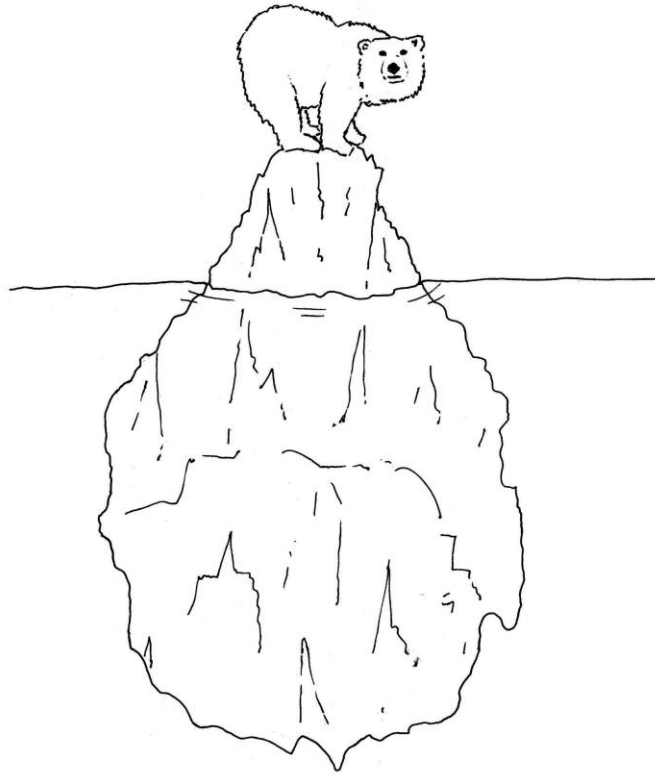


ROYAL COURT

The Heretic by Richard Bean



BACKGROUND PACK

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1. ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

The Royal Court Theatre presents

The Heretic

by Richard Bean

First performance at the Royal Court Jerwood Theatre Downstairs,
Sloane Square, London, Friday 4 February 2011.

In order of appearance

Dr Diane Cassell

Phoebe

Ben Shotter

Geoff Tordoff

Professor Kevin Maloney

Catherine Tickell

Juliet Stevenson

Lydia Wilson

Johnny Flynn

Adrian Hood

James Fleet

Leah Whitaker

Director

Designer

Lighting Designer

Sound Designer

Casting Director

Assistant Director

Production Manager

Stage Manager

Deputy Stage Manager

Assistant Stage Manager

Stage Management Placement

Costume Supervisor

Fight Director

Set built by

Painted by

Jeremy Herrin

Peter McKintosh

Paul Pyant

Emma Laxton

Julia Horan

Sophie Austin

Paul Handley

Ben Delfont

Tilly Stokes

Laura Draper

Louis Carver

Iona Kendrick

Kevin McCurdy

Scena

Charlotte Gainey

The Heretic by Richard Bean was originally commissioned by Sonia Friedman Productions.

2. ABOUT THE WRITER

RICHARD BEAN

Bean, a former psychologist, considers it his job as a playwright to challenge prevailing orthodoxy in as fierce and frank a way as possible. 'As a scientist by training, I was annoyed that this untried hypothesis [about climate change] was dictating government policy.'

-Richard Bean talking to Nick Curtis about The Heretic in the Evening Standard article 'It's Right On', 28 Feb 2011.

PLAYS FOR THE ROYAL COURT:

Harvest, Honeymoon Suite (& ETC), Under the Whaleback, Toast.

OTHER THEATRE INCLUDES:

The Big Fella (Out of Joint/tour); House of Games, The Hypochondriac (adaptations, Almeida); Pub Quiz is Life, Up on the Roof (Hull Truck); On the Side of Angels (The Great Game, Tricycle); England People Very Nice, The Mentalists, Wabenzi (National); The English Game (Headlong/tour); In the Club (Hampstead/tour); The God Botherers (Bush); Smack Family Robinson (Live, Newcastle); Mr England (Sheffield Crucible).

RADIO INCLUDES:

Of Rats and Men, Yesterday, Unsinkable, Robin Hood's Revenge

AWARDS INCLUDE:

2005 Critics' Circle Best Play Award for Harvest, 2004 Pearson Play of the Year Award for Honeymoon Suite, 2002 George Devine Award for Under the Whaleback.

3. SYNOPSIS OF THE HERETIC

The play begins in Doctor Diane Cassell's office in a fictional Earth Sciences department at York University. Doctor Cassell's opinion on global warming contradicts those expressed by the faculty head and Diane's ex-lover, Professor Kevin Maloney, and threatens to undermine the department.

These views have serious consequences for Diane; she receives two death threats from the Sacred Earth Militia. But undeterred, and going against Kevin's demands, she publishes her theory on the lack of sea level rise in the Maldives. Later in the play she goes even further and makes an appearance on Newsnight claiming the 'there is no hard evidence that CO2 is the main cause of Global Warming'. This will have a major impact in the way the Earth Sciences faculty can raise funding and Kevin is forced to suspend Doctor Cassell on the grounds of 'mental incapacity'.

In the first half Diane begins to teach a first year student Ben Shotter. He is a disaffected, young offender whose environmental views clash entirely with Diane's and she suspects him of being part of the Sacred Earth Militia. During the play his passion and intelligence become clear and a mutual respect begins to develop. Diane involves him in a new assignment to peer review a highly respected paper demonstrating Anthropogenic Global Warming using tree ring data by a rival scientist from Hampshire University. Her aim is to encourage Ben's scepticism, but also to feed her own agenda. The data needed to conduct the assignment is not accessible and Diane takes out a Freedom of Information request which gets rejected.

