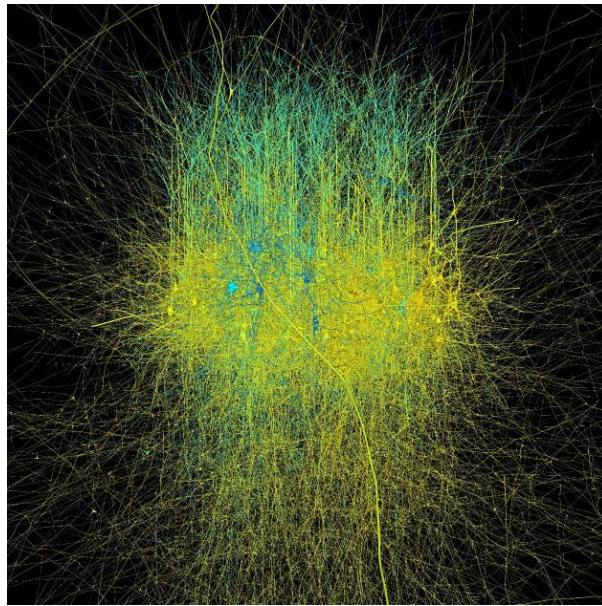




Love and Information

By Caryl Churchill



BACKGROUND PACK

CONTENTS

- 1. About The Production**
- 2. About The Writer**
- 3. Introduction to Love and Information**
- 4. About The Design**
- 5. Caryl Churchill at the Royal Court**
- 6. Interview with the Assistant Director**
- 7. Rehearsal Diary**
- 8. Practical Scene Study**
- 9. About Royal Court Education**

These resources are intended to give teachers and students a detailed insight into the creative process behind developing and staging *Love and Information*. Through interviews, production notes and rehearsal techniques, they demonstrate how the writer, director and cast worked in collaboration to create the show. We aim to provide useful information and opportunities to help students discover the unique world of the play for themselves.

1. ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

The Royal Court Theatre presents

Love and Information

By Caryl Churchill

Love and Information was first performed at The Royal Court Jerwood Theatre Downstairs, Sloane Square, London on Thursday 6th September 2012.

Cast

Nikki Amuka-Bird
Linda Bassett
Scarlett Brookes
Amanda Drew
Susan Engel
Laura Elphinstone
John Heffernan
Joshua James
Paul Jesson
Billy Matthews
Justin Salinger
Amit Shah
Rhashan Stone
Nell Williams
Josh Williams
Sarah Woodward

Director	James Macdonald
Set Designer	Miriam Buether
Costume Designer	Laura Hopkins
Lighting Designer	Peter Mumford
Sound Designer	Christopher Shutt
Casting Director	Amy Ball
Assistant Director	Caitlin MacLeod
Production Manager	Paul Handley
Stage Manager	Laura Draper
Deputy Stage Manager	Fran O'Donnell
Asst Stage Manager	George Cook
Stage Mgmt Work Placement	Maia Alvarez Stratford
Costume Supervisor	Jackie Orton
Musical Director	Simon Deacon
Choreographer	Stuart Hopps
Dialect Coach	Majella Hurley
Set Built by	Miraculous Engineering Ltd
Scenic Painter	Kerry Jarrett

2. ABOUT THE WRITER

Caryl always manages to have her pulse on the moral, social, and political issues that are current in our society. She is and has consistently been throughout her career, a formal adventurer in terms of her theatrical language, so that she's constantly challenging not just literally the language in which theatre is spoken, but also the context, the theatricality and the dramatic landscape in which she works. In that sense she is one of the great innovators of post-war British drama.

Stephen Daldry, Royal Court Artistic Director, 1992-1998, in an extract from *The Royal Court Theatre: Inside Out* by Ruth Little and Emily MacLaughlin, Oberon, 2007



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Caryl Churchill Biography

Playwright Caryl Churchill was born on 3 September 1938 in London and grew up in the Lake District and in Montreal. She was educated at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, where she read English. *Downstairs*, her first play, was written while she was still at university, was first staged in 1958 and won an award at the *Sunday Times* National Union of Students Drama Festival. She wrote a number of plays for BBC radio including *The Ants* (1962), *Lovesick* (1967) and *Abortive* (1971). *The Judge's Wife* was televised by the BBC in 1972 and *Owners*, her first professional stage production, premiered at the Royal Court Theatre in London in the same year.

She was Resident Dramatist at the Royal Court (1974-5) and spent much of the 1970s and 1980s working with the theatre groups 'Joint Stock' and 'Monstrous Regiment'. Her work during this period includes *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* (1976), *Cloud Nine* (1979), *Fen* (1983) and *A Mouthful of Birds* (1986), written with David Lan. *Three More Sleepless Nights* was first produced at the Soho Poly, London, in 1980.

