

FANNY & ALEXANDER AT THE OLD VIC



**TEACHING
RESOURCES**

FEB—APR 2018

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Teaching resources

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Further details of this production
oldvictheatre.com

COMPANY

THOMAS ARNOLD

Carl Ekdahl/Mr Landhal

Theatre: Dr. Seuss's *The Lorax* 2015 (The Old Vic); *Oslo*, *Henry IV*, *Cyrano De Bergerac*, *Mourning Becomes Electra*, *Three Sisters*, *The Stoppard Trilogy* (National Theatre); *The Kid Stays in the Picture* (Royal Court); *Hamlet*, *Orlando* (Royal Exchange Manchester). TV: *Broken*, *The Missing II*, *War and Peace*, *Call the Midwife*, *Wolf Hall*, *Midsomer Murders*, *This is England*, *Miss Marple — Towards Zero*. Film: *The Woman in Black: Angel of Death*, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *Thor 2*, *One Day*, *Made In Dagenham*, *Bel Ami*, *Robin Hood*, *Me and Orson Welles*, *The Duchess*, *The Golden Compass*.

GUILLERMO BEDWARD

Alexander Ekdahl

Theatre: *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole*, *Braille Legacy*, *Medea* (West End). Film: *Tolkien*, *Pan*, *A Child's Eyes*. Training: Sylvia Young Theatre School.

LOLITA CHAKRABARTI

Alma Ekdahl/Helena Vergéus

Theatre: *Hamlet* (Kenneth Branagh Theatre Company/RADA); *Last Seen* (Almeida); *Free Outgoing* (Royal Court/Edinburgh Festival); *John Gabriel Borkman* (Donmar); *The Great Game: Afghanistan* (Tricycle); *The Waiting Room*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (National Theatre). TV: *Delicious*, *Born to Kill*, *Beowulf*, *My Mad Fat Diary*, *Jekyll and Hyde*, *The Casual Vacancy*, *The Smoke*, *Extras*, *Bodies*, *Silent Witness*, *Hustle*. As a writer: *Last Seen* (Almeida); *Red Velvet* (Tricycle/St Ann's Warehouse New York/West End — Charles Wintour Evening Standard Award for Most Promising Playwright 2012, Critics Circle Most Promising Playwright Award 2012). Lolita received an AWA Award for Arts and Culture in 2013.

KIT CONNOR

Alexander Ekdahl

Theatre: *Welcome Home*, *Captain Fox!* (Donmar). TV: *Grandpa's Great Escape*, *The Frankenstein Chronicles*, *War and Peace*, *Grantchester*, *SS-GB*, *Rocket's Island*, *An Adventure in Space & Time*, *Chickens*. Film: *Slaughterhouse Rulez*, *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Society*, *Ready Player One*, *The Mercy*, *Get Santa*, *Mr Holmes*.

KEVIN DOYLE

Bishop Edvard Vergéus

Theatre: *NSFW*, *Spur Of The Moment* (Royal Court); *One For The Road/Victoria Station* (Young Vic); *The White Guard*, *Mutabilitie* (National Theatre); *Henry V*, *Coriolanus*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Henry IV Parts I & II*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Plantagenets*, *The Plain Dealer* (RSC); *Othello* (Bristol Old Vic); *The Admirable Crichton*, *Great Expectations*, *Cymbeline* (Royal Exchange Manchester). TV: *Happy Valley*, *Downton Abbey*, *The Crimson Field*, *Law and Order*, *Silent Witness*, *The Tudors*, *Scott & Bailey*, *Drop Dead Gorgeous*, *Dalziel and Pascoe*, *Brief Encounters*, *The Rotters Club*, *Blackpool*, *Midsomer Murders*, *The Lakes*, *At Home With The Braithwaites*.

JACK FALK

Alexander Ekdahl

Theatre: *Peter Pan* (Hobart Repertory Theatre); *Oliver* (Exit Left Theatre Company). Film: *Everybody is Welcome Here*, *The Silence of White Water*, *The Nun*.

KARINA FERNANDEZ

Lydia Ekdahl/Justina

Theatre: *Mare Rider*, *Shrapnel and Gibraltar* (Arcola); *There is a War*, *Edgar and Annabel* (National Theatre); *Bites* (Bush); *Blue Hart* (Royal Court); *Shopping and F***ing*, *The Convicts Opera* (Out of Joint); *Macbeth* (Bristol Old Vic); *Trips* (Birmingham Rep). TV: *Holby City*, *A Young Doctor's Notebook*, *The Blind Man of Seville*, *Twenty Twelve*, *My Family*, *Married. Single. Other*, *The Forsythe Saga*. Film: *Nico 1988*, *Sense of an Ending*, *Daphne*, *Pride*, *Mr Turner*, *Now is Good*, *Another Year*, *Happy Go Lucky*.

ANNIE FIRBANK

Vega/Elsa Vergéus

Theatre: *The Crucible* (The Old Vic); *Becket*, *High Society* (West End); *Richard III* (Arcola/Madrid); *Oresteia*, *Macbeth* (Almeida); *The Golden Dragon* (ATC); *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Three Sisters*, *An Ideal Husband*, *Separate Tables*, *Habitat* (Royal Exchange Manchester); *Billy Liar*, *Macbeth* (West Yorkshire Playhouse); *Only the Lonely*, *Death of a Salesman* (Birmingham Rep); *The Hollow Crown*, *Henry V*, *The Comedy of Errors* (RSC); *Hedda Gabler* (ETT/Donmar); *The Passion*, *Julius Caesar* (National Theatre). TV: *New Tricks*, *Midsomer Murders*, *Heart of the Country*, *Growing Rich*, *Poirot*, *Persuasion*, *The Nearly Man*. Film: *Anna and the King*, *A Passage to India*, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, *Carry On Nurse*.

MATT GAVAN

Michael Bergman/Aaron Rezinsky

Theatre: *King Lear* (The Old Vic). Film: *Murder on the Orient Express*, *Goodbye Christopher Robin*.
Training: RADA.

MISHA HANDLEY

Alexander Ekdahl

Film: *The Woman in Black*, *The Kid Who Would Be King*.
TV: *Parade's End*.

ZARIS ANGEL HATOR

Fanny Ekdahl

Theatre: *Matilda The Musical* (West End). TV: *Victoria II Christmas Special – Comfort and Joy*, *Forgiving Earth*, *Nella The Knight*. Training: Sylvia Young Theatre School.

AMY JAYNE

Fanny Ekdahl

Theatre: *The Ferryman* (West End). TV: *Damned*, *Unforgotten*, *Hetty Feather*, *Guilt*, *Walliams & Friend*, *Silent Witness*, *Hollyoaks*, *New Tricks*. Film: *Bridget Jones' Baby*, *Patient Zero*. Radio: *Stagecraft*, *Keeping in Touch*, *Agnes Grey*, *The Power & Glory*, *Produce*.

TIM LEWIS

Mr Nordstrom

Theatre: *The Elephantman*, *War Horse* (National Theatre/West End); *The Man of Mode* (National Theatre); *The Edge* (Transport Theatre, UK tour); *The Hudsucker Proxy* (Nuffield Theatre/Liverpool Playhouse); *At The End Of Everything Else*, *Something Very Far Away* (Unicorn); *The Guinea Pig Club* (York Theatre Royal); *The Railway Children* (Waterloo Station Theatre); *Romeo and Juliet* (Birmingham Rep/UK tour). TV: *Mr Selfridge*, *Five Daughters*, *Coming Up: The King*. Film: *A Night in Hatton Garden*, *A Congregation of Ghosts*, *In the Dark Half*, *Push Me Pull Me*.

GARY MACKAY

Actor

Theatre: *'Art'* (The Old Vic); *Farm Boy* (Mercury Theatre); *Run for Your Wife* (Vienna English Theatre); *Let The Right One In* (NTS/West End/New York); *The 39 Steps* (UK tour); *Little Otik* (NTS/UK tour); *The Signal Man* (Theatre Royal Bury St Edmunds); *When Five Years Pass*, *The Highway Crossing* (Arcola); *Lark Rise to Candleford* (Finborough); *Julius Caesar* (Barbican); *Twelfth Night* (Broadway Theatre). TV: *Derren Brown's Twisted Tales*, *EastEnders*, *Emmerdale*, *Hollyoaks*, *The Inspector Lynley Mysteries*, *Half Moon Investigations*, *Francis*. Film: *E=Motion*, *He Who Dares 2*, *The Magic Flute*.

