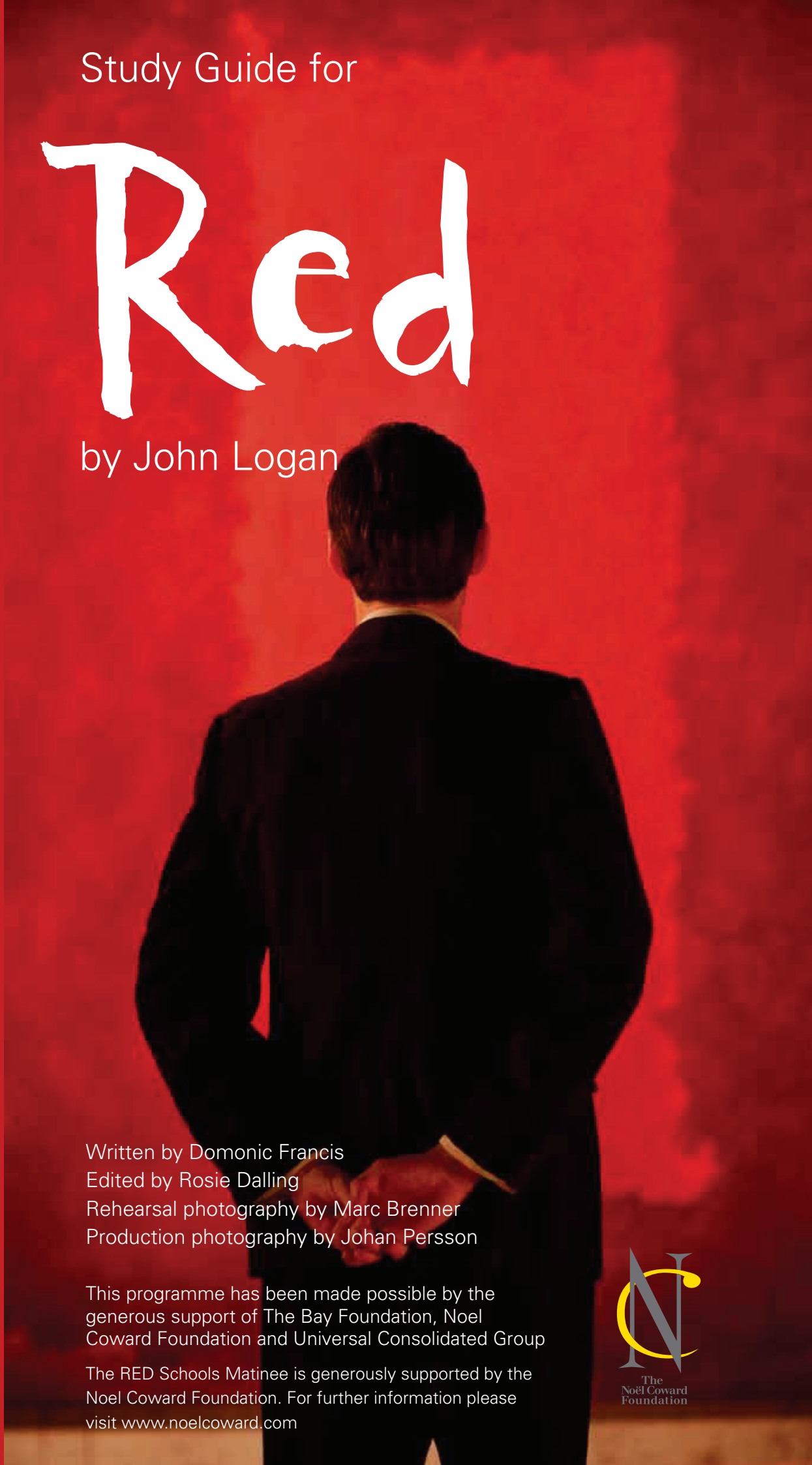
DONMAR®

Study Guide for

Red

by John Logan



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The Noël Coward Foundation

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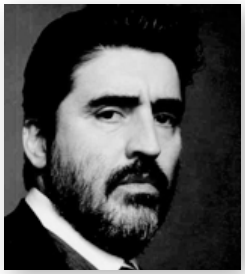
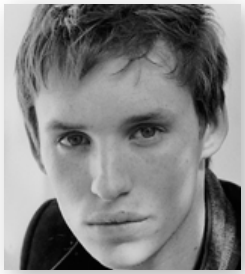


Cast (in order of appearance)

Alfred Molina — **Mark Rothko**, American painter, 50s or older. He wears thick glasses and, usually, old work clothes spattered with specks of red paint. An irritable man, he is passionate about his art and his temper hides an inner vulnerability. He is currently busy working on a new set of murals.



Eddie Redmayne — **Ken**, Rothko's new assistant, 20s. An aspiring painter, he is nervous around Rothko at first but slowly grows in confidence. By nature quiet and thoughtful, he is able to challenge Rothko when necessary.

Creative Team

Michael Grandage, Director

Artistic Director of the Donmar Warehouse. Recent work includes, for the Donmar's West End Season at the Wyndham's Theatre: *Hamlet, Madame De Sade, Twelfth Night* and *Ivanov* (2008 Evening Standard Award for Best Director); at the Donmar: *The Chalk Garden, Othello, John Gabriel Borkman, Don Juan In Soho, Frost/Nixon* (also Gielgud, Broadway and USA tour), *The Cut* (also UK tour), *The Wild Duck* (2006 Critics' Circle Award for Best Director), *Grand Hotel – The Musical* (2005 Olivier Award for Outstanding Musical Production and 2004 Evening Standard Award for Best Director), *After Miss Julie* and *Caligula* (2004 Olivier Award for Best Director); for the West End: *Evita* and *Guys and Dolls* (2006 Olivier Award for Outstanding Musical Production); as Artistic Director of the Sheffield Theatres: *Don Carlos* (2005 Evening Standard Award and TMA for Best Director), *Suddenly Last Summer* and *As You Like It* (2000 Critics' Circle and Evening Standard Awards for Best Director).

Christopher Oram, Designer

Recent work includes, for the Donmar's West End Season at the Wyndham's: *Hamlet, Madame De Sade, Twelfth Night* and *Ivanov*; for the Donmar: *Othello, Parade, Don Juan In Soho, Frost/Nixon* (also Gielgud and Broadway), *Grand Hotel – The Musical, Henry Iv, World Music* and *Caligula* (2003 Evening Standard Award for Best Design); other theatre: *King Lear/The Seagull* (RSC), *Evita* (Adelphi), *Guys and Dolls* (Piccadilly), *Macbeth, The Jew of Malta* and *The Embalmer* (Almeida), *Oleanna* (Gielgud), *Loyal Women* and *Fucking Games* (Royal Court), *Stuff Happens, Marriage Play/Finding the Sun*, *Summerfolk* and *Power* (NT, 2004 Olivier Award for Best Costume Design).

Neil Austin, Lighting Designer

Recent work includes, for the Donmar's West End Season at the Wyndham's: *Hamlet* and *Twelfth Night*; for the Donmar: *Piaf*, *Parade* (2008 Knight of Illumination Award), *John Gabriel Borkman*, *Don Juan in Soho, The Cryptogram*, *Frost/Nixon* (West End and Broadway, 2007 Outer Circle Critics' Award nomination for Outstanding Lighting Design on Broadway), *The Wild Duck*, *The Cosmonaut's Last Message to the Woman He Once Loved in The Former Soviet Union*, *Henry IV*, *World Music*, *After Miss Julie* and *Caligula*; for the RSC: *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Julius Caesar*, *King John* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*; for the NT: *Philistines*, *Man of Mode*, *Therese Raquin* (2007 Olivier Award nomination for Best Lighting Design), *The Seafarer*, *Henry IV Parts I and II*, *A Prayer for Owen Meany*, *Further than the Furthest Thing*, *The Night Season* and *The Walls*.