Top Girls brings together five historical female characters at a dinner party in a London restaurant given by Marlene, the new managing director of 'Top Girls' employment agency. The play was first staged at the Royal Court in 1982, directed by Max Stafford-Clark. It transferred to Joseph Papp's Public Theatre in New York later that year. *Serious Money* was first produced at the Royal Court in 1987 and won the *Evening Standard* Award for Best Comedy of the Year and the Laurence Olivier/BBC Award for Best New Play. More recent plays include *Mad Forest* (1990), written after a visit to Romania, and *The Skriker* (1994). Her plays for television include *The After Dinner Joke* (1978) and *Crimes* (1982). *Far Away* premiered at the Royal Court in 2000, directed by Stephen Daldry. She has also published a new translation of Seneca's *Thyestes* (2001), and *A Number* (2002), which addresses the subject of human cloning. Her new version of August Strindberg's *A Dream Play* (2005),

premiered at the National Theatre in 2005 and *Drunk Enough to say I Love You?* (2006) premiered at the Royal Court Theatre in Winter 2006. Caryl Churchill lives in London.

Source: www.literature.britishcouncil/caryl-churchill



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Caryl Churchill's Plays and Awards

Plays (most recent work listed first)

2012: Love and Information; Ding Dong the Wicked
2009: Seven Jewish Children
2008: Bliss/Olivier Choinire, translator
2007: Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?
2005: A Dream Play, new version of August Stringberg's play
2002: A Number
2000: Far Away
1997: This Is A Chair
1997: Hotel
1997: Blue Heart
1994: The Skriker
1994: Thyestes, translator
1991: Lives of the Great Poisoners
1990: Mad Forest: a Play from Romania
1989: Ice Cream
1987: Serious Money
1986: A Mouthful of Birds, with David Lan
1984: Softcops
1983: Fen
1982: Top Girls
1980: Three More Sleepless Nights
1979: Cloud Nine
1978: Vinegar Tom
1977: Traps
1976: Light Shining in Buckinghamshire
1975: Objections to Sex and Violence
1973: Owners

Awards

2001: Obie Sustained Achievement Award
1988: Laurence Olivier/BBC Award for Best New Play, Serious Money
1987: Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, Serious Money
1987: Obie Award for Best New Play, Serious Money
1987: Evening Standard Award for Best Comedy of the Year, Serious Money
1984: Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, Fen
1983: Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, Top Girls, runner-up
1982: Obie Award for Playwriting, Top Girls
1981: Obie Award for Playwriting, Cloud Nine
1961: Richard Hillary Memorial Prize
1958: Sunday Times/National Union of Students Drama Festival Award, Downstairs

In an article for the Guardian newspaper, another leading British playwright April de Angelis, discusses Caryl Churchill's influence on her own work as well as contemporary British drama.

Caryl Churchill: changing the language of theatre

By April de Angelis

The Guardian, Friday 7 September 2012

With two new plays opening at the Royal Court, Caryl Churchill has remade the landscape of contemporary drama – and earned herself a place among the greats.

It is impossible to imagine the landscape of contemporary drama without [Caryl Churchill](#), the author of more than 30 plays, a handful of adaptations, a clutch of radio plays. And what plays! [Top Girls](#), [Cloud Nine](#), [Serious Money](#), [A Number](#), [Far Away](#), each a landmark in the history of our theatre culture. She has, as the playwright [Marius Von Mayerburg](#) has pointed out, "changed the language of theatre and very few playwrights do that". Only the greats deserve that accolade: Shakespeare, Chekhov, Ibsen, Brecht, Beckett, a roll call to which we could easily add Churchill.

The only woman on the list. Would Churchill be happy to be corralled into the category of "female playwright"? It may be of some solace to those of us who are women and playwrights, who have had to contend with nonsense pronouncements such as "women can't do structure", or who have noted the lack of a robust tradition of women's writing in the theatre to, at last, have a woman take her place in the theatrical canon, but for Churchill herself it might suggest a subtle limitation of her creative enterprise. I made a stab at listing some of the outstanding things about her work: playful, postmodern, serious, funny, theatrical, bold, innovative, poetic, political, surreal ... In what way could these qualities be said to be specifically "female"? But to ask this is not to say that Churchill hasn't had a profound engagement with feminism and sexual politics, as plays such as [Vinegar Tom](#) and [Top Girls](#) prove.