GLORIA OBIANYO

Petra Ekdahl/Pauline/Ismael Rezinsky

Theatre: *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* (Donmar); *The Wild Party* (The Other Palace); *The Grinning Man* (Bristol Old Vic); *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Regent's Park).
TV: *Good Omens*. Film: *High Life*.

VIVIAN OPARAH

Maj

Theatre: *An Octoroon* (Orange Tree). TV: *Class*, *The Rebel*.
Film: *Teen Spirit*.

MICHAEL PENNINGTON

Isaak Jacobi/Death

Theatre: *The Wars of the Roses*, *The Misanthrope*, *Filumena*, *Waste*, *The Seagull* (The Old Vic); *The Winter's Tale* (Garick); *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* (Donmar); *King Lear* (New York/UK tour); *Richard II*, *Timon of Athens*, *Hamlet* (RSC); *Dances of Death* (Gate); *Judgement Day* (Print Room); *Antony and Cleopatra*, *The Syndicate*, *The Master Builder*, *The Front Page*, *Collaboration*, *Taking Sides* (Chichester); *The Madness of George III* (West Yorkshire Playhouse); *The Entertainer* (Hampstead). As Writer, Director and Solo Performer: *Anton Chekhov*, *Sweet William*. TV: *Oedipus the King*, *State of Play*, *Endeavour*, *Silent Witness*, *Waking the Dead*. Film: *The Iron Lady*, *Churchill at War*, *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*.

HANNAH JAMES SCOTT

Miss Morsing

Theatre: *Powerplay* (Hampton Court); *Translations* (Sheffield Crucible/Rose Theatre); *LoveBites* (Southwark Playhouse); *Macbeth* (Omnibus Theatre).
Film: *Crumble*, *Empty*.

MOLLY SHENKER

Fanny Ekdahl

Theatre: *Les Miserables* (West End). Film: *Justice League*.
Training: New London Performing Arts Centre (NLPAC).

KATIE SIMONS

Fanny Ekdahl

Katie attends Take Flight Academy of Performing Arts. She has performed in local community musical productions of *Guys & Dolls* and *Into The Woods*. Katie is making her professional theatre debut.

JONATHAN SLINGER

Gustav Adolf Ekdahl

Theatre: *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Urinetown* (West End); *Trouble in Mind* (Print Room); *Plastic* (Theatre Royal, Bath); *Hamlet*, *The Tempest*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Twelfth Night*, *Henry VI parts 1, 2 & 3*, *Henry V*, *Richard II*, *Richard III*, *The Homecoming*, *Macbeth* (RSC); *The Gods Weep* (RSC/Hampstead); *Power*, *The Duchess of Malfi*, *The Coast of Utopia* (National Theatre). TV: *Kiri*, *Nelson in his Own Words*, *Foyle's War*, *To The Ends of the Earth*, *Vexed*, *Paradox*. Film: *The Taking*, *Harmony*, *A Knight's Tale*, *Forgive and Forget*, *The Last September*.

CATHERINE WALKER

Emilie Ekdahl

Theatre: *Hedda Gabler*, *The House*, *What Happened Bridgie Cleary* — Irish Times Best Actress, *Terminus* (Abbey Theatre, Dublin); *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, *Uncle Vanya*, *Play, A Streetcar Named Desire* (Gate Theatre, Dublin — Irish Times Best Supporting Actress); *Pheadra* (Rough Magic); *Talk of the Town*, *Blackbird*, *Miss Julie*, *Knives In Hens* (Landmark Productions — Irish Times Best Actress); *Richard II*, *Henry V*, *A Month In The Country*, *Troilus and Cressida* (RSC); *Wild Orchids*, *Stairs To The Roof* (Chichester); *John Bulls Other Island*, *Sive* (Tricycle). TV: *RIG 45*, *Versailles III/III*, *Critical*, *Acceptable Risk*, *Rebellion*, *Strike Back*, *Northanger Abbey*, *The Silence*. Film: *The Delinquent Season*, *Dark Song*, *Patricks Day*.

PENELOPE WILTON

Mrs. Helena Ekdahl

Theatre: *Taken at Midnight* (West End/Chichester — Olivier Award for Best Actress); *Afterplay* (West End); *Hamlet*, *Delicate Balance*, *Betrayal* (National Theatre); *Heartbreak House*, *The Deep Blue Sea* (Almeida); *The Chalk Garden* (Donmar — London Evening Standard Award for Best Actress); *The House of Bernarda Alba*, *Tess*, *Piano*, *The Secret Rapture*, *Major Barbara*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Man and Superman*, *Sisterly Feelings* (National Theatre); *Women Beware Women* (RSC). TV: *Brief Encounters*, *Downton Abbey*, *Miss Marple*, *Doctor Who*. Film: *Guernsey*, *Zoo*, *The BFG*, *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*, *The History Boys*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Shaun of the Dead*.

SARGON YELDA

Oscar Ekdahl

Theatre: *King Lear* (The Old Vic); *Human Animals*, *Teh Internet is Serious Business* (Royal Court); *Forget Me Not*, *Incognito* (Bush); *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire*, *Dara*, *Emperor and Galilean*, *Mother Courage and her Children*, *Stovepipe* (National Theatre); *Moby Dick*, *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (Arcola); *Comedy of Errors*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Tempest* (RSC); *When the Rain Stops Falling* (Almeida). TV: *Dead Pixels*, *The Strike Series*; *The Silkwork*, *Cuckoo's Calling*, *Innocent*, *Zen*, *Compulsion*, *Midnight Man*, *Saddam's Tribe*. Film: *Spectre*, *Dead Cat*, *Close*.



CREATIVE TEAM

STEPHEN BERESFORD

Adaptation

Theatre: *Last of The Haussmans* (National Theatre).
Film: *Pride* — Winner of three British Independent Film Awards, including Best British Film, and Southbank Show Award for Best British Film. Stephen won the BAFTA for Outstanding Debut.

MAX WEBSTER

Director

Theatre: *Cover My Tracks*, Dr. Seuss's *The Lorax* (The Old Vic); *The Jungle Book* (Northampton/Fiery Angel UK Tour); *The Winter's Tale* (Lyceum, Edinburgh); *King Lear* (Royal and Derngate, Northampton/UK tour); *Mary Stuart* (PARCO Productions, Tokyo); *The Twits* (Leicester Curve/UK Tour); *Much Ado About Nothing* (Shakespeare's Globe/International Tour); *Orlando*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *My Young and Foolish Heart* (Royal Exchange Manchester); *Shostakovich's Hamlet* (City of London Symphonia); *James and the Giant Peach*, *My Generation* (West Yorkshire Playhouse); *Twelfth Night* (Regent's Park Open Air Theatre); *Anna Karenina* (Arcola); *The Chalk Circle* (Aarohan Theatre, Nepal); *Carnival Under the Rainbow* and *Feast Kakulu* (Hilton Arts Festival, South Africa).

TOM PYE

Set Designer

Theatre: *High Society* (The Old Vic); *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Sinatra*, *Medea* (West End); *Young Chekhov trilogy*, *Major Barbara*, *Happy Days*, *The Powerbook*, *Mother Courage*, *Measure for Measure* (National Theatre); *Long Day's Journey into Night*, *All My Sons*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *Testament of Mary*, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *Top Girls* (Broadway). Opera: *Akhmaten*, *Così fan Tutte*, *The Death of Klinghoffer*, *Eugene Onegin* (ENO/Met Opera); *Messiah*, *Thebans* (ENO); *The Turn of the Screw* (ROH); *Cunning Little Vixen* (Glyndebourne); *Miss Fortune* (Royal Opera House). TV: *To Walk Invisible*.

