS ANDERSON:** *He has not touched me sexually since August Bank Holiday. He slept in another room for a few weeks, but he used to cry quite often and it kept me awake. We would both cry sometimes.*

### What attracted you to the play?

I found it quite intense when I first read it. I thought, 'My God this is really heavy.' But that was really attractive to me personally because I do a lot of comedy. I loved the monologues my character had. But I loved the play as a whole. It's very difficult on a first reading. But once you get into it, it's the most beautifully written thing. When I'm Mrs. Garnsey in the first act, the writing is so real. Somehow you can tap into it. You don't need to do anything as an actor, it informs you. He writes in this amazing way. He repeats words quite a lot. And that makes it very natural.

In the second Act I play Mrs Tonks and Mrs Anderson. Those are very difficult scenes. They are very peculiar and we had to decide what we wanted to do with them. Because there's no indication really. That was a challenge.

### What was that decision?

First of all we decided that all three characters would look and sound the same. I didn't know that was going to happen. Because they all come from different parts of the country, they could all be different. But the decision that Jamie made, was that they are going to look the same and have one costume. So you meet Mrs Garnsey in the first act and she is a real person. And then in the second act when Bill Maitland is losing it, Mrs Tonks comes in and he looks at her and she knows she's Mrs Tonks but he sees Mrs Garnsey. That's the way I understand it. Then straightaway after she leaves, Mrs Anderson comes on and she looks the same as well. And he is beginning to lose his grip. So that's the way I interpreted it for myself which is; I am Mrs Anderson but I'm channeling it through Mrs Garnsey!

There's a spooky element to it. And at the same time as Tonks and Anderson, Maitland is going off on one. We're not really relating. We don't really hear each other. It's more that we're relating but we're both in a dream. We don't even really know whether Mrs Anderson and Mrs Tonks exist. If you were in the office corridor and looking in, you might just see him talking to himself. Maybe. They could be figments of his imagination. So we made decisions like the audience shouldn't see me arriving. She just comes in the door. Who knows what people will think. What's wonderful though, I think, is not to give them too many explanations.

**What work did you do to access the period?**

Our production is absolutely set in 1964. We looked at pictures and Simon Evans (The Resident Assistant Director) had done research. For me, it wasn't a huge problem because I was born in 1959 so I remember my granny wearing suits like my character wears. For some of the younger people I guess it's more difficult to access it. It just is a memory for me. Even though I was only little but I can remember that 1964 vibe; hand-knitted cardies and everything's grey and much muddier and darker and mustier and brown. That feeling seems familiar to me. So again, that seemed to just happen organically. It was interesting when we were in the technical rehearsal because of all the girls' hair evolved and started to get more and more sixties. They started off with quite relaxed hair – then it shot up and up and more and more back and now it really looks great. It's really sharp. And those things help; the little things that happen at the end as part of the process.

## Interview with Alice Sanders who is playing Jane Maitland.

**BILL:** *You'll go anywhere and more or less seem to do anything, you've already permanent sunless, bleached stains beneath your breasts and two, likewise, crescents, on your buttocks. You'll read any menu without bothering, order what you want, and, what's more, get it.*

**Can you describe your character?**

I am playing Bill's daughter, Jane Maitland, who is about to have her eighteenth birthday. She goes in to see her father in the midst of his breakdown which is obviously quite strange for her. She's more robust than her father is. She is relaxed and off-hand and has a teenage attitude and Bill doesn't get how she's not affected so much by everything in the same way he is. He finds that quite difficult. I think she has a tendency to distract herself with other things. She's doing this drama course and I think she's just trying to throw everything into that. This scene doesn't represent an ordinary day. This is *the* day when he breaks down. So, I think, although she knows he's capable of having this massive temper, she's not prepared.

**What are the particular challenges of performing in a non-speaking role?**

I would say, making it seem new every night. It's always slightly different atmosphere when I walk on and Doug doesn't do the same thing every night. It depends on the rest of the play and how he's feeling as the character at the time. Also, I think one of the big challenges is being subtle; not having massive hammy reactions but still communicating to the audiences how she's perceiving this. They have to know that although she's used to her father's temper this is extreme and extraordinary. It is a challenge to find the balance between what she's feeling inside and what she's showing outside. And communicating both of those things to the audience without speaking or delivering any lines.