But then, it's tricky to be reductive about her work, which is part of its joy. [A Number \(2002\)](#) may be read as a play about cloning, a dystopian fantasy of a father who banishes the mother from the reproductive process and replicates sons via the lab. When the sons (both played by the same actor, Daniel Craig, in the original Royal Court production) meet they are thrown into a nightmare of identity confusion which leads to tragedy. But the play doesn't end there – a third clone turns up, Michael (also played by Craig), whose contentment with a lack of uniqueness disappoints his father. This all-male play probes questions about the relationship between sexism, capitalism and war. Deceptive in its simplicity, a play for just two actors, it asks a profoundly feminist question through the most theatrical of illusions. And it's funny. Michael tries to enlighten his father as to what makes him happy. Talking of genes he opines: "We've got 30% the same as a lettuce. Does that cheer you up at all?"

Churchill began her writing career in radio and then in 1972 her first stage play [Owners](#) was produced at the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs. A play written at the beginning of the property boom, it asked provocative questions about the relationship between the impulses to own and to destroy. This led to her association with [Max Stafford Clark and the Joint Stock Company](#), where such plays as [A Light Shining In Buckinghamshire](#) and [Cloud Nine](#) were written using the Joint Stock method – a period of improvisation and research with actors, after which Churchill would leave to write the play. Both plays are interrogations of entrenched aspects of society; our obsession with property which scuppered revolutionary possibilities in the former, and in [Cloud Nine](#) a farcical critique of the lingering impact of our inherited Victorian values on sex, race, sexuality and gender. In Act One, Churchill removes the body from the role, so that you are rewarded with sublime moments of theatre such as Betty, the Victorian wife of a colonial administrator, being played by a male actor. Here "she" is in conversation with her admirer, adventurer Harry Bagley:

HARRY: You have been thought of where no white women has ever been thought of before.

BETTY: It's one way of having adventures. I suppose I never will go in person.

Churchill's take on Brechtian alienation has audacity and comic verve, making us see anew the constructed nature of our beings and opening up possibilities for change. During Act Two, set in 1980s London, in a metaphorical reversal the modern, middle-aged Betty does "go in person" having made the discovery of self-pleasuring: "Sometimes I do it three times in one night and it really is great fun."

Throughout her writing life Churchill has experimented with form as well as process, which is why the question "What is a [Caryl Churchill](#) play?" is hard to answer; they are protean. Churchill is a playwright with a body of work that has continually responded to the "form and pressure of the times", as if she has turned the idea of what a play should be over and over, revisioning it beyond the accepted imaginative boundaries, to produce plays that are always revolutionary. *Blue/Heart* throws a spanner into the mechanism of each one-act play (in her work, a slash marks out when a character cuts into another's monologue). In *Heart's Desire*, while a family await the return of their daughter from Australia, the play constantly "resets itself" as if infected by a virus, so that we witness 25 rewindings and a resulting host of unexpected events – the entrance of a 10ft-bird or a class of school children. In *Blue Kettle*, as a young man pretends to be the long-lost son of various women, a "virus" affects language so that selectively words are replaced by either "blue" or "kettle" until the play at last is extinguished under the weight of non-communication. In "destroying" both plays Churchill asks questions about identity; are we more fluid than the stabilities of language and plotting in conventional narrative suggest?

Far Away (2000) again demonstrates Churchill's constant invention, pushing the traditional three-act format to the limits of its possibilities. In this dream-like play we first see Harper and Joan, an aunt with her young niece who has been an unintentional witness to an ethnic cleansing atrocity in a lonely farmhouse. Harper must recruit the innocent Joan to her cause. The dark fairytale begins. The two following scenes, each a vestigial act, plunge us into intense scenarios – of hat-making for concentration camp victims, and finally the fleeting visit home of an exhausted Joan in the midst of total war. As we, the audience, fill in the gaps between acts we are left with a disturbing question: how far away are we from such blatant ideological war-mongering and its emotional territory of paranoia, hatred and loss?

The question is not how has Churchill influenced women playwrights but rather, is there a contemporary playwright, female or male, who hasn't been influenced by her oeuvre? Who can forget such iconic moments as Act One of *Top Girls*, that surreal dinner party with guests including Pope Joan, who describes giving birth during an 11th-century ecclesiastical parade, being pulled off her horse and stoned to death; or Jack, the impotent neighbour in *Vinegar Tom* threatening to kill Alice unless she gives him back his erection (desperate, Alice puts her hand between his legs which does the trick, "Thanks Alice", says Jack "I wasn't sure you were a witch till then." Later Alice admits to us "I'm not a witch but I wish I was ..."); slow Angie having the last word, "Frightening", in *Top Girls*, summing up the Thatcher era with chilling prescience; or the murdered body of Val in *Fen*, stuffed into a wardrobe, suddenly reappearing on the opposite side of the stage.

This last image reveals Churchill's preoccupation with Foucault's concept of "docile bodies", bodies disciplined by institutions such as the family or factory into becoming obedient wives/workers, one such being Val, an oppressed rural worker. Val's sudden reappearance is a theatrical coup that left theatre-goers gasping. But she is also pointing to the possibilities of opening up a new "unreal" theatrical space that might encompass a woman's desire not controlled by the male gaze, patriarchy or capitalism.