Adam Cork, Composer and Sound Designer

Recent work includes, for the Donmar's West End Season at the Wyndham's: *Hamlet* and *Twelfth Night*; for the Donmar: *The Chalk Garden, Othello, John Gabriel Borkman, Don Juan In Soho*, *Frost/Nixon* (also Gielgud, Broadway and USA tour, 2007 Drama Desk Award nomination), *Caligula*, *Henry IV*, *The Wild Duck* and *The Cut*; other theatre: *No Man's Land* (Duke of York's), *Macbeth* (Broadway and Gielgud, 2008 Tony nomination), *Don Carlos* (Gielgud), *Suddenly Last Summer* (Albery), *On the Third Day* (New Ambassadors), *Speaking Like Magpies* and *The Tempest* (RSC), *Five Gold Rings* and *The Late Henry Moss* (Almeida).

section 2

An introduction to artist Mark Rothko

Biography

Marcus Rothkowitz was born on 25 September 1903 in Dvinsk, Russia (now Latvia). Having emigrated with his family to the United States in 1913, and changed his name to Mark Rothko nearly three decades later, the Russian-born Jew went on to become one of the most influential American artists of the twentieth century. He remains forever associated with the 'Abstract Expressionist' movement; his paintings, with their shimmering, rectangular fields of colour, are instantly recognisable. He was diagnosed with an aneurism and suffered severe depression. Rothko committed suicide in New York on 25 February 1970, aged sixty-six. A highly-educated man, Rothko was a true intellectual. He had a passion for music, literature and philosophy, in particular the work of German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Regarded by many friends as a difficult, temperamental man, Rothko was also known to be loving and affectionate towards his family.

He belonged to a generation of American artists, later dubbed Abstract Expressionists, who completely revolutionised abstract painting. Among the movement's leading figures were Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Barnett Newman, Robert Motherwell, Clyfford Still, Adolph Gottlieb, Franz Kline and, of course, Rothko himself. Formed in New York City between the two world wars, many members of this group (also known as the New York School) lived within blocks of each other in Greenwich Village. They would sit and discuss art into the early hours of the morning, arguing about how to break with the traditions of the past and create a new abstract art that had nothing to do with conventional techniques.

These Abstract Expressionists became the first group of American artists to achieve international recognition. Following a show called 'Fifteen Americans' in New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1952, the New York School's work went on a tour of all the major European cities in the late 1950s and was well-received by critics and collectors alike. Abstract Expressionism was regarded as new and fresh.

The term itself refers more to a process than a style, explains curator and critic Jacob Baal-Teshuva: 'The point is to express feeling through the act of painting itself, the process, without fixating on the actual product of that act, the artwork.'[1] Rothko and his peers were all influenced by European art, which dominated modern art throughout the nineteenth century, and in particular Surrealism and Expressionism. Artists such as Max Ernst, Andre Masson, Mondrian and Chagall, all of whom emigrated to America from Europe to escape the rise of the Nazis, had a significant impact on the New York School. The city's Museum of Modern Art was another source of inspiration, particularly the late works of Monet which were on display there. The Museum's exhibition of Dada and Surrealism in 1936 was also a major influence.

While artists such as Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning became known for their 'action painting' (a term which describes the actual motion of painting itself), others, such as Clyfford Still and Rothko, were exponents of another major trend within Abstract Expressionism: 'colour field painting'. This refers to the emotional force of pure colour; Rothko's colour formations drawing the viewer into a space filled with an inner luminosity.

His career as an artist, which spanned approximately forty-five years, can, argues Jacob Baal-Teshuva, be roughly divided into four main periods: the Realist years (1924-1940); the Surrealist years (1940-1946); the Transitional years (1946-1949); and the Classical years (1949-1970).

'During the first two stages, Rothko painted the landscapes, interiors, city scenes, still-lifes and the New York subway paintings that were so influential on his later development,' explains Baal-Teshuva. 'His work during World War II and the immediate postwar period is marked by symbolic paintings, based in Greek mythology and religious motifs. During his period of transition to pure abstract painting, he created the so-called multiforms, which finally evolve into his famous works of the classical period with their rectangular, hazy fields of colour.'[2]

Central to Rothko's work was the active relationship between his paintings and the viewer, and the merging of the two. 'Nothing should stand between my painting and the viewer,' he once said. As an artist he always resisted attempts to interpret his work. 'No possible set of notes can explain our paintings,' he argued. 'Their explanation must come out of a consummated experience between picture and onlooker. The appreciation of art is a true marriage of minds. And in art as in marriage, lack of consummation is grounds for annulment.'[3]

The Seagram Murals

In 1954 the drinks company Seagram Distillers began planning the construction of a new headquarters on Park Avenue, in New York City. The 525-foot-high Seagram Building, designed by architects Philip Johnson and Mies van der Rohe, opened five years later. Central to its design was a new restaurant called the Four Seasons, intended to be 'New York's newest power-broking hang-out.'[4] Situated within a pavilion on the ground floor, the restaurant, with its rich and elegant drapes and stone fittings, was meant to be palatial. The review in the New York Times commented, 'There has never been a restaurant better keyed to the tempo of Manhattan. It is expensive and opulent, and it's perhaps the most exciting restaurant to open in New York within the last two decades.'[5]

The director of New York's Museum of Modern Art, Alfred Barr, suggested that Rothko should provide the artwork for the new restaurant. The commissioner of the Seagram Building, the heiress Phyllis Lambert, and its architects agreed that only Rothko's work was sufficiently sophisticated to adorn the Four Season's lavish interior. The artist was given an unprecedented $35,000 to create a series of murals for the space and the commission caused a sensation within the art world.

It presented a new challenge for Rothko, who for the first time was not only required to produce a series of co-ordinated paintings, but also to create a concept for a large, specific interior. With the first instalment of his fee Rothko rented the

first floor of a large building in downtown Manhattan (222 The Bowery). Originally a basketball court, the artist converted the room into his studio. High up on one wall was a row of small windows so dirty they let in very little daylight, Rothko preferring the evenness of artificial light. He divided the room with a screen to replicate the dimensions of the Four Seasons Restaurant and constructed a complex series of pulleys which allowed him to work on and contemplate multiple canvases at once and at different heights. Over several months Rothko completed forty paintings in dark reds and browns. He altered his horizontal format to vertical to complement the restaurant's vertical features: walls, doors, windows and columns.

Taking a break from the commission during the summer of 1959, Rothko and his wife took a trip to Europe. On the ship crossing the Atlantic, while in conversation with John Fischer, publisher of Harper's magazine, Rothko described the Four Seasons Restaurant as 'A place where the richest bastards in New York will come to feed and show off',[6] confiding in the publisher of Harper's magazine that his real intention with the Seagram Murals was to paint 'something that will ruin the appetite of every son-of-a-bitch who ever eats in that room.' The refusal by the restaurant's owners to display the work would, said Rothko, be 'the ultimate compliment'. He then added, 'But they won't. People can stand anything these days.'[7]

While in Europe the Rothkos travelled widely throughout Italy. In Florence the artist visited the library at San Lorenzo to see the Michelangelo Room, from which he drew further inspiration for the murals. He later commented, 'The room had exactly the feeling that I wanted... it gives the visitor the feeling of being caught in a room with the doors and windows walled-in shut.'[8]

On returning to New York, Rothko dined at the newly-opened Four Seasons. Following the meal he called a friend to tell them he was withdrawing the paintings and returning the cash advance, apparently distressed that the restaurant's obviously commercial atmosphere was wholly inappropriate for displaying his work. He is quoted as saying, 'Anybody who will eat that kind of food for those kind of prices will never look at a painting of mine.'[9]

This well-documented episode is one of the lasting mysteries regarding the temperamental Rothko. He knew about the class of the restaurant's intended patrons when he accepted the commission so why the reversal of intent and subsequent outrage? The artist never fully explained his conflicting emotions over the whole incident.