Ben comes from a different generation to Diane where the world ending is a real and present danger. His fears and frustration with himself and the human race are similar to those of Diane's anorexic daughter Phoebe. The pair meet and instantly connect. Diane uses this attraction to stop Ben self harming by inviting Ben over to see Phoebe on Boxing Day.

In the second half of the play we are in Diane's home. It is Christmas and Diane has been writing for the Daily Telegraph presenting a sceptical argument on global warming. The death threats have continued and got more confrontational with the most recent appearing in the form of an unstamped Christmas card. The Sacred Earth Militia know where she lives and just after the interval we see one of them secretly enter the house. Geoff, the university

Site Services manager is revealed as the perpetrator. He steals the knives from the kitchen and lies in wait upstairs.

Kevin surprises Diane and Phoebe with a visit; his wife has left him. Diane begrudgingly invites him in and then Ben arrives. As well as wanting to see Phoebe, he has managed to hack into Hampshire University mainframe and has got the data Diane wanted. All four of them go through the data concluding that the results are deeply flawed and the paper does not prove anything. This results in a euphoric moment where Phoebe and Ben kiss.

Determined to have some privacy Phoebe takes Ben outside to the garden shed. Once alone Diane tells Kevin about the death threat. He puts her at ease and asks her to come back and work at the university. Phoebe comes back to the house to tell her mum that Ben has asked her to move in with him. Diane is confronted by her anorexic child growing up and struggles to deal with it. She asks to speak to Ben about the joys of living with a 'purging anorexic'. The tension between the Phoebe and Diane develops throughout the play and Phoebe finally refuses to let her mum control her life anymore. She gets physically violent and punches and hits Diane to the floor, finally grabbing hold of a bottle. Before she can do any major damage, her body, weakened by her illness, gives up on her. Phoebe has a heart attack. Kevin comes back in and helps Diane to call an ambulance while they wait helplessly.

Geoff is still upstairs and, unable to ignore what is going on, bursts in and administers CPR. Ben comes back in telling how the Sacred Earth Militia members have arrived and are heading for the house. Geoff shouts at Kevin and Ben to go out and scare them. We hear the fight as Geoff continues to do CPR on Phoebe and Diane begs her to live.

The final scene is Phoebe and Ben's wedding day. The pair appear to have put some of their angst behind them, but their environmental views remain the same. Diane is coming to terms with her daughter's future and makes a final and moving speech in celebration of the human race.

This is a beautifully funny play about belief that explores the human side of scientific knowledge.

Sophie Austin
Assistant Director

4. NOTES FROM THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR'S REHEARSAL DIARY

Week 1:

We start the week with a read through at the Royal Court in front of the creative team, some Royal Court staff including the literary manager and the writer Richard Bean. It's a positive beginning with many laughs and the first day of school feeling ebbs out of the room.

The next day we move to our rehearsal room which is actually a bar at the Union Chapel in Islington. It's a large room at the back of a beautiful church. It's cold and the acoustics are terrible, but luckily, for the first week we don't notice as we sit huddled round a table reading through the text and asking and exploring all our questions. Richard is with us for the entire week. He is generous and giving and doesn't seem to mind us unpicking his characters and scenes. It must be an incredibly daunting part of the writer's process but Richard is charming and humble and helps the actors to really understand the background to the play and the themes within it. During the week we go on a group visit to the Science Museum where there is an exhibition dedicated to climate change.

<http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/visitmuseum/galleries/atmosphere.aspx>

It's a great start to our research and helps us place and understand the popular arguments regarding climate change. It also helps to highlight the lack of debate around the strong political views. We all leave excited and a little overwhelmed.

During the week some scenes get rewritten, lines come and go, and by Friday we are all reeling; the play tackles huge and complex scientific ideas and emotional issues, Juliet Stevenson's character is never off stage and we need to get hold of Jeremy Paxman!

I spend the weekend doing a great deal of research so I can get my head round the science to help the actors understand where their characters are coming from.

Week 2:

We tentatively begin to get the play on its feet. We still have a lot of questions and so it becomes hard to pin down moves. The first half of the play is set in a lecturer's office and none of us really know what an Earth Sciences lecturer does all day. Juliet is keen to make the office as realistic as possible; the way her character

reacts to her environment is really important and will inform her about rhythm and physicality. We make a plan to visit UCL Earth Sciences department next week.

My dad, a Geophysicist, comes into rehearsal to talk about his work and the scientific ideas within the play. What could have been quite an embarrassing experience, was actually brilliant. The actors, Richard and Jeremy found the session really useful as it enabled them to ask all the questions they wanted. Dad had read they play and was really helpful in backing up Richard's ideas and characters. Jeremy, the Director encourages all the actors to make a time line for their characters. Using the facts from the play the actors develop their character's back stories. They work individually and then come together to decide on dates and facts that are shared. This is a great exercise and helps to develop Lydia and Juliet's Mother/Daughter relationship. It also throws up a lot more questions than it answers so we eagerly return to the text for more discoveries.

Week 3:

We go on another group trip to UCL Earth Sciences Department. It is a really positive and useful experience and helps to confirm and support the work we have been doing.

We continue working through the second half of the text. Johnny plays the song for the first time. It is beautiful and perfectly pitched for the scene. I can't wait for Richard to hear it. Fight director Kevin comes in to choreograph the fight between Diane and Phoebe. We also invite James from the St John's Ambulance trust to come and teach Adrian how to do CPR.

Lunch times are now taken up with running lines with Juliet. She has an incredible amount to learn and we agree to do more work on Sunday too.