LAURA HOPKINS

Costume Designer

Theatre: *The Divide* (The Old Vic); *Misalliance* (Orange Tree); *Opening Skinner's Box* (Improbable Theatre); *Grapes of Wrath* (Nuffield Theatre); *Tosca* (Teatro della Muse, Ancona); *Così Fan Tutti* (ENO/Met Opera — costumes only), *Annie get your Gun* (Sheffield Crucible); *Lanark* (Citizens Theatre/EIF — Best Design, Critic's Awards Theatre Scotland); *The Oresteia* (Home Manchester); *The Seagull* (Headlong); *Troilus and Cressida* (The Wooster Group/RSC); *Dr Faustus* (Headlong Theatre — Best Design TMA awards); *Othello* (Frantic Assembly); *The Pass* (Royal Court). Associate Designer with theatre company Imitating the Dog and Duckie, Purveyors of Progressive Working Class Entertainment.

ALEX BARANOWSKI

Composer

Theatre: *The Cripple of Inishmaan* (West End/Broadway); *Macbeth*, *East is East* (West End); *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Young Vic/St Ann's Warehouse, New York); *Fathers and Sons*, *Salt Root & Roe* (Donmar); *Henry VI Parts I, II & III*, *Cymbeline* (Shakespeare's Globe); *Hamlet*, *Frankenstein* (as Music Associate), *Earthquakes in London* (National Theatre); *The Masque of Anarchy* (Manchester International Festival); *Twelfth Night*, *Hamlet* (Royal Exchange Manchester); *Desire Under The Elms*, *Othello* (Sheffield Crucible). Dance: *1984* (Northern Ballet/ Sadler's Wells — Southbank Award Best Dance Production); *Kes* (Sheffield Crucible); *Together, Alone* (Royal Opera House). Film: *Nureyev*, *McCullin*, *Attacking the Devil*, *Edmund the Magnificent*, *The Hope Rooms*, *The Departure*.

MARK HENDERSON

Lighting Designer

Theatre: *Girl from the North Country* (The Old Vic/West End); *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, Copenhagen, The Sound of Music, Our House, Grease, West Side Story, Spend Spend Spend, Neville's Island, Follies, Passion, Enron, Sweeney Todd, American Buffalo, The Bodyguard, Gypsy, Funny Girl, Don Juan in Soho, Sunset Boulevard* (West End); *All My Sons, Les Parents Terribles, The History Boys, One Man, Two Guvnors, The Hard Problem* (National Theatre); *The Judas Kiss, Democracy, Hamlet, Racing Demon, Indiscretions, Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (Broadway). Awards: Olivier Awards for Lighting Design: 1992, 1995, 2000, 2002, 2010, 2016. The Tony Award for Best Lighting Design of a Play 2006.

TOM GIBBONS

Sound Designer

Theatre: Dr. Seuss's *The Lorax* (The Old Vic); *Venus In Fur* (West End); *A View from the Bridge* (Young Vic/West End/Broadway); *People, Places and Things* (National Theatre/West End/UK tour — Olivier Award for Best Sound Design); *Life of Galileo, Happy Days, A Season in the Congo, Disco Pigs* (Young Vic); *1984, The Crucible* (Broadway); *Mr Burns* (Almeida); *Hamlet, 1984, Oresteia* (Almeida/West End); *Hedda Gabler* (National Theatre/UK tour); *The Red Barn, Sunset at the Villa Thalia* (National Theatre); *As You Like It, The White Devil* (RSC); *Julius Caesar, Henry IV* (Donmar/St Ann's Warehouse New York); *Love Love Love* (Royal Court); *Lionboy* (Tricycle); *Anna Karenina* (Manchester Royal Exchange); *Les Miserables* (Wermland Opera Sweden).

JESSICA RONANE CDG

Casting

Theatre: *The Divide, A Christmas Carol, Girl from the North Country, Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead, King Lear, The Caretaker, The Master Builder, Dr. Seuss's The Lorax, The Hairy Ape, Future Conditional* (The Old Vic); *Running Wild* (Regent's Park). Theatre (children casting): *To Kill a Mockingbird, The Sound of Music* (Regent's Park); *School of Rock, The Audience, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Made in Dagenham, Singin' in the Rain, Billy Elliot the Musical* (West End); *Matilda The Musical* (RSC/West End); *Bugsy Malone* (Lyric Hammersmith); *Caroline or Change, Baby Girl, Mrs Affleck* (National Theatre). Film: *The Kid Who Would Be King* (Working Title/Big Talk).

TOBY SEDGWICK

Director of Movement

Theatre: *A Christmas Carol* (West End); *The Thirty Nine Steps* (West End/Broadway); *Frankenstein* (National Theatre); *War Horse* (RNT/Broadway/World Tour — Olivier Award for Best Theatre Choreographer); *A Dog's Heart* (ENO/European tour); *Tintin* (Barbican); *The Thirty Nine Steps* (West End/Broadway); Film: *28 Days Later, Sunshine, Nanny McPhee and the Big Bang, Victor Frankenstein, Stan and Ollie*. Other: Director of Movement and Choreographer for the opening of Danny Boyle's 2012 Olympics Games (Industrial Revolution/Green & Pleasant Land). As a Director: *Ockhams Razor, The Mill* (ROH); *The Hudsucker Proxy with Simon Dormandy* (Nuffield Theatre/Liverpool Playhouse).

BEN HART

Illusion

Theatre: *Woyzeck* (The Old Vic); *Everybody's Talking About Jamie, The Exorcist* (West End); *A Christmas Carol* (RSC); *Impossible* (West End/UK/International tour); *Paul Merton Out Of My Head* (West End/UK tour); *WILD, Darker Shores* (Hampstead Theatre); *Belief?* (Gag Reflex); *The Vanishing Boy* (Objective); *Dr Faustus* (West Yorkshire Playhouse); *The Outsider* (UK/International Tour); *The Arthur Conan Doyle Appreciation Society* (Traverse); *Fatherland* (Gate); *StageFright* (Theatre Royal Bury St. Edmunds). Film and TV: *The One Show, Killer Magic, Partners in Rhyme, Life Hacks Hoax and Now You See It, Britain's Got Talent, Trick Artist, The EggTrick; Magic Ian, The Sorcerer's Apprentice, Stand Up For Cancer*.

MEGAN DOYLE

Associate Costume Designer

Theatre as Costume Supervisor: *The Divide* (The Old Vic); *Filthy Business* (Hampstead). Theatre as Associate Costume Supervisor: *An Inspector Calls* (West End). Theatre as Deputy Costume Supervisor: *Ulysse, Albert Herring* (Grange Festival). Theatre as Costume Assistant: *The Twilight Zone* (Almeida). Television as Costume Maker: *Black Mirror, USS Callister*. Training: BA Costume for Performance at London College of Fashion, UAL.

DAN BALFOUR

Associate Sound Designer

Theatre as Sound Designer: *Seafret* (Old Red Lion/HighTide Festival); *Figures Of Speech* (Almeida); *Great Expectations* (Merton Arts Space); *Spindrift* (Theatre Royal Plymouth); *I Call My Brothers, Caught, Red Helicopter* (Arcola); *RE: Home* (Yard Theatre); *DREAM, Jenufa — Opera Works* (ENO); *Walking the Tightrope* (Theatre Delicatessen), *SOLO* (Bush); *Nude* (Hope Theatre), *Deathwatch* (Roundhouse); *The Dumb Waiter, Woyzeck* (Old Nick Theatre).

Theatre as Associate Sound Designer: Dr. Seuss's *The Lorax* (The Old Vic — Toronto tour); *Oresteia* (Almeida); *People Places & Things* (Headlong/UK tour); *Frogman* (Traverse); *Life Of Galileo* (Young Vic); *Sex With Strangers* (Hampstead); *How I Hack My Way Into Space* (Unlimited Theatre).

TATTY HENNESSY

Baylis Assistant Director

Theatre as Director: *Romeo & Juliet* (Shakespeare in Squares); *Acorn* (The Courtyard). Theatre as Assistant Director: *The Island* (Dukes Lancaster/Chipping Norton Tour); *An Audience with Jimmy Saville* (Park Theatre); *Hamlet* (Shakespeare's Globe/World Tour). Theatre as Writer and Director: *The Snow Queen* (Theatre N16); *All That Lives* (Ovalhouse). Theatre as Writer: *A Hundred Words For Snow — Heretic Voices Monologues Winner* (Arcola).