Afterwards Rothko kept the commissioned paintings in storage, hidden away from the public for years. The final series, which came to be known as the Seagram Murals, was dispersed and now hangs in three separate locations: London's Tate Britain, Japan's Kawamura Memorial Museum and the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC.

section 3

Inside the rehearsal room

I first visit rehearsals for RED by John Logan at the beginning of the second week. As it's a relatively short play with only two characters (Mark Rothko played by Alfred Molina and Ken played by Eddie Redmayne), the rehearsal period is only four weeks instead of the Donmar's usual five.

It's early November and the rehearsal room at the Jerwood Space in South London is a hive of activity. Stage management is busy transforming the space into Rothko's studio at 222, The Bowery in Manhattan, New York. Canvasses are being stretched across wooden frames and paint is heated on a small stove.

While I wait for rehearsals to begin, I look around the space. On a table in the corner are piles of books about Rothko, his life and work, and the cultural context of the play; the music, the fashion. (For a detailed list see 'Section 5 – Reading and Research'.) The walls are covered in colour copies of various Rothko paintings, plus photos of the model box of the set taken from different angles. I also take this opportunity to talk to the Donmar's Resident Assistant Director, Paul Hart, who summarises what happened last week, the first week of rehearsals.

Writer John Logan was in all week (he'll return in a fortnight's time), as was voice coach Joan Washington. Following the 'Meet and Greet' on the first day, once everyone not directly involved in the production had left the rehearsal room, director Michael Grandage discussed the design in more detail for the actors' benefit, in particular the workings of the set. He then handed over to John who talked in depth about the play.

John explained that he was fascinated by Rothko's life and was obsessed by his paintings. After much research into both, he learned more about the story of the Seagram Murals. John was preoccupied by Rothko's apparent hypocrisy in accepting the commission given his philosophy and distaste for wealth and wealthy people. There were many challenges in writing the play, not least dealing with the artist's surviving family, his children. They were keen to defend their late father, arguing that he had thought the murals were intended for a workers' canteen.

Director, Michael Grandage is particularly interested in the point at which history is made, when an artist becomes 'great' and the company have an interesting debate before working on the first scene of the play, talking through it. Michael's ambition was to have a 'half-staging' of the scene by the end of the day.

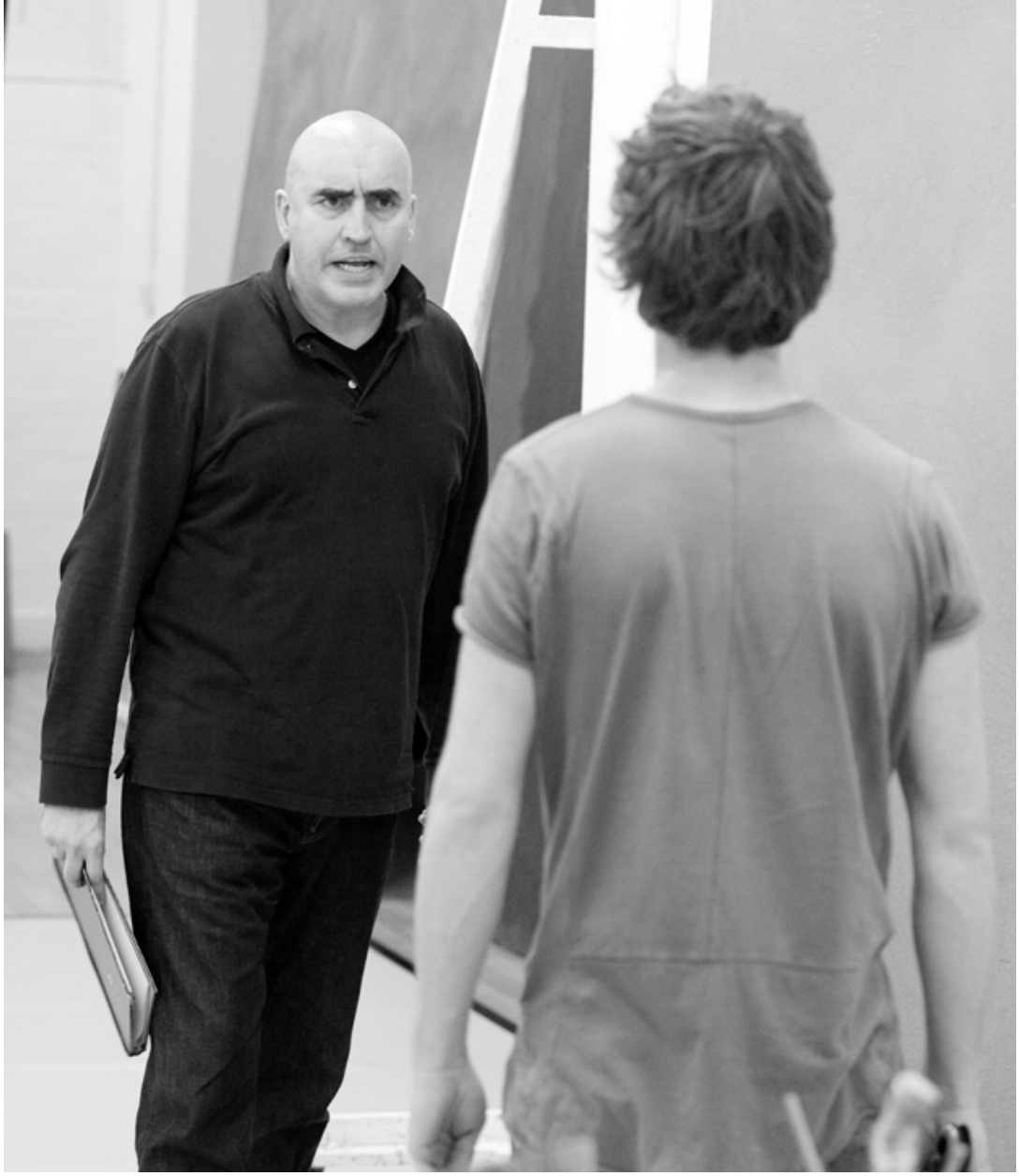
Continuing at this pace, he and the actors worked through a scene a day for the rest of the week. Focusing on the transition from Scene Two into Three on day two, they talked through Ken's theories about Dionysus and Apollo; working out the logic of his argument. Several months have supposedly passed since the action of the first scene and Ken has been reading the philosopher Nietzsche at Rothko's suggestion.

On the third day they did a 'rough block' (staging) of the whole of Scene Three, putting it 'on its feet'. They then talked through scenes Four and Five, which they worked on the following morning (day four). In the afternoon they watched a documentary called *Rothko's Rooms*, which, says Paul, helped 'map out the whole period'. On the fifth day Michael, the actors and most of the production team (about twenty people in total) went on a day trip to Tate Liverpool where the Seagram Murals are currently on display. While the actors sat and absorbed the paintings, scenic artist Richard Nutborne looked in detail at the canvases themselves. 'It was fascinating,' says Paul, 'seeing the paintings out of context. It was profound to see them separated, in some sense lost, from the creative process behind them.'

Throughout the rehearsal period Paul e-mails weekly reports to the rest of the Donmar staff to keep them informed of the creative team's progress. He sent the following at the end of the second week:

'A very messy week in rehearsals over here. Blood-coloured paint spattered all over the rehearsal room as a result of all the canvas-priming that's been going on. We're trying to get the actors more and more used to the realities of mixing paints, canvassing frames, lighting paintings, changing records, building canvas stretchers, etc. So there's a rich amount of practical work that's coming out of the rehearsal room.'