At the end of the week we have a production meeting. It's great to hear how the rest of the play is coming along. Production manager Paul Handley has got his work cut out coming up with a way to strike a set and build another one in a 20 minute interval.

Week 4:

We continue to work on the text with Jeremy starting to do more detailed work on the characters and their relationships. Having worked through the play, the actors have a clearer idea of their character's arc and can now focus on key moments.

At the end of the week we do the first run. It's a nerve racking experience, but the actors perform brilliantly. It is daunting to see how much there is still to do.

Week 5:

After one more day in rehearsal, we move to the theatre where we begin to tech the show. The set looks brilliant, but the change between the office and the house is currently taking one hour! On Tuesday Jeremy, Juliet, Richard, Aaron and I all head to BBC centre to film the scene with Jeremy Paxman. It is such a coup to have got Paxman to do this and we are all really excited. And nervous! All the BBC staff are very welcoming. Jeremy is charming, and brilliant and we get the take that we need. In the evening we project the clip on the set, it looks great and makes us all feel that the show is finally coming together. Good timing, just two more days before the first night....

Sophie Austin Assistant Director



Juliet Stevenson and James Fleet in rehearsal

5. ABOUT THE SET DESIGN

In creating the set for *The Heretic*, designer Peter MacKintosh had to develop two distinct spaces: a university lecturer's office and a country kitchen. Both needed to be naturalistic and filled with the real objects found in these two places. In order to do this effectively, two sets were built. During the play's interval, the stage crew are very busy dismantling the office space and setting up the country kitchen complete with working oven, utensils, wine bottles, glasses, and Christmas decorations (as Act Four is set on Boxing Day).

ACTS 1, 2 and 3



ACTS 4 and 5



Read the Richard Bean's Notes for the Set for the Opening of Act One and Act Four. Imagine you are designing the play. What sort of atmosphere do you think the writer would like to create in each space? How would your set work to create the different feel of each place? What colours would you use? How would you light each space to enhance the atmosphere? Would you give certain elements of each set prominence over other elements and how would you achieve this?

SET

A modern university head of department office. Desk, chair, computer, book shelves, cabinets. A circle of six comfy chairs (dull, functional designs, this not Oxbridge) are set around a coffee table for tutorials. A whiteboard with some climate change algorithms of a difficult and mathematical nature. The words 'infrared', 'radiation', 'forcing' and 'feedback' feature.

On the walls a series of photos. The first is of a six-year-old girl (Phoebe) standing next to a sapling Betel Nut tree. The second when she is about fourteen and the tree bigger. The photos are taken in the Maldives on the wash limit of the sea.

For Acts 4 and 5 the set is Diane's kitchen in the country.

6. RESEARCH

'I'm a scientist. I don't believe in anything' -Diane Cassell, Act 2, Scene 2

As The Heretic pivots on the Climate Change debate, it was vital for the cast and creative team to research current thinking on climate science to inform their understanding of the characters' viewpoints.

In addition to piecing together an overall picture of the debate, everyone also needed to understand the specific scientific and political terms used in the play. So the Assistant Director provided the cast with a glossary of scientific terms used in the play, displayed images and information on the rehearsal room walls and arranged a visit to the Science Museum and a talk with a Geophysicist.

This Quick Guide and Glossary of Terms in The Heretic will help introduce you to the main climate change issues being debated at the moment.

Climate Change: A Quick Guide



What is climate change?

'Climate change' refers to changes in the Earth's temperature over the last 100 years or so. Since about 1900, the average near-surface temperature of the planet has increased by 0.75 degrees Celsius and the UK's sea level has risen by about 10 centimetres. Further global rises are expected, as well as more extreme weather events like flooding and drought.

The causes of climate change

Individuals are responsible for about 40 per cent of UK emissions. There is now very strong evidence that significant recent global warming can't be explained by natural causes alone. Humans are changing the climate by their actions, especially through emissions of greenhouse gases, like carbon dioxide, which artificially warm the atmosphere of the earth.

The effects of climate change

The effects of climate change include rising temperatures, higher sea levels and more frequent extreme weather events like floods. These are expected to become more severe in coming decades. For more information on the predicted consequences of climate change, see 'Effects of climate change'.

However, actions by individuals have already helped the UK meet its targets for cutting emissions by 2010. Future effects of climate change can be influenced by what is done now.

Challenging the Views of Climate Change Sceptics

Sceptics Say: The climate is always changing anyway



There is more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere now than at any time in at least the last 800,000 years

It's true that natural changes in the world's climate have happened in the past. However, in extreme cases this is thought to have contributed to mass extinctions. What is happening now is potentially a big change in the Earth's climate, caused mainly by human activity.

Carbon dioxide is a major heat-trapping greenhouse gas. Its concentration in the atmosphere is now higher than at any time in at least the last 800,000 years. Although this is not new in the history of the planet, it is entirely new in human history. It is expected to have a negative impact on many ecosystems and humans across the world.

Sceptics Say: There's no scientific evidence for climate change

Scientists have been commenting on the relationship between emissions of gases and the climate since the 1800s. They have worked with governments to do something about climate change for a long time.

In 1988, the UN set up the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The IPCC is a body of scientists from all parts of the world who assess the best available scientific and technical information on climate change.

The IPCC's 2007 assessment report warned of a rise in average global temperatures. This rise could be from 1.1 to 6.4 degrees Celsius above 1980-1999 levels by the end of this century,

depending on future levels of emissions. The report said that changes to the climate were very likely (over 90 per cent probable, based on current science) the result of human activity.