HANNAH BANISTER

Children's Director

Theatre as Director: *Strings, Trapp, Step in Time* (Old Vic New Voices); *Cigarettes and Moby Dick, El Grito del Bronx* (Ugly Duck); *Hush* (Gate); *Eyes to the Wind* (The Space); *This is Art* (Shoreditch); *I Killed Rasputin* (Assembly George Square, Edinburgh Fringe); *Gardening for the Unfulfilled and Alienated* (Latitude); *Crimble* (Old Red Lion Theatre); *The Garden* (Lost Theatre); *A Muse of Fire* (Riverside Studios); *Best Men* (Southwark Playhouse); *She's Not There* (Charing Cross Theatre); *Things I say When I Don't Say I Love You* (The Lowry, Salford).

Theatre as Assistant Director: *Jumpy* (West End).

DAVID GALLAGHER

Musicians' Contractor

Theatre as Orchestral Manager: *The Divide, A Christmas Carol, Groundhog Day, Cinderella* (The Old Vic); *Matilda The Musical, 42nd Street, Queen Anne, From Here to Eternity* (West End); *Jackie the Musical, Bernadette Peters, Crush, Play Without Words* (UK tours); *Wolf Hall* recordings (Broadway); National Symphony Orchestra projects. Theatre as Musicians' Contractor: Dr. Seuss's *The Lorax, Girl from the North Country, Future Conditional, Richard III, The Tempest, As You Like It, The Cherry Orchard, The Winter's Tale* (The Old Vic); *amfAR Gala* (Cannes Film Festival). Film *Robin Hood*. David was Music Manager at the RSC 2010–11 and National Theatre 2000–10.



CHARACTERS

THE EKDAHL FAMILY

HELENA EKDAHL

Actress and grandmother to Fanny and Alexander. Helena's late husband bought her the theatre and she performed principal roles until she raised a family. After her children were grown, she returned to the theatre and played roles such as Gertrude in *Hamlet*.

OSKAR EKDAHL

Actor, Helena's eldest son and father to Fanny and Alexander. Following his death early in the play, he appears as a ghost, visible both to his son, Alexander, and to his mother, Helena.

EMILIE EKDAHL

Actress, wife to Oskar and mother to Fanny and Alexander. Regularly confides in her mother in law, Helena.

ALEXANDER EKDAHL

Aged 11. An imaginative and creative boy. Loved and cherished by all of the Ekdahl family and the maids. His fantasies cause him trouble once living with the bishop. He is headstrong, and his stubbornness provokes cruel and harsh physical punishment from Edvard.

FANNY EKDAHL

Aged 7. Fanny is a less prominent character than her brother but it is suggested that she was not fathered by Oskar. She is not aware of this, but several of the adult characters are.

GUSTAV ADOLF EKDAHL

Restaurant Manager in the theatre, Helena's middle son and uncle to Fanny and Alexander. It is widely known that Gustav regularly spends time with women other than his wife. He has an affair with Maj, a maid to the Ekdahl family, who bears him a child.

ALMA EKDAHL

His wife, who shows patience and forbearance, particularly in the light of Maj's pregnancy.

PETRA EKDAHL

Their 16 year old daughter.

CARL EKDAHL

Helena's youngest son, a scientist. Carl and Gustav visit the bishop in an attempt to rescue Emilie but they are unsuccessful.

LYDIA EKDAHL

His wife.

MAJ

Maid to Alexander and Fanny, 19 years old. Becomes pregnant as a result of her affair with Alexander's Uncle Gustav.

BERTHA

Maid to Helena.

VEGA

Maid to Helena, 60 years old.

ISAAC JACOBI

An old friend of Helena's. There is a suggestion that they were once lovers.

AARON JACOBI

Isaac's nephew, who arrives with Isaac to negotiate the sale of a chest which will be used to smuggle Fanny and Alexander out of the palace. He has a large collection of puppets which inspire Alexander's imagination back at Isaac's house.

ISMAEL JACOBI

Isaac's nephew and Aaron's brother. He is confined to one room and talks of magic related to Kabbalah. He shows kindness to Alexander and is able to accurately describe the suffering of the bishop following Emilie's departure, including the fire that ends Edvard's life.

THE BISHOP'S PALACE

EDVARD VERGERUS

The bishop of Uppsalla, who marries the widowed Emilie. His strict Lutheran beliefs are a strong contrast to the world in which Fanny and Alexander have been raised. He believes in corporal punishment and shows a particularly cruel streak towards Alexander, who threatens his authority.

HENRIETTA VERGERUS

Edvard's sister, she lives her life by the same ascetic approaches as Edvard, insisting on the pleasure of 'punctuality, cleanliness and order'. She assists in meting out some of the physical punishment to Alexander.

BLEND A VERGERUS

Edvard's aunt who is an invalid and confined to a wheelchair.

JUSTINA

Maid to the bishop's household.

PAULINE (GHOST)

The bishop's daughter from his first marriage.

ESMERELDA (GHOST)

The bishop's daughter from his first marriage. Both of the girls appear to Alexander when he is locked in the attic by Edvard as punishment.

THE THEATRE

MR LANDAHL

The Theatre Manager.

MICHAEL BERGMAN

A young actor who plays Hamlet following Oskar's death

ACTORS 1,2,3

The actors are seen in rehearsals for *Hamlet* as well as visiting Emilie following the death of Oskar.

SYNOPSIS

Uppsala, Sweden, 1907. The Ekdahls are an affluent family, well known in society particularly as they own and run a theatre. Their house accommodates four apartments, one of which belongs to Oskar and Emilie Ekdahl and their children Alexander and Fanny.

The play begins at Christmas time, when the theatrical family gives a performance of the Christmas story and then returns to the Ekdahl residence for Christmas celebrations. Alexander's grandmother, Helena, tells her old friend Isaac that she is preparing to announce her retirement from the theatre and seeks his support. The family gathers for a sumptuous feast, and Helena makes her announcement. She is dismissive of concerns about Oskar continuing to act in the theatre and his brother Gustav managing the theatre's restaurant. Oskar objects because he is planning to mount a production of *Hamlet* and wants Helena to play Gertrude, Hamlet's mother.

During the celebrations, Alexander's Uncle Gustav arranges to meet Maj, the Ekdahls' maid, in her room that night. Gustav is married to Alma and has a daughter with her, and his wife is aware that he is sometimes unfaithful, coming home smelling of other women's perfume. Meanwhile, Uncle Carl, the youngest of the three Ekdahl brothers, entertains the children by dropping his trousers and breaking wind on to a lit candle. Alexander, who has already encountered Death in the play's Prologue, discusses the inevitability of death with Isaac, a family friend who is Jewish and therefore has some beliefs and attitudes that expand Alexander's outlook on life.

Alma is fully aware of her husband's flirtation with Maj, and warns her to be careful. Later that night, Gustav visits Maj in her room and promises to set her up in her own coffee shop. Elsewhere, Isaac and Helena discuss Emilie and her relationship with Oskar. Emilie admits feeling guilt that Fanny is not Oskar's child but Helena reminds her that he has always treated Fanny as his own child.

During the rehearsals for *Hamlet* at the theatre, Oskar becomes unwell and collapses. Alexander once again sees the mask of Death. Following Oskar's death, the family is visited by friends and family. Bishop Edvard Vergerus arrives and sermonises about the importance of solemnity at such a time. At the funeral wake, Alexander sees the ghost of his father.

One year after Oskar's death, Emilie announces her intention to leave the theatre, despite Helena's protestations. The theatre was bought for Helena by her late husband and she is concerned that the legacy should be continued. Whilst playing, Alexander once again sees Death and asks him who he has come for. Maj arrives to take him to see Emilie and Edvard, who admonishes him for lying at school, claiming that he has been sold to a circus. Once again Edvard fails to see the humour or creativity in Alexander's character and insists that Alexander beg for his mother's forgiveness. It is then that Emilie explains to Alexander and his sister Fanny that she intends to marry the bishop.

After this has been confirmed with the children, Edvard then tells Emilie that he wishes her and the children to come to their new life with him with none of their previous possessions, including the children's toys, books and dolls. Emilie is extremely reluctant, saying that she would need to discuss this with the children themselves, but the bishop overrules her, telling her that it must be her decision and the children should simply follow suit.