'We've also been experimenting with how we might be able to make the theatre smell like a painter's studio, spraying turps and oil smells around the room. And our brilliant stage management team have been boiling up new paint mixtures for us on an almost daily basis, as well as cooking Chinese for the actors to eat in the second scene!'



'Obviously there's still a huge amount of cross-reference to Rothko's original work ethic, but it's fantastic to see the actors making it more and more their own and finding their own process so that there is as little "acting" as possible.'

'We've been able to work fairly quickly through each scene as the actors get off book, and the whole production's taking a really lovely shape. The guys are just having to get used to engaging fully in their arguments without fear of it ever becoming boring with just the two of them. It's already hypnotising to watch two artists at work and to hear their conversation. And the "priming of the canvas sequence" in which the two finally work together is going to be totally thrilling.'

Back in the rehearsal room, Alfred Molina arrives and the first thing I notice is his hair: it's gone. Since I last saw him at the Meet and Greet his head has been completely shaved in preparation for wearing a wig. He instantly looks more like Rothko, even more so once he starts trying on various pairs of glasses, similar to the artist's, handed to him by Costume Supervisor Poppy Hall.

The focus of this morning's work is learning how to prime a canvas. Michael wonders how this will be achieved. Stage Manager Greg Shimmin explains that Richard Nutborne, who has prepared all of the other canvases (the Seagram Murals at various stages of completion), will demonstrate how it's done before the actors attempt it for themselves. 'Rather like *The Generation Game*,' quips Michael. This prompts Fred to do an extremely convincing, and very funny, impression of Bruce Forsyth: 'Didn't they do well?' It's clearly a happy rehearsal room; focused work balanced by good humour and lots of laughter.

While Greg puts the finishing touches to a wooden frame, Eddie looks on, keen to observe every detail. He particularly likes tearing off the excess canvas. Fred and Eddie then take it in turns to practice stirring the paint on the stove. They now wear overalls to protect their clothes beneath. Michael is equally keen to be as authentic as possible, asking Richard lots of questions: 'Is that real? Is that what people would do?'

Having finished preparing the materials, Richard is ready to begin his demonstration. 'Can you talk us through it?' asks Michael. 'Do a Rolf Harris.' Richard begins working quickly to cover the canvas in red paint. He comments on what he's doing: 'Keep a wet edge on the canvas, work as fast as you possibly can.'

'Is the red too bright?' Michael wonders. 'It needs to be the colour of dried blood, that's what it needs to remind Ken of.'

The actors take over for a while, asking lots of questions: Is there a correct way to hold the brush? Do you use it until it's out of colour? 'There's no right or wrong,' Michael reassures them. 'It's the finished effect that matters.' They experiment with different patterns of painting, for example in a figure of eight. 'Looser,' calls out designer Christopher Oram. 'Flick it (the brush) from the wrist.' Fred and Eddie almost hit the canvas, beating it. Michael looks on, smiling. 'There's something about the attack of that that's good for our music,' he says, referring to composer Adam Cork's soundtrack. 'It has to be like an overture, like you've done this a hundred thousand times.'

After this small rehearsal of painting alone, Michael and stage management consider some of the practical details. Fred can't get covered in paint with a wig on. There'll have to be warm, damp cloths waiting in the wings for him to clean himself with. Maybe he'll need two pairs of glasses? Or even two wigs? The latter would have serious repercussions on the budget as wigs have to be specially made and are therefore very expensive.

Michael wants to walk through the bringing on of the canvas and the preparation of the paint materials with the actors before running the scene, to include the actual priming of the canvas. He's focused on finding 'the picture of the scene' and encourages Fred and Eddie to 'always think theatrically', for example, when hanging the canvas on the frame. He allows the actors to add fragments of dialogue in order to communicate with one another on stage: 'John Logan's not going to mind, "Down a little, up a little..." etc.' At one point, to help Eddie, Fred moves a bucket of paint. 'That's generous of you, Fred,' comments Michael, 'but too generous for Rothko.'

Having considered the practicalities, Michael now wants to work through the script; marking where the lines come in relation to the onstage action. For example, he looks for a moment where Eddie can take the bucket of paint off the stove to cool down. Then they run the scene. After Fred and Eddie have primed the canvas for the first time they get a round of applause from everybody in the rehearsal room. Both actors are covered from head to toe in flecks of red paint, which looks eerily like blood.

Discussing it afterwards Michael assures the actors that the scene is, 'completely thrilling and totally captivating to watch.' He notices, however, that Fred and Eddie applied the paint differently, commenting that they had to be the same as Rothko is meant to have taught Ken. Fred asks whether he can use a smaller brush as he finds the large one hard to manipulate. Eddie says that the priming of the canvas is physically exhausting: 'It's certainly going to inform the next part of the scene.' Michael suggests they practice priming the canvas once or twice a week.

A tea break follows and while stage management mop the rehearsal room floor, Fred and Eddie clean themselves up, running lines between them. They then return to the top (beginning) of the play to rehearse. The stage directions read: 'Rothko stands, staring forward. He is looking directly at the audience. (He is actually studying one of his Seagram Mural paintings, which hangs before him.)' (p.9) [10] Michael has tried different 'versions' of this scene, including one where Rothko faces upstage, supposedly looking at a painting, with his back to the audience. Michael remains unconvinced. Fred makes the point that if he faces out from the beginning, 'It looks like the play's already begun.'

Michael considers the music, its transition from pre-set (before the show begins) to present. He goes back to the top of the scene again, this time with Rothko seated looking upstage. 'Fred, get up and tell us there's three paintings in this room.' As the actors run the scene, Michael almost conducts them, calling out

suggestions and encouragement: 'And come in a bit closer to this one now... That's nice, nice... And Eddie, come on now... Very nice, very well modulated.'

Afterwards Michael comments on the staging, 'You've "pros-ed out" a bit there.' (This refers to a style of acting usually seen on a traditional proscenium arch stage.) He places Fred upstage so that an audience can see all of Rothko. 'Help us,' says Michael. 'When you say "these pictures", use the room, show us they're there.' He encourages both actors to be specific about what they're doing and avoid generalising; it will help give them a clear intention. 'Map out the geography of the space.'

He asks whether Rothko's setting a trap for Ken by asking him of the painting, 'But do you *like* it?' (p.10) Or does he trap himself? 'He's certainly doing a riff on the word "like",' observes Michael. He suggests that Rothko telling Ken to hang up his jacket is advice rather than admonishment. It's a rare example of Rothko being kind.

Rehearsals over for the day, I return early the following week. It's the second day of the third week and Scene Three is the focus of today's work, in which Rothko and Ken prime the canvas. I notice that there are more elements of the set in place, including free-standing floor lamps; old theatrical lanterns that create a real sense of atmosphere. The scene begins with Ken alone on stage. This is partly to cover a quick costume change made by Fred between Scenes Two and Three, in which he has to get into a suit, and then another shortly after the scene begins, where he gets back into his work clothes. It is decided that Fred's shoes should be slip-ons to aid these quick changes. Michael talks to Eddie about finding a 'piece of business' (action) to occupy himself while he waits. 'Is there no practical thing that you could be doing with the pigments that would be interesting to watch?'

He asks stage management to give Eddie a packet of maroon pigment with which to fill a glass jar and Greg obliges, making Michael pause to praise his team on their speed and efficiency. 'Normally you'd have to put a request in the rehearsal notes but Greg has it ready in two minutes.' Eddie spends the time familiarising himself with the whereabouts of the different pigments while Fred keeps everyone entertained with amusing stories.

Continuing with the scene and the discussion between Rothko and Ken about Nietzsche, Michael is keen for John Logan to repeat the word 'Interesting?' at the beginning of Rothko's line ('That's like saying "red". Don't be enigmatic; you're too young to be enigmatic?'p.31) as a more direct response to Ken's use of the word. He encourages Fred to use Rothko's instruction to Ken - 'Think more' - as a real challenge. Michael encourages both actors to keep their focus on one another: 'Don't dip out too much; don't go off the radar. Be in the room with each other. Don't be sloppy, keep the argument taut.' Later he adds, 'You should both, as actors and characters, be interested by what's going on between you.' Michael is also careful to refine the smaller, practical details, asking Eddie to keep Ken's stapling of the canvas to 'a minimum' while Fred's speaking.