Sceptics Say: Climate change isn't caused by human activity

Nearly all climate scientists are convinced that humans are affecting the climate by the way we live

The vast majority of climate scientists are convinced that humans are affecting the climate by the way they live. The Met Office Hadley Centre is one of the world's leading centres for climate change research. It found that recent temperature rises and key changes in the Earth's environment could not be explained by natural climate change alone. Human activity is mainly responsible.

Scientific research and careful observation has shown that the concentration of greenhouse gases, which keep the earth warm, is increasing. People are responsible for these increases by, for example, burning fossil fuels and cutting down forests.

Source: www.direct.gov.uk

Glossary for Climate Science Terms in The Heretic

Anthropogenic Global Warming

The increase in the average temperature of Earth's near surface air and oceans since the mid-20th century and its projected continuation.

Carbon Trading or Emission Trading

A market-based approach used to control pollution by providing economic incentives for achieving reductions in the emissions of pollutants

Climate Proxies

Preserved physical characteristics of the past that enable scientists to reconstruct the climatic conditions that prevailed during much of the Earth's history. Examples of proxies include ice cores, tree rings, boreholes, corals and lake and ocean sediments.

Earth Science (also known as geoscience, the geosciences or the Earth Sciences)

An all-embracing term for the sciences related to the planet Earth. The formal discipline of Earth sciences may include the study of atmosphere, oceans and biosphere as well as the solid Earth.

Greenhouse Gas

A gas in an atmosphere that absorbs and emits radiation within the thermal infrared range. This process is the fundamental cause of the greenhouse effect. The primary greenhouse gases in the Earth's atmosphere are water vapour, carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide and ozone. Greenhouse gases greatly effect the temperature of the Earth; without them, Earth's surface would be on average about 33° C colder than at present.

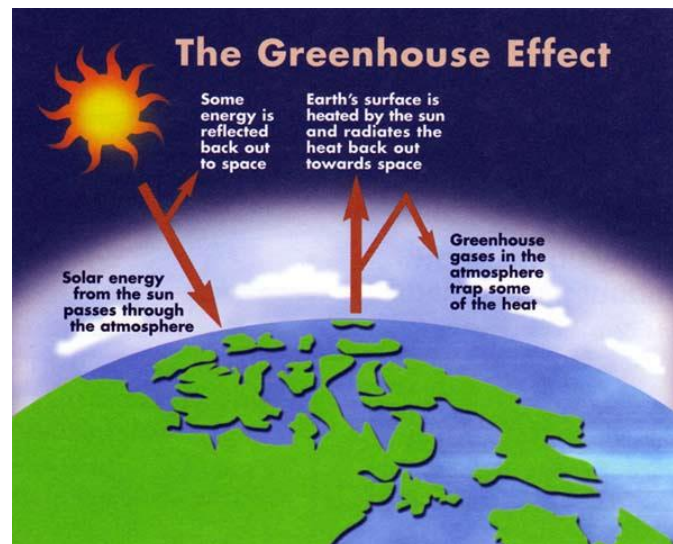
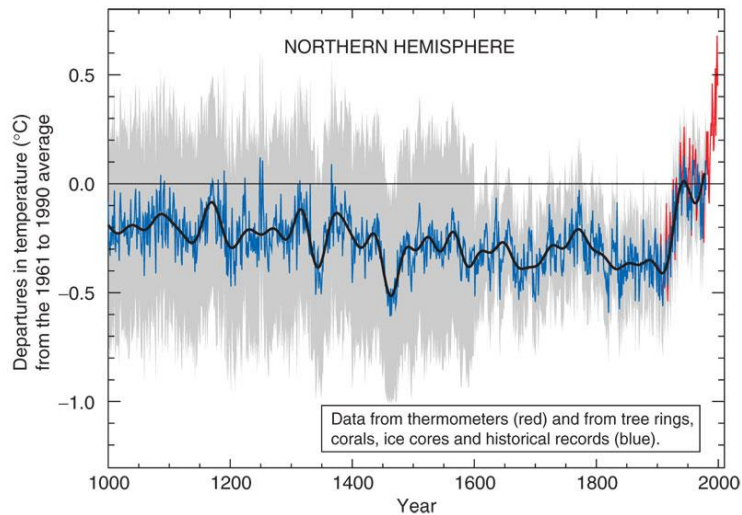


Image from www.realscience.org.uk

The Hockey Stick

The 'hockey stick' describes a reconstruction of past temperature over the past 1000 to 2000 years using tree-rings, ice cores, coral and other records that act as proxies for temperature (Mann 1999). The reconstruction found that global temperature gradually cooled over the last 1000 years with a sharp upturn in the 20th Century. The principle result from the hockey stick graph shows that global temperatures over the last few decades are the warmest in the last 1000 years.



The Hockey Stick graph as shown in the 2001 IPCC report. This chart shows the data from Mann, Bradley, Hughes et al. 1999.

IPCC – Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

A scientific intergovernmental body tasked with reviewing and assessing the most recent scientific, technical and socio-economic information produced worldwide relevant to the understanding of climate change. It provides the world with a clear scientific view on the current state of climate change and its potential environmental and socio-economic consequences, notably the risk of climate change caused by human activity.



Johnny Flynn as Ben Shotter in The Heretic

Your Discoveries

The following people or groups have played a significant role in the Climate Change debate. Each is mentioned in the play. Can you do your own research to discover how they have made an impact on the debate?

Al Gore

Exxon Mobil Corporation

Greenpeace

George Monbiot

VHMNT



Juliet Stevenson as Dr Diane Cassell in The Heretic

7. CAST INTERVIEWS

I. Lydia Wilson, actress playing the character of Phoebe

When you first read the play what did you like about it most?

The very unconventional relationship between a mother and a daughter. And it was quite masculine and violent. Funny. Something about the blackness of that.