There is a wedding feast which ends with Emilie, Fanny and Alexander leaving with Edvard to start their new life.

The bishop's residence is austere and without creature comforts. There are no signs of the luxury, creativity or fun from Alexander's previous life. On arrival they meet Edvard's sister Henrietta and Aunt Bertha, an invalid who is confined to a wheelchair. Their first meal is cabbage soup, black bread and water, and their new life will be informed by the bishop's strict Lutheran beliefs. Henrietta and Emilie immediately disagree on how the children should be raised and the levels of gratitude they should show for the simplest of meals. Henrietta tells the children of the importance of punctuality, cleanliness and order: the antithesis of how they have lived when Oskar was alive.

Getting into bed on their first night at the palace, Emilie tells the children she has married the bishop because she loves him and reassures them that it will become easier. Alexander refuses to kiss her goodnight, sulking because he dislikes his stepfather intensely. Emilie leaves Edvard with the children whilst she goes to her new sleeping quarters. Edvard realises that Alexander has both a book and a teddy bear that has perhaps been brought to his home despite his strict instructions. The children realise that Edvard has locked them in their room once he has left.

During the family's trip to the Ekdahls' summerhouse, Alma informs the assembled company that Maj has fallen pregnant by Gustav. During the picnic it is clear that Carl is deeply unhappy and is particularly cruel to his wife Lydia. Helena expresses deep concern about Emilie and the children, describing an impending doom that Isaac actually attributes to the fact that they are both getting older and their friends are starting to die: he is very aware of his own mortality. Maj appears, and expresses her own concerns about Alexander, who has written a very stilted letter to them claiming to be happy and well. Maj tells Helena, 'Happy children don't write letters. They are too busy being happy.' Emilie arrives at the summer house, wishing to confide in Helena about her new life.

During Emilie's absence, Justina the maid tells the children a morbid story about Edvard's wife and children, and the manner of the drowning. She hints that their spirits remain in the house and are responsible for a permanent sense of being unsettled. Alexander tells Justina that he has seen the ghosts of the children, and that the wife's ghost told him that they had been locked away for five days with no food and water, and their death was caused by their attempt to escape from their captivity. Justina abruptly ends the conversation and sends the children to bed.

Half asleep in her chair at the summer house, Helena sees the ghost of Oskar and converses with him. He claims to have something very important to tell but their conversation is interrupted when Emilie enters. Emilie explains the harshness of the punishments that are meted by the Bishop and his sister. She has asked him for a divorce, despite the fact that she is pregnant, but the law states that if she leaves, he will gain full custody of the children on account of her 'desertion'.

Back at the palace, the bishop has been informed of the claims that Alexander has made to Justina, and Alexander refuses to admit to it. He is caned by the bishop as punishment and banished to sleep in the attic that night and sees the ghosts of the two dead children, Esmerelda and Pauline, who explain that they died skating on a pond that was not frozen over enough to hold their weight. They plan to scare him to death. His visions cease when Alexander hears his mother return and insist that she be allowed into the attic with Alexander. Edvard promises to break Alexander and remove his tendencies for fantasy and lying. He grabs Emilie, covering her mouth to stop her screaming for help, and tells her of how she will be locked into a room for the remainder of her pregnancy, claiming that it is for her own benefit.

Isaac and his nephew Aaron arrive at the palace but Henrietta refuses to let them see Edvard or Emilie, who she claims is resting in her room. Isaac offers to buy a large chest from the bishop, and Isaac then uses it to smuggle the children out of the palace and back to his own house. Aaron's puppet collection sparks Alexander's imagination once again. Emilie is still trapped at the bishop's residence, and her brothers-in-law Gustav and Carl visit the bishop to try and make a financial arrangement for her release. He refuses. Later that night, Emilie is unable to sleep and makes a broth which she then encourages the bishop to drink. When he becomes unwell she explains that she has laced the broth with a large amount of bromide powders and when he wakes up, she will be gone and he will be unable to do anything about it.

Ismael, Aaron's brother, narrates a vision of exactly what is happening at the palace, as the bishop writhes in pain. His sister has overturned a paraffin lamp, catching her bedclothes and nightclothes on fire. She makes it to Edvard's bedroom and they are both engulfed in the flames. Ismael tells Alexander, 'everything is burning'. We learn that both Henrietta and the bishop die in great pain as a result.

Emilie returns to the Ekdahl family with her children, and a christening banquet is held for the two new babies born to Emilie and Maj. Emilie suggests that she perform a Strindberg play with Helena who responds scornfully, calling Strindberg a 'horrible woman hater'. Alexander encounters the ghost of the bishop who tells him he will never be free. He sits and talks with his grandmother as the lights fade.

THEMES

FAMILY: CONFLICT AND LOYALTY

The sense of family is important from the very beginning of the play, when the assembled actors create a tableau of the Holy family at the nativity.

Helena is the matriarch of this family, and there is a sense of competition between her three sons. Oskar is actor and director, Gustav is the Restaurant Manager and Carl is a scientist. However, when Oskar dies, it is the remaining two brothers who seek to rescue Emilie from her captor.

The relationships between male family members are another point of interest. Isaac is a benevolent guardian to his nephews Aaron and Ismael. In contrast, Edvard is the complete opposite of Oskar: whilst Oskar has raised his children in a creative and accepting environment, Alexander suddenly finds himself with a stepfather for whom fantasy is anathema. Edvard and Alexander clash in part because they are both strong minded and unwilling to bend to other people's expectations. However, Alexander is a young child whilst the bishop imposes his own beliefs without exception. It is Isaac who becomes a guardian for Fanny and Alexander: although he is not a member of the Ekdahl family, Isaac shows his loyalty to them and welcomes the children into his own family home.

Throughout the play, the women show tolerance and support of each other's experiences. Whilst bewildered by Emilie's decision to marry Edvard, the extended family continue to show concern and care for Emilie and her children. Alma is aware of Maj's flirtation and subsequent pregnancy with Gustav, but the baby is accepted by the family despite her illegitimacy. Indeed, it is known and accepted that Emilie's daughter Fanny was not fathered by Oskar.

The family motifs in this play often mirror those in *Hamlet*, which is frequently referenced both in Oskar's choice of play to be performed at the theatre and Emilie's instruction to Alexander, 'You are not Hamlet...and this is not Elsinore'.



CREATIVITY AND MAGIC

The play contains numerous different references to theatre, magic and the imagination. Alexander's own imagination is both an escape and a way in which to understand his experiences. Alexander begins the play by allowing the shadows to crowd and play in his mind, and he has been raised in a theatrical family.

Whilst Alexander uses creativity and fantasy to cope with his experiences, Edvard is increasingly threatened by it. For him, it represents jollity and levity which have no role in his way of life. He interprets Alexander's fantasies as wanton lies which must be punished. Edvard's lack of understanding makes Emilie's decision to marry him particularly bewildering.

MAGIC

Kabbalah magic is suggested in the play as being responsible for the rescue of the children (the bright shaft of light as Isaac negotiates with Edvard for the chest), and the fire so accurately described by Ismael that ultimately leads to Edvard's death. The magic also blurs the lines between reality and fantasy for Alexander, who imagines Aaron's puppets coming to life.

DEATH AND LIFE

The ages of characters in the play range from the babies, born to Emilie and Maj at the end of the play, to Isaac who frequently talks of accepting that death must come to all of us. Alexander's experience of death includes losing his father at the age of 11, seeing ghosts of the bishop's two daughters and an interaction with Death himself.

Within the lifespan presented on stage, the audience is exposed to love, loss, growing up, ageing, adultery, birth, betrayal and conflict. It is no coincidence that the play also spans a number of years and seasons, mirroring life itself.

CHRISTIANITY AND JUDAISM

The play opens at Christmas with the Ekdahls performing the Christmas story, but also shows a large family enjoying traditional celebrations. The feasting and gifts highlight the wealth and affluence of the family, which strongly contrast with the bishop's Lutheran beliefs. The Vergerus household is one of simple food, and Edvard asks Emilie to free herself of all material belongings before moving to the palace, and that the children do the same. Bishop Vergerus insists that Alexander confess his sins and repent, and doles out harsh physical punishment when Alexander refuses to do so.