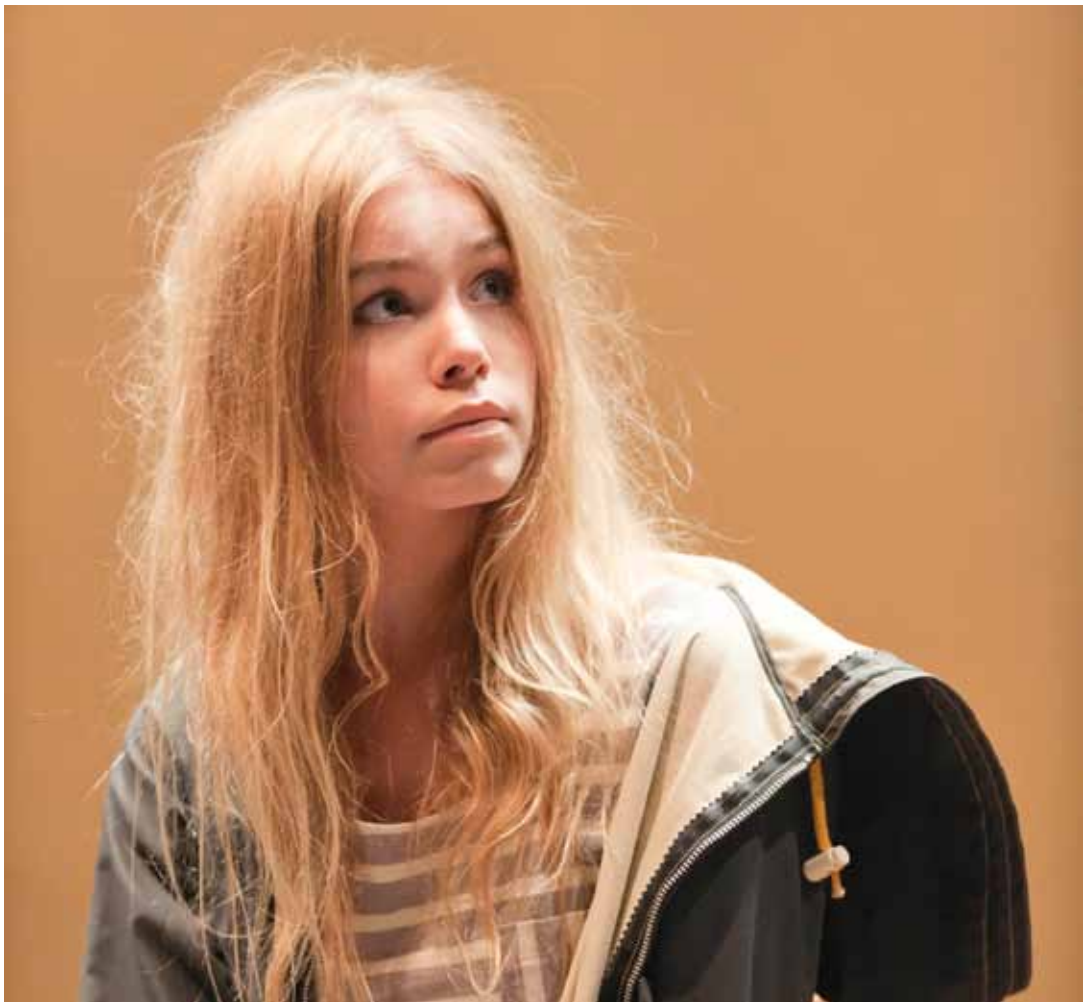
**What research did you do to prepare for the role?**

I did quite a lot of research about the sixties and about John Osborne's life. I wanted to get a feel of the sixties and what being a teenager in the sixties was like. What shakes Bill Maitland so much is how there's this new generation of teenagers who are allowed to go out and listen to music and go to jazz clubs and have sex and do what they want for the first time *and* she can take or leave any of it. She's flip.

I did quite a lot of research about John Osborne and his relationship with women and particularly his daughter. In Bill Maitland's relationship with Jane, Osborne is sort of predicting his own future in a very strange way. He had a daughter called Nolan. When Nolan was seventeen Osborne told her he wanted nothing to do with her. He withdrew her from school and threw her out of his house. They never spoke to each other again. This was years after *Inadmissible Evidence* was written. Osborne objected to how aloof Nolan was. He would get upset when he introduced her to his fancy theatre friends and she wasn't as impressed by them as he thought she should be.