There's clearly a lot of apprehension about rehearsing the priming of the canvas. Eddie wants to work through the 'choreography of the scene', looking at the movement and music. With regard to the latter, Michael says encouragingly, 'Let the music do what it needs to do and you find your own rhythm.' He's keen to rehearse the details too, such as the way Ken pours paint into the buckets. 'Make it more ritualistic,' he tells Eddie. They run the scene, preparing to paint the canvas.

‘Now stop,’ says Michael at one point. ‘That doesn’t make sense to me, that a bucket would be half off the cloth.’ The actors go back, running the scene again with even more attention to detail. ‘There are a couple of little details I’d love to explore,’ says Michael afterwards, ‘but there are things we can’t play because of all sorts of technical limitations.’ He wants to ensure that Fred and Eddie finish together with the end of the music. He wants to show Rothko and Ken’s exhaustion.

After rehearsing the scene, including the actual priming of the canvas, there’s a short tea break during which Fred expresses his frustration with the finished product, in particular his half. ‘It’s not even,’ he says. Greg suggests returning to the original, bigger brushes, as used by Richard Nutborne, and not letting the brush leave the canvas. Michael recommends John alter the lines slightly, cutting

Ken's reference to the base layer being 'Nice and even' (p.39). Greg reassures Fred that there is no actual record (i.e. film) of Rothko painting as he didn't like to be observed at work. The artist was continually experimenting with different materials and techniques which, he suggests, gives the actors greater licence to find their own style.

The tea break over, Michael and the actors continue with the scene and Ken's long speech about the murder of his parents. Michael acknowledges the challenges it presents: 'There's something about the beats (short pauses). The second one says, "Ladies and gentlemen, you're now going to hear Ken's story".' He encourages Eddie to be open to the possibilities of the speech: 'Allow Ken to be surprised by things.' They talk about the phenomenon of people discussing their innermost thoughts and feelings with complete strangers, Michael adding, 'This is the first time anyone has ever said to Ken, "Talk about it...".' They agree to continue work on Scene Three tomorrow morning. While acknowledging some of the frustration of today's rehearsal, with the priming of the canvas, Fred concludes, 'Any rehearsal is a good rehearsal as far as I'm concerned.'

Composer Adam Cork comes in towards the end of the day to rehearse the scene changes with music, which, he explains, is still a work-in-progress. While he sets up his laptop, Fred reads and makes notes in his script and Eddie runs lines. Adam positions himself close to Michael so they can swap notes during the rehearsal. Michael explains to the actors that the music contains 'posts' which act as cues for different moments of action within the stage directions. Occasionally he leans over to Adam, commenting on the music, 'Too soft...' or, with regard to a change in tone, 'Reduce the suddenness, make it bleed more.'

As the actors run the scene changes, Michael conducts the action again: 'Go nice and slow, don't run... Just one second ahead of the music there... That lovely flourish there could have been lighting a match... You could help there, Eddie... At the end of that phrase walk over there.' Using his computer Adam appears to be able to adapt the music, and various flourishes therein, to suit the actors and their actions. It's incredibly evocative and gives an indication of the ultimate tone and feel of the play in performance.

I next visit rehearsals the following week to watch a run-through of the whole piece. These particular run-throughs are very intimate performances within the rehearsal room, to which selected people are invited, including the Donmar team based at the office. There are usually a few run-throughs before the cast and creative team move to the theatre, providing the actors with an invaluable opportunity to perform in front of a discerning, but ultimately friendly, audience.

It's fascinating to watch the play all the way through, having previously only seen parts of scenes. Fred and Eddie have a wonderful chemistry together, partly due to the close relationship they have developed through the rehearsal process. They have complete ownership of their characters and make sense of the complex arguments within the play; debates concerning art and its place within contemporary culture. At the end of the performance they are given an appreciative and well-deserved round of applause.

The next time I see the cast and creative team is halfway through the fifth week. They have left the Jerwood Space and moved into the Donmar for several days of technical and dress rehearsals before the previews start at the end of the week. It's Wednesday evening and the stage crew are hard at work finishing the fit-up (installing the set, lights, etc); they'll continue working into the night until

everything's finished. The auditorium is littered with scenic art materials. A large ladder positioned between two rows of seats has to be covered up with a black cloth so as not to be seen in the production stills, which are being taken this evening.

Tonight's dress rehearsal is the first and is run under performance conditions, starting at 7.30pm as performances would during the run. I notice that Fred is no longer wearing a wig. It's been decided since the run-throughs last week that it's too restrictive, preoccupying Fred with concerns about getting paint on it.

During the dress rehearsal Michael moves around the auditorium, observing the performance from different angles. Paul Hart takes notes on his behalf. Occasionally Michael sits next to him and whispers of an actor and a line, 'He swallowed that.' He also comments on good syncing of music and action, calling out, 'Perfect!' The photographer works non-stop for the duration of the dress rehearsal, photographing the actors from every possible angle. Afterwards the actors are given a round of applause and do their curtain call (bows) as they would at the end of every performance.

While Fred and Eddie get out of costume, Michael calls the production team together in the stalls to go through technical notes. He starts by explaining that this is his first production back at the Donmar having spent a year away working at the Wyndham's on the West End Season. He comments on how quickly and efficiently everything works at the Donmar, praising his team. Next he talks to John Logan. They sit apart from the others in order to talk quietly and swap notes. Michael asks John if there are any more changes he wants to make to the text and they discuss possible revisions. Another dress rehearsal is scheduled for 2pm tomorrow before the first preview that evening.

I go back two days later for the second preview. It's interesting to observe the difference an audience makes to a production; where they're still and silent, where they laugh. It's a very quiet, focused performance with Fred and Eddie exploring every detail of the play. There's a warm, appreciative round of applause at the end and a palpable sense of relief from the actors.

Four days later I'm back again for press night, when all the theatre critics come to review the production. The performance is different again with both Fred and Eddie really flying. The play and production is theirs now; they completely inhabit their characters and the space, and, clearly look forward to a two-month run during which they can explore all the possibilities offered by the piece.

An interview with actor Eddie Redmayne, playing Ken

Can you start by telling me a little about your character and the journey he goes on through the play.

I play Ken, a young man who arrives at the top of Scene One for a job interview with Rothko, who is already an incredibly established and famous artist. So it starts from a terrifying scenario where the audience wonder if he is going to get the job, this young man, of whom we know very little about; for example whether he's been a student, etc. So those are all choices that I've had to make, through indications in the text, to flesh out the character.

He starts on day one incredibly nervous, as one would be with a terrifying, iconic figure at a job interview, and the play continues over the next two years. It's really about how Rothko's life changes during that period, around a specific commission for the Seagram Building, but also how this relationship with this imaginary assistant develops.

Rothko had many assistants, he got through quite a few of them, but John has chosen to invent the character of Ken and to play with time to a certain extent in an attempt to show how Rothko, towards the end of his life and having been a bastion of forward thinking and a great innovator in the art world, couldn't quite deal with the fact there were these young upstarts, i.e. the 'Pop Artists', who were doing the same thing to him that he did to the Cubists and Surrealists.

And emotionally, at the end of the play, how is Ken a different man to the one we first encounter on his arrival at Rothko's studio?

I think he arrives with deep admiration and nervousness, and leaves with... deep admiration, but he's been made aware by Rothko that there's only so much you can learn through apprenticeship and there comes a moment where you have to take those tools and go out and start making your own mistakes and causing your own havoc. But it takes that two-year period, and all the highs and lows of their relationship, to get him to that point. So it's almost like his being let go is actually a new beginning.