Isaac and his nephews Aaron and Ismael are Jewish, and there is a strong suggestion in the text that they use Kabbalah magic in order to aid the children's escape from the palace, and also the subsequent death of Edvard, despite the fact that the police state that it was an accident.



TIMELINE

INGMAR BERGMAN

1918

Ingmar Bergman born in Uppsala, Sweden. His father is a Lutheran minister who later becomes chaplain to the King of Sweden.

1927

Aged nine, Ingmar trades tin soldiers for a magic lantern. He develops a love of marionette puppets, creating scenery and re-enacting plays.

1934

Aged 16, Ingmar travels to Germany for a holiday and witnesses Hitler at a Nazi rally in Weimar.

1937

Enters Stockholm University College where he spends most of his time working on student theatre, rather than studying art and literature. He does not graduate but obtains a job as assistant director at a theatre based on the experience he has already gained.

1942

Directs the first of his own plays, *Death of Punch*. Over the next decade he will direct six more of his own works.

1943

Joins The Dramatist Studio, which is led by writer Brita von Horn.

1944

Becomes youngest theatrical manager in Europe at the Helsingborg City Theatre.

1950

Directs his only Brecht play, *The Threepenny Opera*.

1953

Bergman moves to become Director of Malmö theatre, where he meets many of the actors who will become part of his longstanding ensemble.

1955

Smiles of a Summer Night (film).

1957

The Seventh Seal (film).

Wild Strawberries (film).

1961

Directs *The Seagull* (play) at the Royal Dramatic Theatre, Sweden.

Through a Glass Darkly (film).

1963

Directs the European premiere of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (play).

Becomes Head of the Royal Dramatic Theatre, where he directs one play a year until he leaves in 1976.

1966

Persona (film).

1967

As guest director, directs *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (play) in Oslo, Norway.

1969

Directs *Woyzeck* (play), and invites audiences to public rehearsals.

1970

Directs the National Theatre's production of *Hedda Gabler* (play) at The Old Vic, London, as guest director. This is a revival of a previous production he had directed, with Maggie Smith in the title role.

1972

Cries and Whispers (film).

1975

Directs *The Magic Flute* (opera) for television.

Directs *Twelfth Night* (play) at Royal Dramatic Theatre, Sweden.

1977

Moves to Munich in response to charges of tax evasion, from which he is later fully exonerated.

Adapts his own film *Scenes From a Marriage* for the stage. It is presented alongside scenes from *A Doll's House* and *Miss Julie*.

1982

Returns temporarily to Sweden after exile in Germany.

Fanny and Alexander (film)

The semi-autobiographical film involves 60 actors and more than 1200 extras.

1984

Fanny and Alexander wins four Academy Awards™ for Best Foreign Language Film, Best Cinematography, Best Art Direction and Best Costume Design. It is also nominated for Best Director and Best Original Screenplay.

1987

Directs *Hamlet* (play) which tours to London and New York the following year.

1991

Directs *The Bacchae* (opera).

1994

Directs *The Winter's Tale* (play).

2002

Directs *Ghosts* (play).

Directs Ibsen's *The Wild Duck* at the Royal Dramatic Theatre.

2003

Retires from film making aged 85.

2007

Dies on 30 July, in Sweden.

PostNord Sverige issue a commemorative postage stamp depicting him directing *Fanny and Alexander*.

2018

Centenary year. The British Film Institute mounts a centenary season of Bergman's films.

The Old Vic stages theatre production of *Fanny & Alexander*. Bergman's daughter Eva also directs an adaptation of the play which transposes the action to the 1930s. 50 stage adaptations of Bergman's work are set to be staged across the world.

REHEARSAL DIARY

REHEARSAL ROOM DIARY OF TATTY HENNESSEY, BAYLIS ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

DAY ONE

On the first day of rehearsals, the room was full of people. The entire company and creative team and people from all departments in the theatre; wardrobe, set and production, development and marketing, met excitedly over coffee and biscuits. We stood in a vast circle as Max Webster, the director, welcomed us all and we introduced ourselves and our jobs one by one. As always at meet and greets, I was struck by what a hugely collaborative process making a play is, especially a play of this scale and ambition.

The company and team sat around a big table and we did the first read-through of the play. This is always an exciting and nervous time, it is the first time we heard the play read aloud by the actors and the first time they heard each other. Max stressed that there is no pressure to 'perform'. We decided to alternate the child actors through the reading; even though there are only two children in the play, we have four teams of child actors who will share the roles throughout the run. It was wonderful to hear the Stephen Beresford's script for the first time, to start to get a feel for its pace and structure. It is a very big story, of a large, complicated, messy family dealing with a big trauma, and it moves through many locations and follows many characters across a two year time span, so telling the story clearly is a balancing act.

After the reading, Tom Pye, our designer, revealed the model box. This is a scale replica of what the set will look like in the theatre. As we have to move between many locations, our set is moveable and constantly shifting in a mixture of moves done by backstage crew and onstage actors. To capture some of the magic impressionism of Bergman's film, our set isn't entirely naturalistic, but implies and suggests spaces through shapes and colours and carefully selected pared back items of set; sofas, a Christmas tree, a wicker chair in a summer house, hanging puppets on strings. The company asked a lot of questions; Kevin Doyle, who plays the Bishop, asked whether actors moving furniture pieces are moving 'in character' or not, and what quality these moves will have. Toby Sedgwick, our movement director, replied that no, it's not in character but more fluid and expressionistic, and that our goal was to create elegant and fluid moves between locations inspired by the way film cuts and segues between scenes.

At the end of the day our composer, Alex Baranowski, gathered the cast around the piano to learn some Swedish Christmas songs. Pronunciation is difficult and I made a note to find a recording of a native Swedish speaker so we can get it exactly right. We ended the day feeling energised — it felt like a big task ahead of us and there was a lot of ground to cover but also a huge amount of potential. We couldn't wait to get to work.



WEEK ONE

Table work, physical exercises, discovering the ‘world of the play’

For the first week of rehearsals the full company were called every day and we worked our way through the entire play. We sat around an enormous table, reading scenes and asking questions about the characters and scenes.

We shared research relevant to the story and asked a lot of questions.

- What was it like to live in Uppsala in 1907?
- What was it like to be a woman then?
- What was it like to be a child?
- What is a Swedish Christmas like?
- The Bishop in the play is a Lutheran; what makes Lutheranism different, and how does this affect the choices he makes throughout the play?
- The Ek Dahl family are actors and theatre managers; what would a play have been like in their theatre?

The whole company was present for all of these discussions and everybody joined in, and together we built up a shared picture of the world of the play and its characters.

We asked questions about motivation and objectives:

- Why does Alma stay with her husband even when he’s unfaithful?
- Why is Carl so cruel to Lydia?
- Why does Emilie choose to abandon the world of the theatre to live with the Bishop?

Max Webster and movement director Toby Sedgwick also led physical exercises to develop a shared physical language. In my favourite of these, everyone got into pairs — my partner was Catherine Walker. We were given a length of thin bamboo and told to hold it up in suspension between us with the force of our palms on either end, and then to move around the room together, taking it in turns to push and give and keeping the bamboo firmly held between us. We then did the same in pairs, then fours, until eventually the entire company, nearly 20 of us, were all connected in a long snake of bamboo, feeling how one movement rippled all along the chain and keeping alert and alive to each other’s positions.

- How does my movement change when I think about it in relation to other people?
- How do I make it clear to my partner when my movement is over and I’m waiting for their response?
- How do I balance awareness of my immediate relationship with my partner with where we fit in the group as a whole?

This felt hugely relevant to the play — every scene is about give and take, push and pull — and in a big ensemble play, it is important to know how you and your performance fits and relates to the whole.



WEEKS TWO AND THREE

After our week of exploratory work, we get right down to getting the play up on its feet.

The play begins with a Prologue where the characters are introduced and we see the Ekdahl family through Alexander's eyes as he moves, bored and alone, through an empty theatre and the halls of his family home. This is a big physical sequence involving the whole company and lot of moving set.

- Toby Sedgwick tried out a few ideas.
- We are not just blocking a sequence, we are making important decisions about the physical language of the play
- Do we want this to be very choreographic, like a dance, or impressionistic?
- What quality do we want the movement to have?