He was very affectionate with her when she was a baby. Then he and her mother (Penelope Gilliatt) split up. Nolan went to live with her mum in New York. Her mum was an alcoholic so Nolan came back to live with him and his current wife. Then eventually he chucked her out the house.

I think the difference is that Bill Maitland does care about his daughter. He just believes that everyone is better off without him. I don't think Bill is as heartless as John Osborne was.



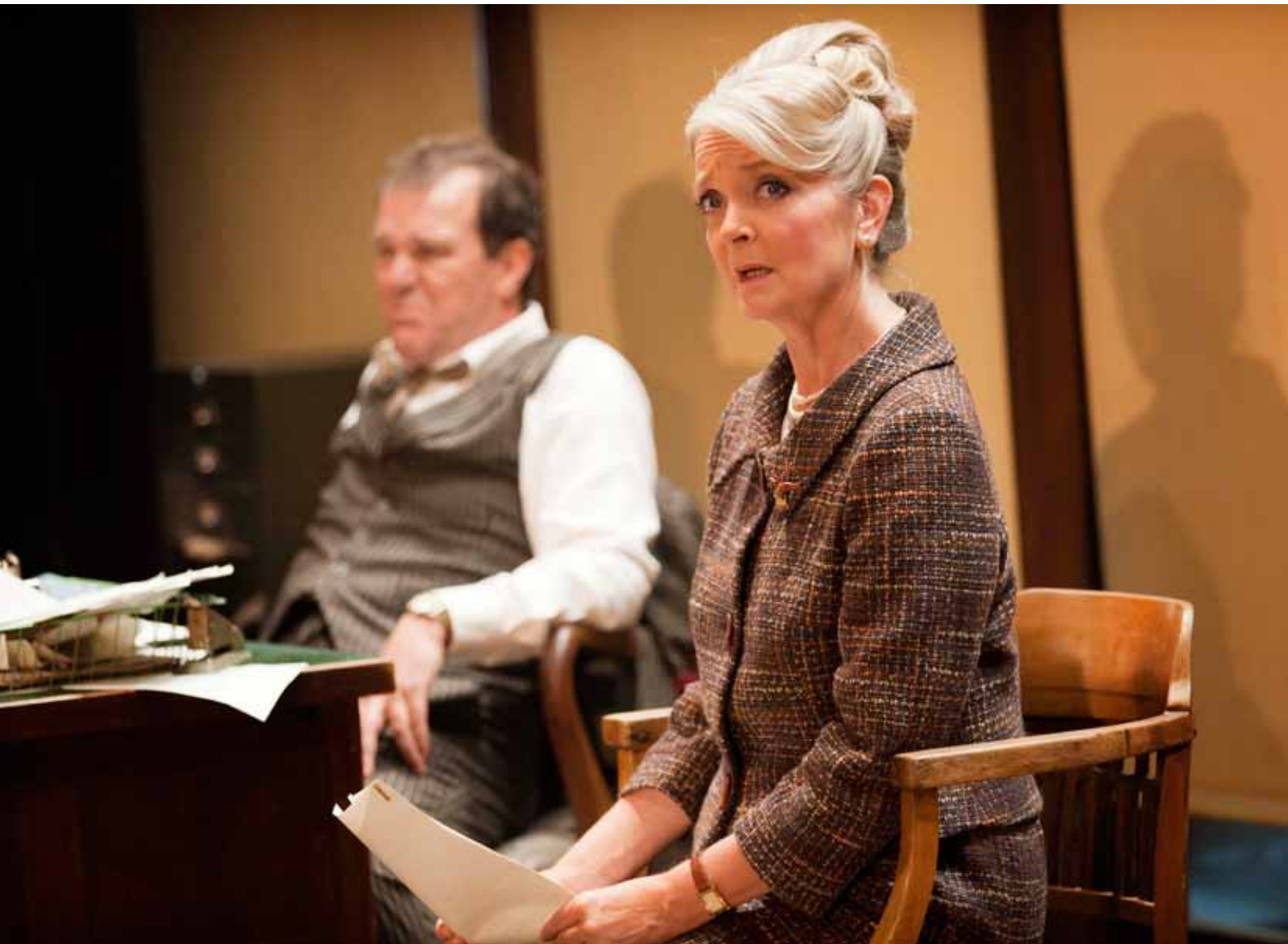
## Interview with Esther Hall who plays Liz.