What's the biggest challenge this play has presented to you as an actor?

This play has presented several challenges. The most wonderful challenge in some ways is the idea of it being a two-hander, which scares you as an actor because you think, 'What if I'm boring?' So that's a huge challenge because we have to find all the intricacy and modulation in ourselves, both Fred and I. There's no light relief of another actor coming on to take the spotlight off you for a moment. So you have to be incredibly detailed with the characterisation.

But another major challenge has been purely technical, which is trying to recreate the world of this studio and these artists, and to inhabit that world. Because that is a progression for Ken. He starts off as a novice and ends up, in that sort of precocious way I think assistants and apprentices can, knowing the space better than Rothko. And that's an interesting dynamic. So things like, physically priming the canvases, making the paint, moving the easels and stretching the canvases, all those things are wonderful but challenging, because you have to get them so sorted that hopefully they become second nature to you and you don't look like a fraud.

And you spent a lot of time in rehearsals learning how to handle those materials.

Completely, because there's no real way of blagging that. It's something you have to be doing and playing with from the word go.

But you also have to find your own way of doing it, adapting the techniques to suit yourself.

Absolutely. And the reason to start early with it is so you get to a point where you're comfortable enough to be just doing it, and then you can start messing around with it. So one interesting example of that is the staple gun. We had this staple gun and I, as Ken, had a very different way of handling it and playing with it to the way Fred as Rothko does. And it's not like you sit down and discuss that, you just have to find it.

From your perspective, what do you think there is in this play that will resonate with young people in particular?

I think what appeals to me as a relatively young man is the idea of the relationship between young people and adults. And that kind of confidence that we have as young people to do whatever we want, because the world hasn't really got scary enough yet, or we haven't had to take on responsibilities yet. We can be quite selfish, in a good way. I think it's an important thing that you find your own way and do your own things and there aren't any boundaries. You have to go out and break these things.

Ken has a feisty and vicious relationship with Rothko, and in many ways he absolutely detests the man, but he learns a lot from him. And I've found that in acting, with a lot of older actors or directors I've worked with, they can be strong and stern and rude and aggressive but often for all of that you get nuggets of gold. And I've found it all through life, with teachers, etc. So those people that you find difficult on the surface, it's worth persevering with them because often there'll be something to learn.

And to some extent working with Fred mirrors the dynamic between Ken and Rothko. Here's an established older actor with many years of experience.

Absolutely. I've got to say Fred's reputation in this industry is amazing. I was so excited to meet him because I'd heard nothing but hyperbole - 'Oh, Fred! He's the nicest human being in the world' - and my God does he live up to it. He's an amazing man. Generous - spirited, lovely and absolutely someone I wholeheartedly aspire to be like. Not just as an actor, because he's staggering, but also in the way in which he conducts himself in a very weird industry. So I absolutely have to act detestation at moments in the play, but never have to act admiration.

section 4

RED in performance

Practical exercises based on an extract from Scene One

The following extract is taken from early in Scene One. Rothko and Ken are standing in the artist's studio, having just met one another for the first time. Rothko is questioning the young man, considering whether to take him on as his assistant. He has just finished outlining a description of the job.

Working as a group, read through the extract and explore the staging of this scene. As a director what atmosphere do you want to create? How would you direct the two actors playing Rothko and Ken in order to establish their relationship within the scene? You will need to think carefully about their positioning on stage, in particular their relationship to one another. Consider also their respective status as boss and employee.

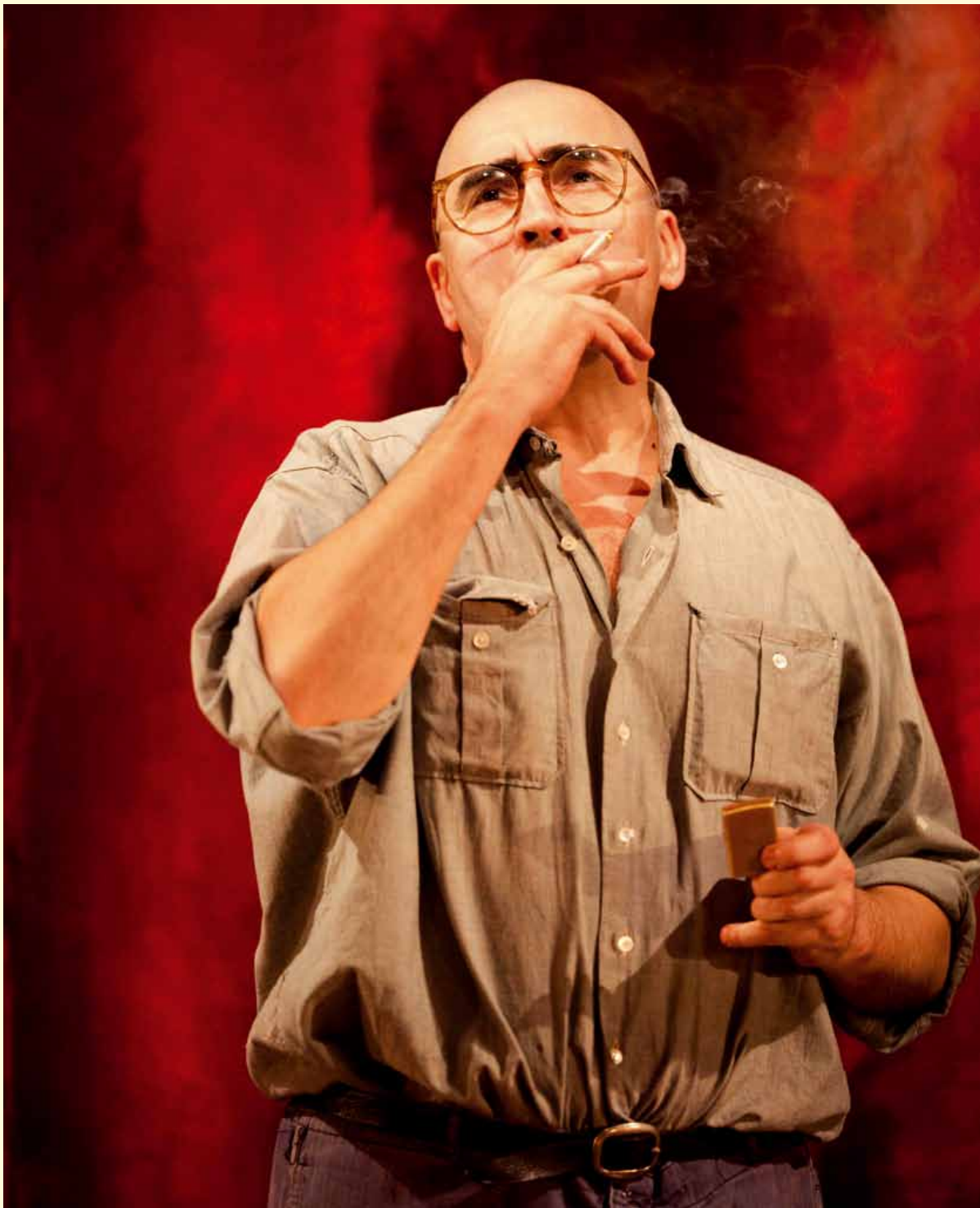
Think about the following: How will you ensure the scene, the first of the play, has maximum impact upon the audience? How does that affect your approach to pacing it? You should also take into account the other elements of production. For example, what should the lighting be like? Is any specific sound required?

Once you have seen the Donmar's production of RED consider how their staging of this scene compares with your own.

RED by John Logan
An extract from Scene One (pp.12-15)

Rothko *pours two glasses of Scotch. He hands one to* **Ken**.
They drink. **Ken** *is unused to drinking so early in the morning.*
Beat.
Rothko *stares at him, appraising.*

Rothko Answer me a question... Don't think about it, just say the first thing that comes into your head. No cognition.
Ken Okay.
Rothko You ready?