We decided we want to use movement to express character, and to give a sense of how Alexander feels. We talked about the best way for the performers to interact with the set, how to move objects with grace and to make those movements interesting, how to hold and move our bodies in relation to objects to give those objects characteristics. It was almost like puppetry. Toby asked the actors to practise by picking up random objects from the room and flying them around the space with different 'moods.' It was amazing how simple changes in the actor's body language dramatically changed an audience's feelings about the objects they're manipulating.

We also started to work on the scenes.

One morning we looked at a short duologue scene between Emilie, played by Catherine Walker, and Alma, Lolita Chakrabati. The characters are very different women, both dissatisfied with their marriages, for different reasons, both want support and help from the other but somehow in the scene this connection is missed and neither quite comes away with what they wanted. Emilie tells Alma a long story about a sudden moment of jealousy she felt for a young girl. We tried the speech in lots of different ways with different objectives, to see which objective — getting pity from Alma, shocking Alma, explaining herself to Alma — seemed the most interesting. We experiment with how much Emilie's words are totally focused on Alma and how much she gets lost in her own thoughts. We played with how sympathetic, or not, Alma is to Emilie's problems. We made decisions about the 'Given Circumstances' of the scene; we know it is nearly three o'clock in the morning, it is Christmas Eve, they have been eating and drinking all night, Alma has recently discovered her husband is pursuing another woman, they are in an empty corridor while a party continues downstairs.

Having concrete answers to these questions gave the scene a secure grounding and informed our decisions of how to play the relationship.

Every time we ran the scene Max would ask questions or make suggestions before running it again, and every time it changed subtly and grew more complex and interesting.



WEEK FOUR TO SIX

Runs and Changes

Once we had worked through the whole play, we started running sections and doing more fine-tuned work.

We started to understand how the whole piece fit together; what pace it needed and where things weren't quite working. It is an old saying, that to make a story work you have to be prepared to 'kill your babies' — make cuts to sections even if we like them, to benefit the shape of the piece as a whole. Stephen came to rehearsals, scenes were cut and rewritten. It is always a difficult and emotional process. It can feel personal to an actor when a moment they've worked hard on is cut, but Max reassured everyone that it's all in pursuit of a tighter, clearer story. It was amazing to see how even small changes had a drastic impact on the pace and structure of the whole play and on an audience's emotional journey through the play.

One thing that became apparent is that speed of thought is very important in this story. Stephen told the actors 'these people think quickly and they're resourceful.' Max encouraged the actors to 'think on the line'; to take out pauses between their cue and their words. A good exercise to drill this was clicking your fingers at the end of your scene partner's lines — you shouldn't be able to get a finger click between them finishing and you beginning. This sounds fast but it can be freeing as a performer; taking out time to think before you speak allows you to respond instinctively and stay in the moment.

Relationships between characters also started to come into clearer focus as we became more familiar with them. These are family members who have known each other for years, so their relationships are layered and complex, they don't need to take care with each other, they can hit every scene with their history in tow. We looked at making the relationship between Emilie (Catherine Walker) and her mother-in-law Helena (Penelope Wilton) have more conflict from the beginning, leaving their duologues more unresolved and keeping tensions higher between them for longer.



WEEK SEVEN AND EIGHT

Tech and Previews

Tech is a really exciting time in the process, when the entire team — sound, light, music, stage management, props, set, costume all finally come together in the theatre and we put the whole thing together for the first time. It's like an echo back to that first day in the rehearsal room. The actors get into wigs and costume and get little microphones, so small you can't even see them, attached to mic packs they wear under their costumes. We started at the beginning of the play and worked our way through everything, stopping to fix problems that came up. Decisions were still being made about what sounds and lights looked right. We ran the complicated prologue sequence a few times. Max didn't think the music was quite right — composer Alex had started with something quite slow and intricate, and in the big space of the theatre with so much colour and set movement we thought something grander and more up-beat would introduce the play better. Changes in one department affect every department so communication is always really important and our Company Stage Manager Robbie liaised between all the teams over radio mics.

Even after our first show in front of an audience, changes were still being made. This is really common with new plays, especially new plays on this scale. Sometimes you just don't know if something works until you see it in front of an audience. After the performance the whole creative and technical team, including playwright Stephen Beresford, gathered to discuss what was working and what needed fixing. This included technical things — there is a beautiful moment where rows and rows of puppets fly in from the ceiling to show the strangeness of Ismael's shop. It's technically tricky and involves lights, music and crew working together in perfect synchronicity and took practise to get right.

It also includes script changes. We realised the second half is a little long, and had too many time jumps. It was difficult for a theatre audience to follow all the 'Bergman zigzags' (as Max calls them!) that worked on film. It is really interesting to see how storytelling differs across the two mediums. Max also felt we weren't focusing enough on the children and the central story of a boy's grief for his father. We decided to move the first interval and re-worked some moments from the first half, including the moment Alexander's father collapses at a rehearsal and Alexander sees Death emerging from the crowd, so that we focused more on Fanny and Alexander.

By the time we got to press night, the show was very different to what we began tech with, but also felt so much more itself. The scrutiny of an audience, their palpable reactions and focus, are so illuminating, like a searchlight revealing everything that's working — and not working. It took a lot of hard work from everyone, in all departments, to make the show better, leaner and more exciting, and by press night we are all really proud of what we've achieved.

Making any play is a huge feat of collaboration. So many things have to fall into place, so many artists working together, so many little things to balance and get right. How do the lights help tell the audience where we are? How does the music help us understand how a character is feeling? How does a prop evoke a specific time period, and is it easy for an actor to use and manipulate? Do the costumes all look like they're from the same world, and what are we telling an audience about that world? And are the actors able to change in and out of them quickly enough?

It's an amazing balancing act of the practical and the fantastical, and, when you get that balance right, it feels like magic.



INTERVIEW

WITH TATTY HENNESSEY — BAYLIS ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

We caught up with Tatty during rehearsals for *Fanny & Alexander* and asked about the process of mounting such an ambitious adaptation of a classic film.

Can you talk us through how you've gone about rehearsing such an epic play?

It's been a group effort, requiring massive organisation. Within the first two weeks of the rehearsal period we've done a walk-through of the entire play and got it on its feet very quickly. The first week was quite cerebral with lots of discussion, and Toby (Sedgwick, Movement Director) did some workshops with the cast on creating the different places in the play.

I've also done a lot of research, for example on Lutheranism and Kabbalah magic, and we've applied that to the piece where appropriate. Once the piece is on its feet we then go into more detail about how we create the world of the play.

Reading the script, there's a lot of reference to food. How is that translated on stage?

The food is a key way of communicating the lavish lifestyle that the Ekdahl family lead, and it then contrasts to the world in which Emilie and her children find themselves later. Although this food is important, we don't necessarily need to see it — instead we focus on the physical aspects of it. What does it feel like to eat that kind of food? Toby has created a lovely 'hand ballet' which has been inspired by Pina Bausch — it's a gestural sequence which really communicates the rich abundance of that food.

Stephen Beresford is also very clever in creating a child's eye view of that food, and that privileged world is a quick way into the emotions. Those little domestic details are important too and again create a strong contrast with the strict Lutheran world that's so different to everything they've ever known.

The original film is famously long, with a lot of characters and a number of different locations. For a theatre audience, it must be challenging to engage and sustain the audience's attention for such a long period. What approach has the creative team taken to this?

Looking at the story beats is useful — what order do things need to be in in order to make sense for the theatre audience. Whilst it can be difficult to sustain momentum in such a long piece, the story and its characters are what help maintain the pace and energy and it actually expands in ways that you wouldn't expect.

What's interesting is that this story is set in 1907 Uppsala, the film was made in 1982 and here we are in 2018 so all of those periods are layered into each other to create the piece we have on stage now.

You've mentioned the research that you did. Once you've done that research, how do you apply it meaningfully to a play?

Research is an important part of the actor's process, and knowledge is definitely power. We need to choose what information will benefit the journey of putting on the piece. It's important to remember that we are putting on a play rather than creating an historical re-enactment so you need to choose carefully and then put the research to one side.