Phoebe's got an amazing sense of humour but it's quite cutting isn't it?

Yeah, I've been watching Stewart Lee and Jack Dee, those kind of archetypal male stand-up comics, it's those armouries in her wit, and how she cultivates that persona. Because she's grown up in a vacuum without going to school – in fact that's what I really liked – you can't place her most of the time, she sort of transcends – she's not like 'those girls at school who were like that' or anything, because she's cultivated her own blend which is really close to Diane. That's her role model, that's her world .

How have you worked on preparing and developing your character?

I learned to drive a tractor! Well, they wouldn't trust me with a tractor but I did go and learn how to drive a tractor – I haven't mastered it yet.

I have a secret anorexia diary, I've been talking to someone who has it because it's something I don't know about, and actually the rules of it, you couldn't write. You need to speak to someone who has experienced it.

It's really surprising. I mean it has crossovers with many things that I think lots of women experience as teenagers, similar thought processes, but then there were corners of it that I just couldn't have imagined, so this very generous girl has been helping me with the details of her experience. Obviously it's different for everyone, there's no generic experience, but it's been very useful. There's a lot to think about – a lot of things to do with perfection, and ingenious behaviour. I mean from the outside it looks like it's common sense that you should eat, but actually once you're inside it, it has this amazing logic that is ingenious.

What would you say was the most surprising thing that you discovered in that research?

I guess actually that it's the way of coping, that actually it can be a friend, you can love it and hate it at the same time. And you can understand how it's useful.

Did doing your research challenge your preconceptions of what it was?

Yeah. There's a line in the play where Diane says 'it's not just a funny thing about not eating much' – and it's that. It's a whole world. And it's really useful for acting, because my escape route in acting is to have loads of prepared thought processes, and behavioural rules that kind of help you forget you're acting. And it seems like anorexia gives that to people – makes them forget that they are living. You know they can have so many rules, that they have a complete code to live by. And it solves a lot of problems as well as creating them.

Do you think your character changes throughout the play?

Massively. I think she's on a crusade and in one way it's quite straightforward, she needs to escape her mother and I think quite literally the metaphor is there is no space for her, so she tries to make herself disappear. But it's like slaying a dragon at the end of Nintendo. You need to do that to get onto the next level. So in that way it's quite direct; her logic.

How would you describe the relationship with Diane?

Passionate like a lover, in a way. Husband and wife or something. I feel like her boyfriend, and I want to protect her, like I'm her mum. It's really fluid, it changes around... It's difficult to find and I don't think I've found it yet. But in an ideal world there's something quite passionate about it in that mother and daughter dynamic.

What would you say drives the play?

Care. That people care underneath their arguments. What is emotionally at stake underneath what they say.

What did you find most exciting about working on the play?

Johnny Flynn singing a song on stage is the best bit!

If the audience were to take anything away from the play what would it be?

We were talking about it yesterday, about whether we should be conscientious about what the play is saying. But I think because it's a play, it's not an article in a magazine saying 'these are the politics we're backing' it's an embodied bunch of ideas, it's not a diatribe, it's got so much action in it. You can't take one political argument,

it's hopefully just loads of ideas sloshing around, so people can have their own affinities and their own debates.



Lydia Wilson and James Fleet in rehearsal

II. Johnny Flynn, playing the character of Ben Shotter

What did you find most exciting when you read the play?

Initially it challenged my preconceptions about something I thought I knew. Because you go along with the orthodox perception of these issues and it basically made me really challenge what I was doing about these things, and in some ways compounded what I really felt about the issues of climate change. In my particular case it made me feel like making a more of a concerted effort to make sure my personal efforts were conscious and mindful. So it's interesting as each different character has a different standing on the issues. My character is an eco warrior to start with and has quite a woolly approach to what he thinks he's got to do, and then he's challenged

by this brilliant teacher who sits slightly on the other side of the fence. But instead of necessarily bringing him to her camp she just tries to sharpen up his foundations, and what it is he's acting on. And that's what it did for me. It makes you sift through whether bandwagons are easier to be attached to, and just know why you're doing it; peer pressure or common consensus and political persuasions and things like that.

What did you do as an actor to figure out Ben's vantage point on climate change?

I started reading a lot about the actual science, because I realised that I just basically accept a lot of what's been told to me. So I did a bit of research. It's very easy to see temperatures of the world throughout history, throughout the history of the world, so I did a bit of that. And then when we started rehearsing we went to the Science Museum and we had a talk with Sophie's dad who is a geophysicist and that was amazing - to highlight the amount of time that we have been on the planet and to show us what we're dealing with, which is a very grey area. A lot of it is guess work. So I had to work out where I would pin Ben's hopes into that, and how the accumulation of that science affects his understanding of it. By the end of the play what's really nice about Ben is that there is something he's holding on to: he still won't go in a petrol driven car. He still thinks of global warming as a major threat, so that was really nice to have that still there. So that's how I did it as an actor, by using the science. Also I didn't go to University, that's quite a big thing. Most people did go to University, most people over the age of 22 probably did, so I have to try and understand and portray why it is that somebody goes and does a three year, vocational degree.

What do you think is the biggest challenge in portraying Ben?

I think he's really, really angry about a lot of things and I'm personally not so angry. If I do get angry then I try and address it. But I think he sees his rage as something he's really happy with. He wants it to be attached to his pain, and he has this itch about that that I think is really key to his character. In this one particular scene, it's like the pinnacle of his agitation - he starts to make motions to cut his wrists, in front of Diane, but it's not like he's going to do it, he's just showing her that he could. I still have to really go into that. When we first did that scene I thought 'oh, my, Lord, this is quite serious, I have to find this somewhere'. That was definitely the hardest thing. I feel like there is a lot in his life that I can pin my own experiences to, and find correlations, and that's all good - like who he is, what he believes, what he does - I can pick bits of my life and put blinkers on and really recognise who he is

and inhabit that. But those things that come from stuff in his childhood like his mother dying in childbirth – how does that make you feel? So I've been doing a bit of reading of psychological stuff, particularly about when you've killed your mother in childbirth what that does to your relationship with your father and so on.