**BILL:** *She talks that way because her father is a don and is what is called a conceptual thinker, which, it's all too clear, I am not. No, darling, it's not something in a rubber goods shop, it's what her father is.*

### Do you like Bill Maitland?

I just saw this man in a lot of pain. This character who was so self-depreciating, battering himself. I think Liz encapsulates what the audience are thinking, which is 'Why do you do this to yourself?' She gives him an out. She says 'Come home or let's go away, let's do something' She's endlessly going 'Come on, what do you want to do? What shall we do?' And he doesn't take it. He loves himself so little that he can't take it. She says, '*You pretend to be ill and ignorant just so you can escape reproach. You beggar and belittle yourself just to get out of the game*'. In other words, you make yourself smaller than you are for fear of taking a risk, taking a leap.

He says, '*I've never made a decision in my life that doesn't involve other people.*' When I read John Osborne's autobiography, I thought, this is him; a man who is stuck.



**How is it coming on to play such a crucial scene right at the end?**

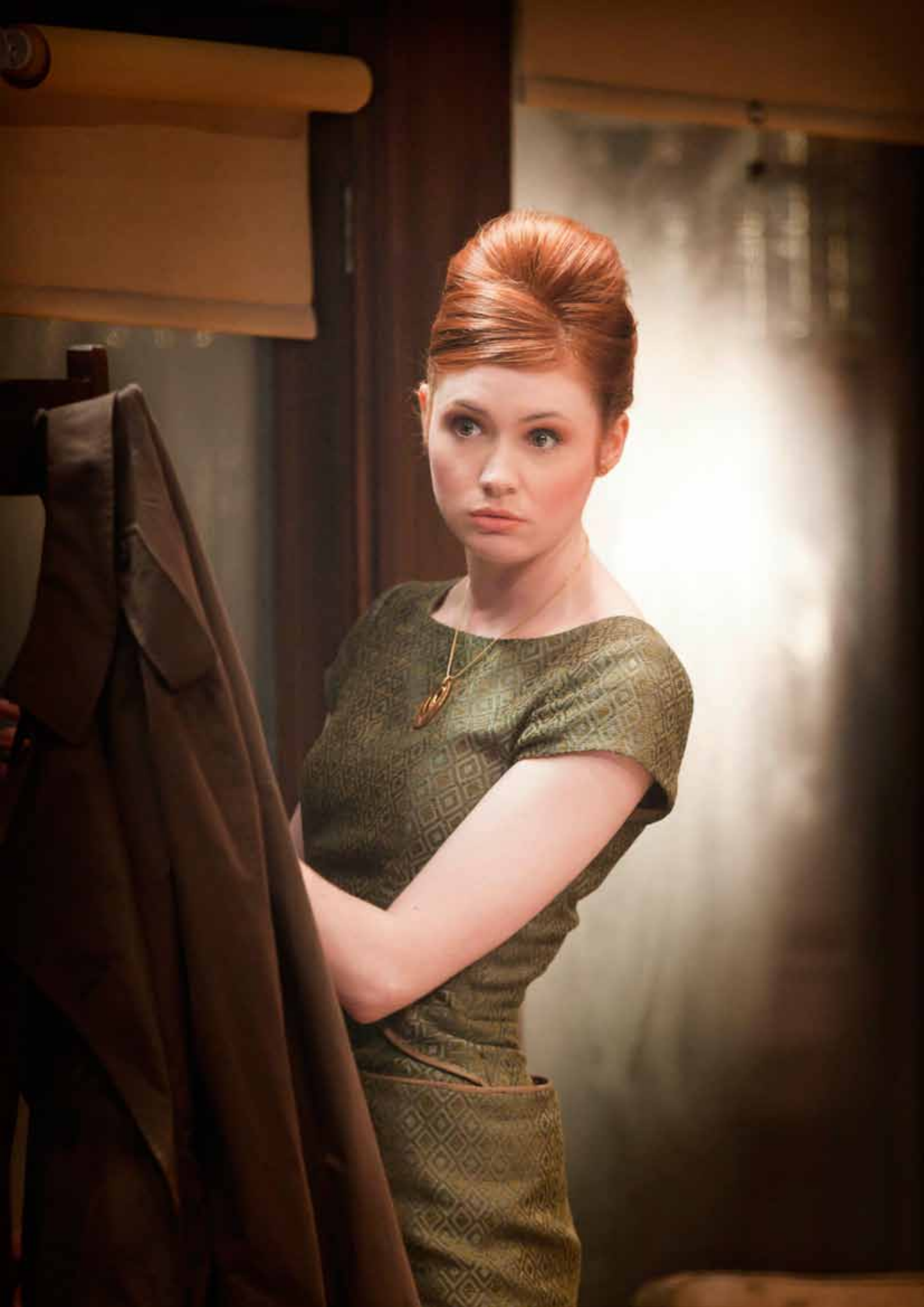
There is great pressure for one scene. You feel like you have to juggle, do a cartwheel, stand on your head. Because it's one scene so you feel like you've got to show everything. Not in an egotistical way, but you think surely the audience want to know all about this character and there's a whole history to bring, the whole back-story, and the relationship with him, and I've got to do it all in one scene. And you don't. You just play the scene. And the audience will take from it what they want to take from it. And it needs to emerge from the whole play.