Her latest work *Love and Information* has no named characters, rather a series of unnamed voices in a collection of encounters circling around the central preoccupation. It is up to us as the audience to draw our conclusions as to the meaning of the possible connections and disconnections between the scenarios.

What is the meaning of the lack of information the writer is giving us? On paper the white spaces seem frightening, threatening to engulf the words. Without the usual signposts of stage directions or scene numbers, the lack of information becomes terrifying in some way – or is it like the space in a therapist's room, where you encounter your own thinking and feeling? There is always darkness in Churchill's work.

In the scenario entitled "Lab", the most precise scientific rendering of the slicing of a chick's brain in order to understand the pecking mechanism is particularly brutal for being conveyed in unemotional scientific jargon. One starts to wonder – what is information without love? Is it a madness like the obsessive fan in "Fan" where the need to know everything, disguised as love, threatens in another way?

This mysterious, powerful play is like a disquisition on two of the most powerful poles in our lives: needing to know and needing to love. It is also the work of a great artist, a late work, so in some way it is a reflection on all that has preceded it. In "Climate", a voice states: "I'm frightened for the children," and later: "It's whether they drown or starve or get killed in the fight for water." Here is a writer who can convey with simplicity and directness such a terrible fear. Is this the information you want? Here it is. Can you live with it?

From her early historical, epic Brechtian plays to the more surreal later plays, Churchill has lit a blazing trail. Her career is unmatched in contemporary theatre and she stands with the greats in insisting, with brilliance, on her vision.



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3. Introduction to *Love and Information*

The Idea

Love and Information is an unusual and unique state-of-the-nation play. Churchill examines, explores, celebrates and questions where we are in our contemporary society. Her focus is on how the information that makes us human beings; our feelings, dreams and minds, are negotiated in a world dominated by a different kind of information. We are adrift in a sea of internet, religion, mathematics, communication, news, adverts and Facebook. How does this affect our relationships? How does it affect our memories? But rather than giving us an answer or presenting a moral tale, Churchill offers up snapshots of ourselves, existing, loving and figuring, and it is up to us to decide what we make of it.

The Structure

The play is made up of a series of very short scenes depicting contemporary life in Britain. There are 57 scenes in total; some last only 5 seconds and none are longer than 5 minutes. In the script, every vignette has a title. For example, one is called 'Wedding Video' and other titles are 'Secret' and 'Rash'. The scenes have been grouped into seven sections, each section simply numbered 1 to 7. Each short scenario is discreet and isolated from the others, with different characters in every scene. This means that there are over 100 characters in the play! In this production, all of the characters are played by a cast of 16 actors. Dotted randomly throughout the piece are 10 different micro-scenes with only one line of dialogue, all titled 'Depression'. The play ends with a vignette called 'Last Scene', and it's the only scene in which all the actors appear together.

Caryl's always ahead of the game. It's fascinating to hear the way she describes a new play. She makes it clear that what she understands a new play to be is the kind of play that has never been written before about something that has never been said before in the way in which we should say it. In other words, she would only hand something in as a new play if for her its form and content were new in the theatre.

James Macdonald, Director, in an extract from The Royal Court Theatre: Inside Out (Little and MacLaughlin, 2007)



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4. THE DESIGN

The Challenges

The radical form of Love and Information presents fascinating challenges for the designer. Here were just a few of the practical considerations:

- 57 Scene Changes
- 100 Different Characters
- Play is Divided into 7 Sections
- Running Time of Individual Scenes Range from 5 Seconds to 5 Minutes
- Total Running Time of Play is Under 2 Hours
- Characters Don't Enter or Exit during the Scenes
- Limited Storage Space Backstage
- Proscenium Arch Stage

How might these points impact a set design? Jot down a few design ideas for tackling the issues that arise from the needs of the production.

As Assistant Director Caitlin McLeod explains in her interview, the set had to provide infinite possibilities while simultaneously capturing the abstract realism of the scenes and the clinical, experimental feel of the overall play.