How would you describe Ben's relationship with Diane? How close do you think you get to her?

Really close. I think the thing about Diane is that she is the first person to allow Ben to be who he really is. She wants certain things which align with his own interests. She wants Phoebe to be happy, and she sees me (Ben) as an opportunity for that, if we get together and so on. And immediately before the play - we have made it that just before the play, Ben has been on his gap year, and he's spent it in prison. It was originally a bit earlier but we've changed it so it is just before. Great way to spend a gap year! There is this great line where Phoebe says 'how old are you?' and I say 'nineteen, I took a year off'. And Diane says 'what did you do?' (to kind of work me out), and I say 'nothing, I took a year off.' And she thinks he's just a lay about, but the truth behind that for me is that it was a very hard year! I was in prison!

And did you find that for yourself or was that something Richard came in with?

We discussed it. It was when he was sixteen, but in terms of how his character journey goes it makes sense that he makes it on to this quite good science course, that he did his A levels and that was all cool, and then he had this fractious time with his dad, and he hit his dad, and his dad had had enough and he decided to press charges. Then in prison afterwards, mulling it over, he has the UCAS form, he has already met some people that had turned him onto militant eco-activism, so he decides that the way he was going to do it was he was going to be a scientist. And it makes it a bit more loaded that just before the play he has been in prison. It heightens the tension. It means that all the adults he has met with recently have been rehabilitation officers, and prison guards, who haven't really seen him as a person. So the first adult he meets in this new situation is Diane, and she really unlocks him – you see that happen. And even though she is the complete ideological antithesis of him, that's what's really good about the play: it says that although you can have very different views to somebody, on a

human level and on a caring level it doesn't get in the way of really enjoying and seeing and recognising each other.

What do you hope that the audience may take away from the play?

For me – I probably should have said this when you asked me what the most exciting thing about the play is – in the last scene, everybody drops their agendas. And that is the most exciting thing to see for me, that resolution, that everybody starts to really be together, are able to be together and look past political views. On a wider scale in the world, that is what needs to happen and a demonstration of that in a really well written play is a really positive and ethical thing to put out. That, alongside the questions that are thrown up about climate science and so on which are really important questions.

Since we've been doing the play it's been shown that there are these big carbon trading fraud scams going on. There are people doing the wrong thing in the name of a good thing, so it's good that this stuff is being dredged up. It can make you feel very uncomfortable, but I think that is a really valid and important thing to do. There's no propaganda because it's a play and because each character speaks their mind – it's like what Brecht did – you can see someone behaving in a certain way and you can personally judge them or not. How they are on a human level is also there as well as a political side, so you can judge those things against each other and see how one affects the other. And then you can look at yourself and work that out as well – and that has been part of our journeys as actors too, and it's been great.



Johnny Flynn in rehearsal

8. Interview with Director Jeremy Herrin

What most excited you about the play when you read it?

It's the combination of subject matter – digging around in the politics of climate science and the tone of the play which is robust and very comic: well-structured, sort of old fashioned jokes. Put all that together with a really interesting network of family and romantic relationships and it's a really good combination. If you're going to do a play about climate science it feels like there's lots of traps that you could fall into. Preaching to the converted is probably one of them and being all doom and gloom is probably another. I think this play avoids both those traps, so that's really exciting. I've worked with Richard Bean before, on two plays – a revival of his play *Toast* at the Live Theatre in Newcastle, and I just loved working on that. There's something very male and linear about his work, that's a nice change for me. And I worked with him on a new play called *Smack Family Robinson* which again took quite a controversial and provocative look at law and drugs policy, set in the network of the family. And his jokes are just...brilliant. It's great to work with someone who can create that effect, it's wonderful.

Have your opinions on climate science changed through directing the play?

I felt very affirmative of what my own views were. I kind of went through a process of assuming that I knew a whole load of stuff about climate science and what that is, realising very quickly from digging around in a professional capacity that I knew very little, and a lot of the stuff I did know, I had been completely credulous about. Having gone through a whole process of research I've gone back to where I started. I believe that we are, with our industrial practices and lifestyle, warming the planet. That needs an act of faith though because you can't *entirely* prove it, but lots of interesting, intelligent 'proper' scientists are making the same conclusion. On balance, it seems to appear to most of them that we are warming the planet. But what I think is really brilliant about the play is that it's not an argument one way or other about how to look at global warming, it's about how we receive science in the media, and what our politicians do with it. There's a lot of hypocrisy, and I think that's an absolutely brilliant thing to focus a play on: poking around in hypocrisy. Particularly what we deem to be watertight, cast iron, solid, liberal values that are often completely unexplored because there's a network of media and cultural institutions – such as this place here, the Royal Court Theatre - that used to prop those up rather than provoke and challenge. I think if there's one thing we're doing really well here as a theatre company is forcing people back

into themselves, in terms of asking those questions. That's a really robust and vital and urgent thing for a theatre company to be doing.

Would you say it's more about the politics of climate change rather than the science of climate change? What is the relationship between them in the play?