I'm coming in to take this man home; he's in pain. Obviously there's all that other stuff going on but you don't need to bring it on. Because it'll be there because you've done all of that invisible work, the imaginative work.

I remember reading Declan Donnellan's great book; '*The Actor and The Target*' – I think this book is really helpful for anybody starting out as an actor. One line always stuck in my head. Every actor at some point will say, 'I don't know what I'm doing. I don't know where I am.' They'll have a block. He says in his book; you can never play the character, you can only ever play the situation. Such a simple thing. But it releases you. You can't play a character. You can only play the situation. That released me, remembering that.

**What research did you do to create Liz?**

I looked at women of the period, like Joan Bakewell. Most people who play a character will examine what's said about the character by others, what facts there are about that character in the text, and make a list. There wasn't much to go on with Liz. But there were certain things. Bill calls her generous and loving. She's got authority; her father was a don. So I build up a picture of her. Joan Bakewell was born where I was born and she went to elocution lessons and then she went to Cambridge. She was an intelligent woman who was a thinking man's totty. There's a misconception that John Osborne hated women, that he was a misogynist. I think Liz is a very strong woman. The play is set just before the pill was in widespread use. So women were getting pregnant by men who were then despicable to them. I think John Osborne was probably frightened of women. I think he admired them and was intimidated by them, and possibly felt a bit emasculated. The women in his life were very strong down to Helen, his last wife.



section 5

# Practical Exercises

## Exercise 1: Before seeing the production

Look at the scene between BILL and SHIRLEY below.

- Read the scene
- Explore the **subtext** of the scene. The **subtext** is what is going on underneath the words, what your character is thinking and feeling while they speak. See if you can work out those thoughts which accompany the lines and make up the subtext of the scene. See how different the subtext is to the written text.
- Have a look at the interviews with Karen Gillan and Douglas Hodge above. How does this change your perceptions of the subtext in the scene?
- Play the scene again, showing the **subtext** (ie – making your inner thoughts and feelings very obvious).
- Think about how your character (SHIRLEY or BILL) might cover up their feelings. Do they use humour? Are they tough? Or distant? Or defensive? Or evasive? Play the scene again hiding the **subtext** behind the covers you choose.
- Finally, play the scene once more, choosing where you think your character is showing their inner thoughts/feelings (**subtext** ) and where you think they are hiding them?

**BILL** Anything the matter?

**SHIRLEY** Not with me there isn't.

**BILL** Sure? You all right?

**SHIRLEY** Fine, thank you.

**BILL** Then what is it? We're friends aren't we? Why are you like this?

**SHIRLEY** I'm not like anything.

**BILL** Then?

**SHIRLEY** I just want you to know I'm giving in my notice, that's all. You owe me a week's holiday but I'll give you a week, anyway.