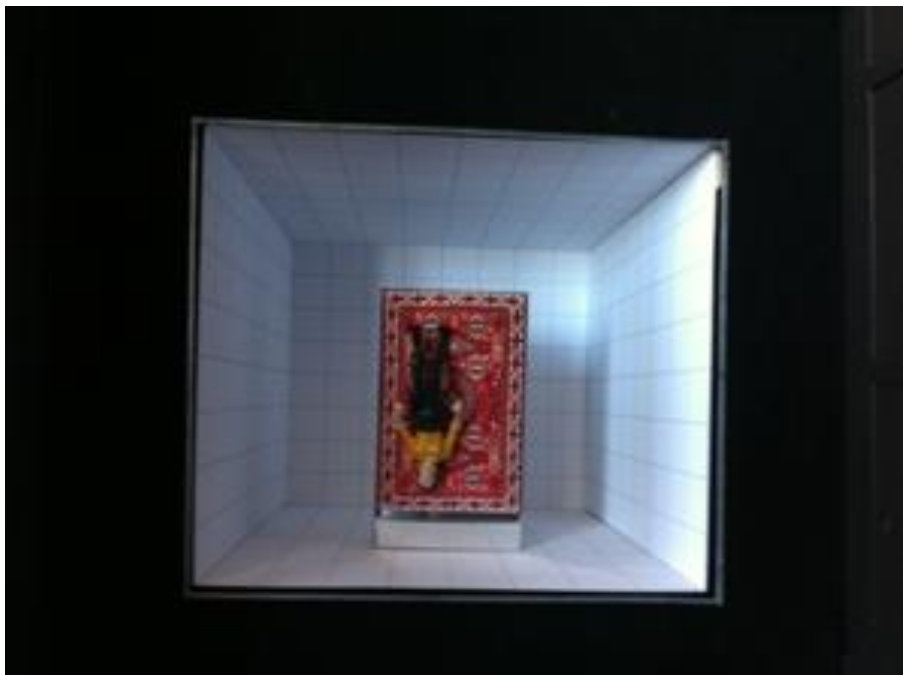


Photo of Model Box for Love and Information. Design © Miriam Buether 2012

Designer Miriam Buether's ingenious solution was to design a white box in which people and props would seemingly appear by magic. The box provides the sort of blank space into which simple props, such as a bed or a picnic blanket, can be introduced to create a specific location instantly. But it was very important that the scene changes not slow down the pace of the play. The transitions had to feel as rapid-fire as the scenes themselves. Working from the idea that the play was a series of snapshots, Miriam created a sort of camera shutter that closes across the front of the box for a few moments for a scene change, during which time the actors exit and props are removed at lighting speed while new actors and props are re-positioned for the next scene. A unique soundscape and lighting state are also used to evoke each location as are different costumes for every character.

DESIGN ACTIVITY

1. Imagine you are designing *Love and Information* for a site-specific production.

What type of venue would you choose to best represent the ideas and feel of the play? You might want to consider places such as warehouses, office blocks, car parks, etc. There are hundreds of possibilities - try to think as creatively as you can.

Once you've selected your venue, decide how you would like your audience to experience the production in that space, giving particular thought to how the transitions from scene to scene can be handled.

2. Imagine you are designing *Love and Information* for a small black box studio space.

How would you try to establish all of the different locations for the 57 scenes, and where would you place the audience in the space?



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5. Caryl Churchill at the Royal Court

Caryl Churchill's first stage play, *Owners*, directed by Nicholas Wright, had its debut at the Royal Court in 1973. This production heralded the start of a long-standing creative relationship between Churchill and the Royal Court that has continued for 39 years. During

this time, the theatre has produced 17 of her plays, including ground-breaking pieces such as *Top Girls*, *Cloud Nine*, *Serious Money*, *A Number* and *Far Away*.

Light Shining in Buckinghamshire, a Joint Stock production in 1976, marked the beginning of a number of landmark collaborations between Max Stafford-Clark and Caryl Churchill at the Royal Court. This was her first experience of what became known as the 'Joint Stock Method'. The Joint Stock Theatre Company became known for its distinctive and influential method of play development, involving a workshop period of three to four weeks during which writer, director and a company of actors collaborate to explore a subject or idea using improvisation, research conducted inside and outside the rehearsal room and rehearsed readings. Following this intensive period of investigation the playwright creates a draft script and the group meets again in an extended rehearsal period to hone the material for production.

Source: The Royal Court Theatre: Inside Out (Little and MacLaughlin, 2007)

Royal Court Reflections

Directors, actors and Caryl Churchill herself reflect on staging some of her best-known work at the Royal Court.

On Owners

Director Nicholas Wright: Unusually for an agent, she [Peggy Ramsay] liked having clients who were, as she saw it, uncorrupted by too much success. She finally got Michael Codron to commission a play from Caryl and that was *Owners* and Codron brought it to the Court. It did, at last, put Caryl properly on the map.

On Light Shining in Buckinghamshire

Director Max Stafford-Clark: I enjoy it...it does have a clean, spare beauty and passion in it. I love watching it. The scrubbed table... the figures...the actors lit against the black...the skull, the hourglass...Soon it will be gone forever, but it is beautiful.

On Cloud Nine

Director Max Stafford-Clark: All of us were able to give approval to the high comedy of the first act but found it more difficult to digest and give credence to the reflection of our own experiences which Caryl had written for the second half.