There is one character in the play that sort of rebukes the idea that politics should be related to science, that science could be corrupted for political ends. Taking such a controversial, dangerous and emotional subject like climate science is a really brilliant way to look at scientific integrity and how science moves forward. It doesn't move forward through consensus, it moves forward through breakthroughs and peer review and everyone accepting that that the science is settled. Now that hasn't happened for one reason or another with climate science and it's fascinating to look at why. You could argue that politicians and people in the public eye have used shortcuts to frighten everybody in order to affect political change. And yet that's backfired spectacularly because there's this cohort of deniers and sceptics that regard themselves as purists in terms of the science, but by the same token those people and their research is being abused for vested interests such as oil companies. The whole thing is a complete mess, and it's absolutely fascinating to shine a satirical light on that whole area. There's no area where comedy is more effective than when we're dealing with really sore and dangerous subjects. I think one of the successes of the play is it digs around in and picks up on the discomfort around that subject.

How do you think the play's ideas about family impact the political ideas? Are the family ideas actually more important in the play?

Well I suppose, it's a comedy. In the sense that a Shakespearean comedy, or an old fashioned definition of a comedy, is not that you necessarily have to get loads of laughs, but that you've got a happy ending. In that sense, it's almost counter-intuitive and desperately unfashionable to have a play about climate science that has a happy ending. There's all the drama, all the threats, the thriller element, you're kind of enjoying the comedic element – but there's a threat: the established world at the top of the show comes under pressure, and then all is well at the end. It's interesting that there's a kind of classic, comedy ending. The dynamic of the family is a metaphor for the fact that the climate change debate is fractured, fragile; within the family there's strong opinions, there's robust, aggressive conflicts in terms of an emotional capability that seems to be

lacking. That's one of the really fun things about the character Diane that Juliet Stevenson plays, is that she's really smart, she knows her onions, (she knows her Petri dishes!), she's a confident scientist but she's emotionally inarticulate and arguably incapable, and the damage that her daughter seems to represent through her eating disorder and some level of dysfunction, it's just really pleasing that that character is brilliant yet massively flawed.

So I would say that the way the family is drawn in the play complicates the politics further. I think there is a version of the play that would be tiresome in the extreme and almost unbearable, which would be if that the heretic in the title, Diane, was entirely right and a very good person and they all agreed with her and understood her. I mean what's delicious about the play is that she's got a point, but she's making the point in more and more extreme ways, in a response to what's happening emotionally for her. And that for me justifies the play. I wouldn't be interested in directing anything that was a post-sceptic polemic. That would be boring.

So do the politics drive the play in terms of the action?

Yes, because Diane's beliefs create the pressure in the play. There's quite a lot of work around at the moment that is taking apart that baby boomer generation – if anyone saw *Earthquakes in London*, *The Heretic* is a really interesting correspondence with that, almost like a companion piece.

Do you think the play is combustible? How do you think the audience are going to react?

It doesn't feel like it so far. We've done two previews, and I think they've bought the comedy in the way I was talking about, they laugh, but they're also quite sated by the end. It's more like a provocation, in terms of the argument. But the gesture of the play is one that is entertaining and satisfying. So there's a kind of conservatism in the evening than I thought there wasn't going to be. I thought it was going to be a bit more liberal-baiting.

Something interesting is happening in terms of where people are arguing about a show. In the old days it used to be in the bar, and now it's in the blogosphere. That can then be amplified in a slightly disingenuous way. So it will be interesting to see how it goes. The thing I'm dreading with the reviews is that they turn the play into something it isn't. At the moment it's got an uncluttered transaction with the audience, in that they're interested by it. It feels like they're provoked but it's not seen as trying to be sensational – not trying to wind them up in an immature way. We're trying to

entertain them with some intellectual questions as well as some banter and a happy ending. What the reviews often do is define the experience for people that haven't seen it yet, and it will be a shame if they do that in a reductive way because it feels like it's sitting quite nicely with the audience so far.

What has been your approach to staging this play?

What I normally do. Do research, so we know what's going on. What you do work out quite quickly, especially with under four weeks rehearsal is that you're never going to get to the bottom of the debates because it's raging. Professionals working on climate science, they're still raging away at that argument. What you can do is get to a level where you understand your argument and what the issues are, in order to sell the idea of it on stage.

There's a lot of quite traditional staging. It's naturalism on a closed set. So the process for me has been, as usual, to try and make myself absent as a director. Make the play tick along, make way for the audience to understand the characters and to enjoy the jokes. It's always really necessary that no-one knows about my work. It's been about grounding the actors and their performances and the rhythm of the lines. Comedy is information really and ironically there is a science to it too. I try and discover what the audience needs to see, what they should be looking at, what they need to hear and in what order, in order to get a laugh.

Do you think the audience will have sympathy with Diane?

I think they might do by the end of it. One of the things we've been careful about is to not beg them for sympathy for her too early. Quite a brave choice has been made, which is to present someone who is quite buttoned up, possibly quite repressed, who's clearly brilliant, witty, but we don't necessarily like her. I mean I'm always a bit suspicious about likeability. It always seems like an infantile criticism or suggestion 'ah, I didn't find any of them likeable'. I don't think likeability is the issue. It's whether they are interesting and whether there is momentum. No-one likes Richard III but you want to see what he's going to do next. He's a murderous, Machiavellian maniac so no, you don't like him, yet you're fascinated by him. So hopefully they're interested in her.

Interested in Diane's complexity?