Ken Yeah.
Rothko Who's your favourite painter?
Ken Jackson Pollock.
Rothko (Wounded.) Ah.
Ken Sorry.
Rothko No, no –
Ken Let me do it again.
Rothko No –
Ken Come on –
Rothko No, it's silly –
Ken Come on, ask me again.
Rothko Who's your favourite painter?
Ken Picasso.

Ken *laughs.*
Rothko *doesn't.*
Rothko *glowers at him.*
Ken's *laugh dies.*
Rothko *roams.*

Rothko Hmm, Pollock... Always Pollock. Don't get me wrong, he was a great painter, we came up together, I knew him very well.
Ken What was he like?
Rothko You read Nietzsche?
Ken What?
Rothko You ever read Nietzsche? The Birth of Tragedy?
Ken No.
Rothko You call yourself an artist? One can't discuss Pollock without it. One can't discuss anything without it. What do they teach you in art school now?
Ken I –

Rothko You ever read Freud?
Ken No –
Rothko Jung?
Ken Well –
Rothko Byron? Wordsworth? Aeschylus? Turgenev? Sophocles? Schopenhauer? Shakespeare? Hamlet? At least Hamlet, please God! Quote me Hamlet. Right now.
Ken 'To be or not to be, that is the question.'
Rothko Is that the question?
Ken I don't know.
Rothko You have a lot to learn, young man. Philosophy. Theology. Literature. Poetry. Drama. History. Archaeology. Anthropology. Mythology. Music. These are your tools as much as brush and pigment. You cannot be an artist until you are civilized. You cannot be civilized until you learn. To be civilized is to know where you belong in the continuum of your art and your world. To surmount the past, you must know the past.
Ken I thought you weren't my teacher.
Rothko You should be so blessed I talk to you about art.

Rothko *moves away.*
Beat.

Rothko How do you feel?
Ken How do I feel?
Rothko indicates the huge mural paintings all around them.
Rothko How do they make you feel?
Ken Give me a second.

Ken *moves to the middle of the room and takes in all the paintings.*

Rothko So?
Ken Give me a second.

Beat.

Ken Disquieted.
Rothko And?
Ken Thoughtful.
Rothko And?
Ken Um... Sad.
Rothko Tragic.
Ken Yeah.
Rothko They're for a restaurant.
Ken What?
Rothko They're for a restaurant.

Rothko *smiles. He enjoys this.*

Questions on the production and further practical work

You may wish to work individually on completing these questions.

When you go to see the Donmar's production of RED consider the following:

- How does the production utilise lighting and sound to realise the above scene?
- Elsewhere, what transformations take place within the main characters through the journey of the play? How do the actors embody these changes? (See 'An interview with actor Eddie Redmayne'.)
- John Logan's opening stage directions describe Rothko's studio in detail: 'The hardwood floor is splattered and stained with hues of dark red paint. There is a cluttered counter or tables filled with buckets of paint, tins of turpentine, tubes of glue, crates of eggs, bottles of Scotch, packets of pigment, coffee cans filled with brushes, a portable burner or stovetop, and a phone.' (p.7)
- How does the design establish the world of the play, in terms of its location and atmosphere?

section 5

Ideas for further study

Reading and research

The following is a list of books about Rothko, his life and work, and the cultural context of the play which were on a table in the rehearsal room:

The Artist's Reality – Philosophies of Art by Mark Rothko (Yale University Press, 2004)

Writings on Art by Mark Rothko (Yale University Press, 2006)

Mark Rothko (Skira, 2007) No author was credited. The book may have been part of a series compiled by a General Series Editor.

Mark Rothko (National Gallery of Art Washington/Yale Catalogue, 1998)

Rothko ed. by Achim Borchardt-Hume (Tate, 2008)

Mark Rothko – A Biography by James E.B. Breslin (University of Chicago Press, 1993)

The Legacy of Mark Rothko by Lee Seldes (Da Capo Press, 1996)

Mark Rothko in New York by Diane Waldham (Guggenheim Museum, 1994)

Seeing Rothko ed. by Glenn Phillips and Thomas Crow (Getty Publications, 2005)

Fifties Forever – Popular Fashions for Men, Women, Boys and Girls by Roseann Ettinger (Schiffer, 1998)

Fashionable Clothing from the Sears Catalogs Late 1950s by Joy Shih (Schiffer, 1997)

Young Chet by William Claxton (Schirmer Art Books, 1993)

Bibliography

Mark Rothko - 1903-1970 – Pictures as Drama by Jacob Baal-Teshuva (Taschen, 2003)

Endnotes

(Endnotes)

1 Mark Rothko - 1903-1970 – Pictures as Drama by Jacob Baal-Teshuva (Taschen, 2003), p.10
2 Ibid., p.17
3 Mark Rothko quoted in Mark Rothko - 1903-1970 – Pictures as Drama by Jacob Baal-Teshuva (Taschen, 2003), p.7
4 Quoted in 'Timeline – Mark Rothko', RED Programme (Donmar Warehouse, 2009)
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Mark Rothko quoted in 'The Challenge and Turmoil of the Seagram/Four Seasons Restaurant Commission', Wikipedia
8 Ibid.
9 Mark Rothko quoted in 'Timeline – Mark Rothko', RED Programme (Donmar Warehouse, 2009)
10 All page references to the play refer to the Oberon Books' edition, published 2009

The First Noël

By Al Senter

Thirty-six years after his death, the Noel Coward brand is as powerful and as evocative as ever. The sparkling quips, the clipped delivery, the silk dressing-gown, the cigarette-holder, the elegant languor of a moneyed world where it's always cocktail hour; all these are integral elements of the Noel Coward image. It's an image that was manufactured for the 1920s and which we are still eagerly buying today. As Coward himself was well aware, a writer who speaks eloquently to one era is likely to be ignored by the next.

If anything, Coward was too successful in establishing himself as the voice of a generation, once the sensation of The Vortex in 1924 had made him the darling of the chic and the fashionable. And once that generation had passed into middle age and Coward himself moved from yesterday's radical to tomorrow's reactionary, the tide that had flowed in his favour left him stranded, in particular, as public taste ebbed in the opposite direction.

There were many critics even in Coward's heyday who predicted that such a dazzling talent, composed, as they saw it, entirely of superficiality, would soon fall to earth, like a firework that soars into the night sky, only to peter out in a few paltry shards of light. In his more introspective moments, Coward was inclined to wonder if his adversaries did have a point. In Present Indicative (1937), his first volume of autobiography, he considers the case for the Prosecution:

"Was my talent real, deeply flowing, capable of steady growth and ultimate maturity? Or was it the evanescent sleight-of-hand that many believed it to be; an amusing, drawing-room flair, adroit enough to skim a certain immediate acclaim from the surface of life but with no roots in experience and no potentialities."

Prey to such doubts, perhaps Coward would have been surprised by the tenacity with which his best works have clung on to the repertoire.

Of the plays, Hay Fever, Private Lives, Blithe Spirit and Present Laughter always seem to be in production, closely followed by The Vortex, Design For Living, Easy Virtue and Relative Values. The revues and the musicals that gave birth to The Noël Coward Songbook may not have survived changing tastes, although his epic Cavalcade was handsomely served by a recent revival at Chichester Festival Theatre. Yet Poor Little Rich Girl, I'll See You Again, If Love Were All, Twentieth Century Blues, Mad Dogs and Englishmen, and Mad About The Boy are only a few of his popular standards. Since the National Theatre's revival of Hay Fever in 1964 – orchestrated, no doubt, by Laurence Olivier, Coward's co-star from Private Lives – restored Coward to critical and public approval, his position has been secure in the pantheon of English-speaking drama. The recent film of Easy Virtue, the Broadway revival of Blithe Spirit and Kneehigh's production of Brief Encounter all underline his continuing vitality.