On Top Girls

Caryl Churchill: The ideas for *Top Girls* came from all kinds of things...The idea of Dull Gret as a character I found in some old notebook from 1977 or '78. There'd been the idea of the play about a lot of dead women having coffee with someone from the present. And an idea about women doing all kinds of jobs.

Actor Carole Hayman: The difficulties of staging new work are always underrated. There is no yardstick. There are script battles, personality clashes, frantic searches for meaning. *Top Girls* was no exception. With its extraordinary structure and revolutionary use of overlapping speech, it nearly had us beat.

On Serious Money

Director Max-Stafford Clark: It hit the zeitgeist...At the time we did *Serious Money*, there was an absolute focus in the newspapers on the City and the greed and the amount of money it was making.

Caryl Churchill: In any one audience you get an extraordinary mix of people: City people who could laugh at themselves and City people who couldn't; people who didn't know what was going on in the City and were appalled left saying God, this government, this City, we must stop all this.

On Far Away

Director Stephen Daldry: I remember reading Far Away on the tube and turning over the page and seeing this stage direction which says, 'The Parade (Scene 2.5): five is too few and twenty better than ten. A hundred?' And I thought, 'Oh my God, Caryl, how can you do this to us? A parade of 100 people and it's only 45 minutes long!'

Source: *The Royal Court Theatre: Inside Out* (Little and MacLaughlin, 2007)

Research Activity

Choose one of the plays above and research the original production in-depth to discover how Caryl Churchill developed the play in collaboration with the Royal Court, how the production was received by audiences and critics and the impact it made at the time it was produced.



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6. Interview with *Love and Information's* Assistant Director, Caitlin McLeod

When you first read *Love and Information*, what was your immediate response to it ?

I felt it was such a pertinent state of the nation play written by Caryl Churchill, one of our greatest leading playwrights. I guess it's also a state of the world play, but seen through a mainly British lens. I thought these vignettes summed up where we were in time, in a technological sense and in a relationship sense – it's where we've come to. And it was so far reaching and ranging that it felt like it was something that everyone could relate to or at least have imaged themselves in that situation or know people in that situation. It felt like there was a way in for everyone, it was one of those plays that I felt, for anyone who read it, there would be an instant reaction of recognition and enjoyment from each of those little scenes. And of course I was struck by Carol's language which has become even more pared down from the days of plays like *The Striker*. There's now no punctuation, pauses or character indications. Her simple, sparse and poetic style leaves such room for interpretation and meaning. There's so much meaning in such few words, which I think is definitely unique to her craft.

The form is really unique, isn't it? *Love and Information* has been described as a kind of kaleidoscope in term of structure. Would you agree with that?

There are different levels of structure, so you have the overall play that was then divided into seven sections and each of those sections has a collection of about seven different scenes which have a distinct theme. So one of them is difficult information, one of them is looking for meaning, one of them is memory. In those you can then have 3 page scenes, or you have 5 second scenes. And within these scenes, it doesn't say who these voices are or how many people are in the scene. What the feelings are, what the relationships are, that is all up for grabs with the other artists.

When you read the play on the page, those sections are numbered and each scene is also tilted. How did you try to convey those titles to the audience?

We did a workshop a couple months before we started the play and there was a lot of talk about whether we needed the titles at the beginning of each scene, because some of them are quite specific and you wouldn't necessarily know what the scene was about just from hearing it. I think everyone felt quite strongly that we could feel that were different sections and also when you were moving from one to the next because they were each saying something different about information or love. But generally, as we've rehearsed it and come to create the world of each scene, it has become quite clear that if you put too much meaning on top of it or try to signal too strongly that this is what it's about, then it takes away from the possibilities of the scene. So I think they decided it wasn't necessary that the audience knew, for instance, that a scene was about Census. It was more important that they have a sense that this scene is about people avoiding information or about people avoiding giving information. That's more interesting than knowing what the scene is called.

Can you say a little bit about the play's title *Love and Information*? How did the name of the play feed into the rehearsal process?

There was a lot of discussion about where the information is in each scene and where is the love and how that is negotiated and changed. What was important to find out was what the relationships or what the love could be in each scene and every time that we pushed that, the scene inherently became more interesting and more powerful.

It's an interesting juxtaposition, love and information. What do you think Caryl Churchill might be saying about the relationship between these two ideas?

I think she is investigating the point that we are at now in terms of our natural impulses, which are love and feelings, existing within our man-made technological world which is a lot to do with information and how to process that. Today's information, Internet, Facebook, etc - are they used to channel love, are they now different ways to express love? So, I think she was interested in investigating, exploring different types of love that have come out of this new world of information. She's not necessarily saying this is bad or this should change, or that we are in a worse place than we were when we had love without Facebook or any of these other things. I think she is really interested in the strange place we have ended up and how we negotiate love within information which is overpowering us every minute of the day, really.