Yes. There are these set pieces, big speeches, where she debunks a traditional liberal view about climate science. She describes 'green' as a proxy for anything. She describes it as a perfect religion for the narcissistic age. There's a brilliant speech about it being a massive

act of faith that's wonderfully provocative. One approach would be to present that with a sweetness, a kind of persuasive energy. But at the moment, the choice has been to locate that in her anger and her fright and fear, which I think motivates why she can be dismissive and why she can have a lack of generosity. It piles it up and makes it a little more edgy for the audience. We could have made her really sweet and really likeable, I've had a lot of conversations with Juliet about that in rehearsal. Juliet's instinct as an actor is to let the audience in and to let them see what the character is thinking all the time. I'm convinced that that's not right. I think it's interesting to push the audience away sometimes.

Why do you think it's called *The Heretic*?

Diane goes against the tide, in terms of what common, conventional belief is. Also there are the religious themes throughout the play. We were talking about being a believer in anthropogenic global warming. Because the science isn't settled, there is a degree of faith in that. So there is an idea about belief in the play. And faith, which the character is trying very, very hard not to be involved in. Acts of belief. At one point she says 'hold on, I'm a scientist, I don't *believe* in anything'. But as her daughter points out to her, she says 'empiricism is a fucking 'ism' the same as any other ism.' You've got to have enough faith to believe in empiricism as much as anything else. Anything that gets you back to a belief in humanity actually, there's a surprising generosity about people and about life.

It's very difficult to have that many big round laughs in an evening with someone who doesn't love people and doesn't understand what love is. I think if anything that's a really brilliant note to leave the evening on: that we endure as humans. Whatever you think the cause of climate change is (it probably is since industrialisation it probably is the incredible, unbelievable rise in levels of CMT), what is really important is to look forward and to be positive and to think that humans have an incredible capacity for innovation and change. It's a really strong way to be. To trust that our scientists will have the arguments to understand what's going on and how to improve it. We can help that by taking science really seriously, by funding it properly and not having these Earth scientists reliant on pro-warming funding or funded by oil companies. It's got to be independent so that these people can make discoveries without a political agenda. If the play gets people closer to thinking like that then that's good, good, good.



Jeremy Herrin working with the actors in rehearsal

9. CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Drama Exercises

Many of the exercises the actors did in rehearsals focused on finding the right rhythms to bring out the comedy in the play. Here are two that you can try:

I. Zip

This is a variation on the game Zip, Zap, Boing. The cast used this version as a way to generate the sort of energy needed to keep the comic exchanges quick and sharp.

Ask students to find their own space in the room. They should NOT stand in a circle. The first person says Zip and simultaneously claps in the direction of another person. Once that person has received the zip, s/he then turns to pass the zip and clap onto someone else. Continue to pass the zip/clap in this way, working to send it more and more quickly. This will require everyone to be very alert and aware of everyone else in the room. Once the zip/clap begins to move swiftly from person to person, then ask the students to continue the same exercise but on the move. Encourage them to walk more and more quickly while still passing the zip/clap from person to person with precision and speed.

II. In/Out

Another way to energise the comedy in the play was to experiment with the characters' entrances and exits. This exercise explores the physical rhythms you might use when entering or exiting different rooms.

First ask each student to imagine walking into his or her bedroom over a count of ten. Ask them to leave again over a count of five.

Next ask each to imagine walking into the following rooms: headteacher's office; friend's living room; the Oval office; grandparents' kitchen; new boyfriend/girlfriend's bedroom, etc. The rooms can be done in any order, but for each successive room, the count should be shortened, so that by the last room they only have a count of two to enter and to exit.

In the final part of the exercise, ask for a volunteer to decide which room s/he would like to enter. They should not tell the group. As the volunteer demonstrates entering and exiting their chosen room, the group should try to guess which one it is. Repeat until everyone has had a chance to perform.

Finish by discussing how each room affected their physicality as well as their inner thoughts.

Scene Study

This is the opening scene of *The Heretic*. Ask students to read it in pairs, one person taking the part of Diane and the other the role of Phoebe. Once they've read it through, ask them to jot down their ideas on the following:

-the type of relationship Diane and Phoebe have

-the rhythm of their speech

-their senses of humour

-any factual information in the scene

-the most important line each one says

-what each character says about herself and what each says about the other (verbatim).

Act One. Scene One.

(A September morning. Diane is mounting a photograph of a Betel Nut tree taken on the wash limit on a Maldives beach. She hangs it next to seven other photos of the same tree making a series. Phoebe stands in front of the first in the series.)

Phoebe This has just gotta be illegal.
Diane What?
Phoebe Having a photograph of a four year old girl on your wall,
 in a bikini.
Diane (A loud sigh.)

Phoebe Stop sighing mom. You sound like you're in the Archers.
Making jam. Or getting raped. From behind. By Jack Woolley.

Diane Don't make jokes about Jack Woolley. He's got
 Alzheimers.
Phoebe Exactly, he thinks you're Peggy.
Diane The subject of the photograph is the tree.
Phoebe A paedophile would not even notice the tree. *And* I look
 fat.
Diane I know, but you've lost weight since then.
Phoebe Bitch. Give me a pen.
Diane Get your own pen. There's some about two yards over
 there.
Phoebe Fascist. You're wasted in this job, you could be running
 Burma.
 (Phoebe gets the pen. There is a knock at the door.)
Diane Come in!

Ask the pairs to try the scene again, this time on its feet. How has their understanding of the scene developed or changed? How could they most effectively convey this particular relationship between mother and daughter to an audience? Show to the rest of the group. Discuss why the playwright might have started the story at this particular point and how it could be staged to capture the audience in the opening moments.

10. EDUCATION AT THE ROYAL COURT

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Juliet Stevenson, Adrian Flood and James Fleet in *The Heretic*

The Heretic Background Pack compiled and written by Lynne Gagliano and Sophie Austin, February 2011. The Heretic set design by Peter McKintosh ©2011. Production and Rehearsal photographs by Keith Pattison © 2011.