**BILL** But what for?

**SHIRLEY** I've just made up my mind I'm going, that's all. Do you mind?

**BILL** Of course I mind –

**SHIRLEY** Well, that's bad luck for you, isn't it?

**BILL** I don't know, love. Perhaps it's bad luck for both of us.

**SHIRLEY** Not for me it isn't. I don't know why I didn't clear out before.

**BILL** You've always gone on about it –

**SHIRLEY** And who talked me out of it?

**BILL** What have I done?

**SHIRLEY** Nothing. I'm just giving you notice. O.K.?

**BILL** But – you must have a reason.

**SHIRLEY** Sure, I've got reasons. Do I have to tell them to you?

**BILL** No.

**SHIRLEY** I've had enough.

**BILL** What of?

**SHIRLEY** Do you think I mean you?

**BILL** I don't know. I don't know. I honestly don't know. If you wouldn't be in such a rush, perhaps I could –

**SHIRLEY** Oh, well if you must know what for, for one thing, I'm pregnant.

**BILL** You're what?

**SHIRLEY** Mit child, dear. You'd had two haven't you? At least.

**BILL** I'm sorry. *(Trying to focus).* I thought you were on the pills.

**SHIRLEY** I was. I got fed up with them.

**BILL** But you've only just got engaged.

**SHIRLEY** So?

**BILL** You mean you're going to get married?

**SHIRLEY** That had always been the idea.

**BILL** And you still want to?

**SHIRLEY** Do I have to ask for your blessing or something?

**BILL** I'm just a bit taken aback.

**SHIRLEY** These things do happen, you know.

**BILL** Are you really in love with him?

**SHIRLEY** I thought you didn't go much on being in love.

**BILL** Does he know?

**SHIRLEY** I told him last night.

**BILL** *(irritated).* Well?

**SHIRLEY** He said he'd rather have waited a bit, he's quite pleased. What's the matter? Seen something?

**BILL** Naturally, I see you a little differently . . . I mean physically. . . I feel . . .

**SHIRLEY** Poor you! You should feel like I do.

**BILL** Is this the right thing?

**SHIRLEY** Why? Should I ask advice from you? Father?

**BILL** No, Shirley, no, don't do all that, I'm concerned –

**SHIRLEY** Look – you can stick your long farewell. I just want you to know now: I'm pregnant.

*Even SHIRLEY's flush of relish is abated by BILL's dismay. Pause. Quieter.*

I'm getting married. And I'm giving in my notice. A week Friday. O.K.?

## EXERCISE 2 – After seeing the production:

Choose a character from Inadmissible Evidence. Create a back-story for this character. A back-story is the life story of the character before we meet them at the start of the play.

- Begin by assembling the clues from the production. What did your character say about themselves? What did other characters say about them? (Remember these things may not be true.)
- Make a list of questions such as:
  - Where was Hudson born?
  - What did Hudson's parents do?
  - Where did he go to school?
  - What subjects did he like?
  - Did he go to university?
  - What did he study?
  - How did he become a solicitor?
  - How long has he been in the job?
  - Where did he meet his wife?
  - How many children does he have?
- Try and list as many questions as you can as they will unearth details about your character. Scour the text for answers to these questions. If the information isn't in the play, invent the answers.
- Once you have established your character's back-story, work with a partner to 'hot seat' your character. Take it in turns to ask each other's character questions about themselves. What things do your answers reveal about your character? What new insights, or unanswered questions, are there?
- Once you have a clearly established idea of these characters, you might want to try and devise a scene from another aspect of their life. For example, a scene between Shirley and her fiancé, or Maples and his wife.

## About the Donmar Warehouse

The Donmar Warehouse is an intimate not for profit 251 seat theatre located in the heart of London's West End.

Since 1992, under the Artistic Direction of Michael Grandage and his predecessor, Sam Mendes, the theatre has presented some of London's most memorable theatrical experiences and has garnered critical acclaim at home and abroad. With a diverse artistic policy that includes new writing, contemporary reappraising of European classics, British and American drama and musical theatre, the Donmar has created a reputation for artistic excellence over the last 19 years and has won 40 Olivier Awards, 23 Critics' Circle Awards, 21 Evening Standard Awards, two South Bank Awards and 20 Tony Awards from ten Broadway productions. In January 2012, Josie Rourke will succeed Michael Grandage as the Artistic Director of the Donmar.

Alongside the Donmar's productions, we offer a programme of Education events, which includes subsidised tickets, introductory workshops and post show discussions, as well as special projects which give young people an opportunity to involve themselves more closely in the work of the theatre.

For more information about the Donmar's education activities, please contact:

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