Could you describe how Caryl Churchill and the director James MacDonald worked together in the rehearsal room?

They have a wonderful working relationship and they have done a lot of shows together. It's such a close collaboration. I think James reads Caryl's work very well. She trusts him inherently and they trust each other. So, at times, they worked a bit like two directors, or not really directors, but two people offering up ideas for each scene and making suggestions. And both of them are incredibly gracious towards each other's ideas, saying 'oh, yes, let's try that'. One of James' key features as a director is to say 'let's try it' which is wonderful – no matter what anyone says, he will give it a go, which is liberating for everyone concerned. And it also meant that Caryl could try out anything she wanted as well and give her ideas. And a lot of her ideas were in the final production. I think they shared it pretty equally. I noticed, in the beginning, that they had already planned out together who had been in each scene, the combinations, and the logistics of it. They had fine tuned all of this when we came into to rehearsals.

How does the show's design work to help the movement and flow of the production?

In the initial workshop a few months ago, one of the questions or concerns was how do you make sure each and every scene has the same weight and the same tension. Some scenes might be 3 or 4 pages long and others just 5 lines, but each one is as important and will need as much attention as the others. So, if you create different spaces, that is going to have an impact on how different scenes are viewed. And in the same vein, if you create very realistic whole worlds for each scene, are you projecting too much onto what a scene is about that isn't actually within the writing? So the creative team came to this idea of having one space that could be seen as a complete entity but also a blank canvas that meant anything could turn up at any point. It would have the same sort of abstract realism that each individual scene had. And it provided infinite possibilities because you can put anything in a white box and it becomes what you want it to become. The design also enhanced the idea of the play being a bit of an experiment, a sort of controlled, scientific space. It allows for focusing, pinpointing and zooming in on people's lives. That's what the set captures.

Given the scenes in the play are so short, how did you create the world of each scene in rehearsal?

First of all, we just read through a scene and we would talk about what came out most strongly and what might it be about, what might these people be saying? Then next probably came the relationship – who could they be, could it be mother and daughter, could it be best friends? And that kind of moved and melded with where could they be and what the situation was. That did sometimes completely change. Sometimes we would start off with the idea that the scene was in the back of a taxi but then later decide the characters were instead at the gym on cross trainers. We would sense pretty early if it wasn't working, either the energy of the place they were in wasn't right or the actors didn't feel it was completely truthful in terms of what the scene was saying. At the same time James had some ideas of things that he wanted to see. At one point he really wanted to have someone up a ladder, so we tried it out in different scenes and in one scene it worked, so that stuck. But again, you only have a limited amount of time to explore infinite possibilities. Even now during the previews, James is tweaking and changing certain things in different places.

Once you had decided the location and the relationship for each scene, did you create any sort of back story for the scene?

A little bit. Because no one enters or exits the scenes, you do just kind of happen upon an exchange. So, the actors did a little bit about what they might have said right before this to discover where the characters were when they first started a scene. And a lot of them quite enjoyed doing these improvisations. It was fun, but, again, there was only a limited time to rehearse each scene, so there were only a few times we could explore that.

Having worked with James and Caryl throughout the process, what do you think they might hope an audience would take away from *Love and Information*?

I think something they wouldn't like is someone coming out feeling like that is what Caryl Churchill wanted to say about the world and who we are. Not at all. There is no sort of overarching political, social message. But I think what we were striving for was for each audience member to have a unique experience and reaction. For some people it may not resonate, it won't be their cup of tea, and that is as equally as valid as someone who wants to keep seeing these scenes again and again. But I think it's about being able to relate at least to something in the piece, and feel that it captures a bit of me and where I am in the world. The play is so open-ended and very much without a certain message. From the reactions I've heard so far in previews, people find it delightful seeing these little worlds. A lot of them are very funny, and a lot of them are very moving. I think it's just that you could keep watching it forever to discover the different surprises inside the box.

7. Assistant Director's Rehearsal Diary

Caitlin McLeod, the Assistant Director, shares a few pages of her rehearsal diary for Love and Information. The notes are a short-hand record of the initial thoughts/ideas/questions about the play's scenes that came out of the company's discussions in the first week of rehearsals.

DEPRESSION – a retreat from information. No want or need. Nothing can reach you. No meaning.

*note to self: look up Louis Walpert or Dorethy Roe (speakers on mental disorders??) also – a specialist for CLIMATE change? Stephen Emmett?

SCHIZOPHRENIA – a shattering of connections and an otherness. Things happen for no reason.

'normal self' is located in memory and perception. We live by reacting. "fear is the root of all madness".