Yet are we not in danger of making the same mistake as Coward's contemporaries in equating the man with the characters in his plays? To be fair to the mass media of 1924, it was a connection which the wily Coward, always aware of the value of publicity, did everything to encourage in the public mind. In The Vortex, Coward, a moralist even in his mid-twenties, was fiercely attacking the pleasure-seeking frivolities of Florence Lancaster and her weakling son. Yet, in anatomising social decadence Coward himself was stigmatised in the same way he condemns the

Lancasters. Equally his own assurance in high society gave the impression that he was a lifelong member of this exclusive club rather than an arriviste from the suburbs. There is surely some truth in Sheridan Morley's suggestion that work took the place of religion for the atheist Coward and so there was no greater sin in his mind than an indolent and a parasitic existence. Coward's apparent effortlessness, whether in acting, music or writing was actually a product of sustained and dedicated craftsmanship. And his work ethic drove him to several nervous collapses like so many high-achievers, Coward shows all the signs of a bi-polar disorder that could only be cured in his case by long, often solitary, sea voyages across the Pacific and through the Far East.

To judge from Coward's smooth penetration into the highest reaches of society, it's easy to compose an upper-middle-class background for him, complete with nannies and butlers, public school and Oxbridqe. But Coward's origins were suburban rather than smart-set, Middlesex and not Mayfair. In fact, he was born during the final weeks of the nineteenth century on December 16,1899 in the unassuming themes-side village of Teddington. Coward's maternal grandfather had been a sea-captain and there is the sense that his beloved mother had slightly come down in the world by marrying Arthur Coward. From working in a music publishers, Mr Coward became a travelling salesman for a piano business. Unlike Willy Loman, he's unlikely to have taken his samples on the road with him and unlike Willy, he does not seem to have been very passionate about his trade. In fact, Coward's father appears to have been rather a colourless personality, not dissimilar from Mr Lancaster in The Vortex, content to fit in with his wife's plans and apparently relaxed about the exceptionally close bond between his wife and their elder surviving son. Holidays were taken at Brighton, Broadstairs and Bognor rather than the Riviera and until Coward hit the jackpot with The Vortex, family finances were often strained. From Teddington, the Cowards moved to Sutton in Surrey and thence to Battersea, Clapham Common and at length to Ebury Street on the fringes of Belgravia, where Mrs Coward ran a lodging-house.

His parents had met through their shared love of music and Coward fully inherited their interest but with added skills. Mrs Coward does not appear to have been the archetypal showbiz mother but she seemed to sense that her elder son's talents might lead to something special. Although Coward's formal education was at best haphazard, he received a thorough schooling in the theatre from his mother who would take him to as many West End productions as the family finances could permit. And it was Mrs Coward who entered him for auditions for The Goldfish, a children's play, which marks Coward's first professional engagement on the stage. Among his fellow actors was Alfred Willmore, (later to re-invent himself as the very Irish Michael MacLiammoir) who remembers a boy much older than his years, possessed with boundless self-confidence. Certainly, with an insouciance that might appal today's generation of mothers, Mrs Coward allowed her son to roam on his own through the West End. In the wake of The Goldfish, young Noel became a reasonably successful boy-actor, both in London and on tour through the provinces, and his earnings were an invaluable addition to the family exchequer.

Even at this tender age, Coward had acquired the knack of making useful connections. As he admits in Present Indicative, he could behave with brattish grandeur backstage but he was wit and charm personified to the outside world. There was never any shortage of invitations to addresses that were much smarter and more comfortable than the lodging-house in Ebury Street and with his networking skills he was soon amassing a formidable array of famous friends

and acquaintances. In Present Indicative he reels off an impressive list of his New Best Friends, including Maugham, H G Wells, Rebecca West, Fay Compton and future Hollywood star Ronald Colman. But his earnings, either from acting or the writing which he was fast developing, were sporadic and he was forced to work for a music publisher and even as a professional dancer-cum-gigolo. In order to present a facade of substance to his grand connections, Coward was often forced to borrow money from friends. If he was a snob, it was a snobbish desire for celebrity rather than blue blood. If it was success that he craved and strove so hard to achieve, it was not only for the kind of financial security that had eluded him and his family. It was as if he felt he had a destiny which he was bound to fulfil.

Yet for all the self-assurance he could muster when frequenting the stately homes of England or the smart Park Avenue mansions when both London and New York lay prostate at his feet, the private Coward still felt something of an interloper in these charmed circles. With the loosening of social conventions that came post 1918, the upper classes and the performing classes rubbed shoulders more easily; it was as if Debretts had merged with The Spotlight. Coward found himself both an observer and a participant. In Present Indicative, he refers to himself several times as a performing beast, never wholly accepted, doing tricks to justify his admission. In Robert Altman's Gosford Park (2002), the Oscar-winning screenplay by Julian Fellowes imagines Ivor Novello, Coward's friend and rival, a valued guest at a country house weekend but one who is expected to sing for his supper. Coward must have fulfilled a similar role at many such gatherings.

It is fascinating to note how insecure Coward feels in such an environment – not simply because he's a parvenu from the wrong side of the social tracks but because he's a performer, playing a part by invitation rather than by right of birth. He compares his imposing surroundings to a film or stage set and he imagines that the great men and women he meets are all being played by the cream of Equity's character actors. There is the clear implication that soon the director will call 'Cut!' and the curtain will fall and Coward will hand back his costume and be shown out through the Tradesman's Entrance. In Present Indicative, he recalls an indifferent reception for his latest play:

"I remembered the chic, crowded first night of This Was A Man in New York. Three quarters of the people present I knew personally. They had swamped me, in the past, with their superlatives and facile appreciations. I had played and sung to them at their parties, allowing them to use me with pride as a new lion who roared amenably. I remembered how hurriedly they'd left the theatre the moment they realised that the play wasn't quite coming up to their expectations; unable, even in the cause of good manners, to face only for an hour or so the possibility of being bored."

Beneath the epigrams, both Coward's life and work were infinitely more complicated than the image he projected and still projects today. Among his thirty-six plays, there are at least two curiosities. Post-Mortem (1931) is a blast against those forces in society who failed to deliver a land fit for heroes to the surviving soldiers of the 1914 - 1918 conflict. In Peace In Our Time (1947), Coward imagines what would have happened, had Britain fallen to the projected Nazi invasion. The play was unsurprisingly only tepidly received at its West End premiere. Two years after the end of the war, the euphoria of victory had no doubt vanished with the grim reality in the era of austerity. But it was still a bold move on Coward's part to question the self-congratulatory pieties of the time. These two plays suggest

a Coward who is a bleak and angry social critic and might surprise audiences accustomed to the polished wit, the glittering dialogue and the heady romanticism.

The scale and depth of Coward's achievements still astonish. His writing career spanned forty-six years from I'll Leave It To You in 1920 to Suite in Three Keys in 1966; his film career lasted fifty-one years from D W Griffiths' Hearts of the World in 1918 via In Which We Serve in 1941 to The Italian Job in 1969 in which Coward's memorable Mr Big plans Michael Caine's heist from behind prison bars. Forget the clichés. His range was wider, his work more questioning, and his talents more diverse than the cravat and the silk dressing-gown would suggest. Coward's capacity to surprise as well as delight is surely undimmed.

Al Senter

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Present Indicative by Noël Coward and *A Talent to Amuse* by Sheridan Morley.

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. The theatre attracts almost 100,000 people to its productions a year. 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 as well as 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 music theatre, the Donmar has created a reputation for artistic excellence over the last 12 years and has won 26 Olivier Awards, 12 Critics' Circle Awards, 10 Evening Standard Awards and 10 Tony Awards for Broadway transfers.

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