SECTION 1 – wanting information. SECTION 2 – difficult information (what information you choose to share, how you choose to share it)

How does the information change the situation in each scene?

SECRET

the audience is never going to know what the info is..

- starts with this scene because...classic conflict in a play (A wants something from B, B avoids giving it to A etc)

Why is the SECRET a whisper?? Too awful to say out loud? In public?

CENSUS

The institution, the govt. wants to know our information. Will the audience know it's about census (GET PROP to play with)

What happens if you don't fill out the census? (£1000 fine?)

FAN

Two people wanting, competition

Fan magazine, biography, Googling for the information?

TORTURE

We know it's torture but... does it matter if the audience don't?

It's just a job to them, routine.

RENDITION/EXTRAORDINARY RENDITION?

Accents? Location? Politics?

LAB (journalist, scientist, date?)

Stephen Rose scientist talk:

Treating animals with respect. Very social. Animals won't learn unless they are well treated.

When chicks first hatch, the first object they see they become attached to, think it's their mother.

20 sec experiment.

Procedural memory (riding a bike)

Semantic memory (days of the week)

Episodic memory (life)

Every time you recall a memory, you remake it. (BBC 'Philosopher's Arms' 3/4pm tomorrow)

- LOVE is the variable in every scene???

DIRECTING ACTIVITY

Here is the shortest scene in *Love and Information*:

Cold

Someone sneezes

In the script, Caryl Churchill placed it after 'Last Scene' in a group of scenes she titled 'Random'. She indicates in her notes that these scenes can happen in any section of the play and they are also optional. (NB: 'Cold' is the title of the scene and 'Someone sneezes' is the action - there is no dialogue.)

Imagine you are directing *Love and Information*:

Would you include this scene? Why or why not?

If you did include it, where would you put the scene in the play?

Make two lists:

1. Five possible locations for the scene
2. Five possible reasons someone sneezes

Then play the scene several different ways, mixing and matching the locations and reasons for sneezing. Which works best in performance?



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8. On Your Feet – A Practical Scene Study

These exercises allow you to try out the approach the director James Macdonald and the actors used to rehearse the individual scenes in *Love and Information*.

In pairs, read the two short scenes below from *Love and Information*. Once you've finished, select the scene you'd like to work on:

1. Discuss who these two people could be. Make a list of all the possibilities. Remember to consider age, gender and relationship to one another as well as possibly thinking about each character's class, what they do and where they might live.
2. Discuss where they might be in the scene. Are there any clues in the text? Again, list all the places they could be and what activities they might each be doing in those locations.
3. What event might they be discussing in the scene?
4. Try to discover what role information plays in the scene and how love informs the scene.
5. Choose three possible combinations of location and relationship. Rehearse the three different scenarios.
6. Rehearse the scenarios again, adding an activity/action for one or both of the characters in each scene.
7. Team up with another pair and show your 3 variations to the other pair. Talk about which scenario works best in performance.
8. Perform your favourite version of the scene for the whole group and allow feedback from the audience about what the scene communicates to them when presented in this way.

Scene 1

Decision

I've written down all the reasons to leave the country and all the reasons to stay.

So how does that work out?

There's things on both side.

How do you feel about it?

No, I'm trying to make a rational decision based on the facts.

Do you want me to decide for you?

Based on what? The facts don't add up

I'd rather you stayed here. Does that help?

Scene 2

Grief

Are you sleeping?

I wake up early but that's all right in the summer.

Eating?

Oh enough. Don't fuss.

I've never had someone die.

I'm sorry, I've nothing to say. Nothing seems very interesting.

He must have meant everything to you.

Maybe. We'll see.



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8. EDUCATION AT THE ROYAL COURT

The Royal Court is a centre for excellence and innovation in theatre-making, and the Education Department aims to stimulate and inspire students of all ages, encouraging learning and participation in every aspect of the theatre's work, from the process of writing plays to pioneering rehearsal room techniques.

We offer a wide-ranging programme of work designed to open up and demystify the craft of making theatre. Royal Court Education activities include:

Workshops for productions
INSET workshops for teachers
Post-show talks
Royal Court in a Day Study Day
Drama School in a Day Study Day
Performing Arts Business Study Day

A full description of all education events can be found on the education page of the Royal Court web-site, www.royalcourttheatre.com. If you would like more information, please e-mail Lynne Gagliano, Education Associate, at lynnegagliano@royalcourttheatre.com or phone 020 7565 5174.

The *Love and Information* Background Pack compiled and written by Lynne Gagliano, Royal Court Education Associate and Caitlin McLeod, Assistant Director for *Love and Information*. Cover Image by Science Visuals ©2012. Production photos and Caryl Churchill photo by Stephen Cumminskey © 2012.