As Assistant Director, what other responsibilities do you have?

I've worked with the younger actors, alongside Children's Director Hannah Banister — the psychological journey for *Fanny and Alexander* is very complex so that work is integral.

We've also done vocal warm-ups with the younger actors every day: it's important that you know how to use and care for your instrument and make sure you can be heard by your audience.

Can you give us some insight into helpful exercises when working with text?

One exercise you can do is to take a short speech and only say either the consonants or the vowels. What do you learn from that? How does that then affect the way that you say the lines when delivering them properly? The playwright has crafted every word of the script and so also looking at the structure and form of what's written can be helpful.

Characters in plays speak because they have a NEED to say something. A key task therefore is to identify what need this particular speech is helping him or her to fulfil. That will then inform the delivery.

What advice can you give to drama students who wish to direct?

Get a good cohort of people around you — you need collaborators rather than competition, so work with that ethos. And get good friends around you too: it's a demanding profession. Make work, even if no one sees it, and say yes to any opportunity. Becoming a director is not a linear process and it's a long game!

INTERVIEW

WITH TOBY SEDGWICK – MOVEMENT DIRECTOR

Can you describe what your job is, and how you start putting movement together?

It's difficult to say what the job of a movement director is. It depends on the nature of the production. Some pieces demand a Poor Theatre style, where you work with invention and movement, for example, creating the idea of a sail boat moving swiftly towards you. In others it's more about creating body language and considering where characters are on stage in relation to each other. You can be working with gesture, which can be extremely subtle and precise, for example, a gesture ON a line rather than AFTER a line can create very different effects.

Body language can change depending on where the piece is set. Italians, for example, tend to have rounded and complete gesture, whilst a French person might make smaller, tighter gestures. The British are fairly conservative in the way that they move. *Fanny & Alexander* is set in Sweden; their movements are more direct, and perhaps less ambiguous.

Fanny & Alexander moves through a lot of different locations and spaces. Therefore, in some scenes there are moments where I've focussed on body language and in others I'm working with transitions and scene changes. There always has to be a reason for those scene changes and so I think of a dynamic. In that scene change I need to think of what happens at the end of the scene, and where we need to get to at the beginning of the next one. That creates the dynamic for the transition.

Can you explain how you've approached a particular scene where this has been a useful approach?

A good example would be the wake scene, in which characters are sharing a joke and a smile until the bishop enters, at which point the entire atmosphere changes. At the end of the scene, everyone must exit, and so they are doing so at an angle — the ensemble moving off in one direction, the coffin in another. I've used a lot of choral work in this scene, too, in order to move to the next critical moment. It's quite a cinematic approach, in which one person emerges from the chorus and obtains the audience's full attention. I call this approach 'declaring the hero' — where one person emerges from a larger ensemble or chorus.

It sounds like you work from an image in your mind?

Yes, and you need to identify what makes you excited about that image. Going back to that image of creating

a sail boat on stage — it's the idea of the speed of the boat, that it would list at an angle, and the water needs to break as the boat moves through it at speed. Once you've identified those key things, you then translate that into physical movement. I also think in colour quite a lot. A mental image can also be quite abstract, and the challenge is to then translate it into a theatrical format.

This play also includes ghosts. How have you dealt with the challenges that this presents?

We've had some very interesting discussions about ghosts in the Rehearsal Room! A ghost can touch a human, but can a human touch a ghost? What happens then?

It's helpful to think about the Swedish attitude towards death: that it's inevitable, it happens to all of us. The British tend to deny it; there's a stigma in discussing it which isn't the same attitude as the Swedish outlook. The characters in *Fanny & Alexander* have more of a willingness to accept death when it comes. And therefore when creating a ghost, there's actually less fuss about it. Once Oskar's ghost has entered, he then just becomes Oskar as he was. There's a costume choice that's made to communicate some elements — the use of a white suit, for example — but the movement doesn't need to fall into cliché or stereotype to indicate that he's no longer alive.

What key advice can you give to drama students about creating movement when working with scripts?

There are a number of important elements to creating movement. The first is to identify what style or language you're using and make that universal across the piece, rather than scattering various different styles which can be confusing and uncomfortable for your audience. Commit to one language and use it throughout.

You also need to consider the investment of the audience — what do you want them to believe? The audience don't need to be spoon fed — they can engage with what they see, and use their own imagination so you don't need to give them everything. In *Fanny & Alexander*, for example, there is a lot of food involved. When you see the show, you'll notice that naturalism doesn't always play a part in creating the idea of that food for the audience.

Be informed and influenced by the attitudes of your characters and their relationships with each other. Spatial awareness and proximity between characters is important.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

ONE — THE FEAST

All the way through *Fanny & Alexander*, food is used to describe season, occasion, the passage of time and Emilie's change in lifestyle when she marries Edvard, the bishop. In The Old Vic's performance, they do not use any real food, choosing instead to use movement to help the audience imagine it for themselves.

Look at the opening description of the Christmas feast. For each item, create a small gesture or movement, which can include one or both hands and the forearms too and the opportunity to lean forward or backwards, for example bending to smell the steam from the plate. Each movement should be clear, crisp and be no wider than a normal plate or placemat.

As an ensemble, put your ideas together so that you can create a sequence of movements which communicate the smell, taste, texture and/or appearance to the audience. You then need to decide who narrates the feast:

- Do people take it in turns?
- Do they speak in unison?
- Or is there one 'narrator who does not sit with the family as they eat'?
- If so, where does the 'narrator' stand?
- Do they watch from afar in the same way that the audience does?

Take the opportunity to film the sequence, or for one or two members of the ensemble to step out and evaluate the effectiveness of the piece.

FIRST COURSE

- Herring salad
- Gravadlax
- Janssen's temptation
- Beetroot with sour cream and dill
- Oysters — both devilled and raw — with an accompanying champagne
- Wild mushroom soup
- Salmon pudding
- Lutfisk
- And potato cakes with roe

SECOND COURSE

- Stuffed cabbage rolls
- Knackerbröd
- Spit-roasted chicken
- Christmas ham, served with Akvavit
- Venison with blackberries — 'Dripping in the pot' served with Vörtbrod
- Pickled white cabbage salad
- White Christmas sausage
- Meatballs

THIRD COURSE

- Peach Melba
- Cheese
- Ham
- Sweet dessert wine
- Risgrynsgröt — Christmas rice pudding porridge

TWO — CHORAL WORK: DECLARING THE HERO

Several times during the performance, Toby Sedgwick has used this method to allow characters to emerge from a chorus whilst previously unseen. An example of this is the ghost of Oskar who emerges from the crowd during his own funeral procession.

In a group of approximately 8–10 actors, create a passage across your performance space. Be very clear about your starting point, and where it finishes. Consider using diagonal lines, movement from one side of the stage to the other (downstage left to downstage right, for example). You would find it useful to finish the journey somewhere upstage, near an exit point.

Decide on one member of the ensemble who is going to emerge from the chorus. Identify a reason for this character to emerge — are they going to address a character on stage? Perhaps they are going to use direct address to talk to the audience, or you could use the device to create a transition from one scene to another.

Rehearse this choral movement so that you are able to 'release' the hero at the correct moment. In *Fanny & Alexander*, a black cloak is used to conceal Oskar's white suit, and a member of the ensemble then removes it as he then moves downstage to be 'declared' to the audience.

If you have a copy of the *Fanny & Alexander* script, identify moments where you could use this device, and rehearse a scene or section. Perform it to the audience, and ask for their feedback on the impact of the device. What do you find out?

THREE — ENSEMBLE WORK: WORKING WITH PROXEMICS

We often refer to proxemics when writing about theatre but often need to explore why we use space and proximity to communicate to the audience. A character's proximity to the audience, or to other characters on stage communicates a great deal about status, confidence, control, comfort in their surroundings and even their mood.

EATING ARRANGEMENTS

Look at a copy of Leonardo da Vinci's painting *The Last Supper*. You can find information about it here: thoughtco.com/the-last-supper-leonardo-da-vinci-182501

What do you notice? Jesus is in the middle, but what assumptions do you make about the disciples when viewing the paintings. Where are the loyalties and alliances? How does your understanding of the moment in time that this painting depicts affect the way you interpret the painting? Try and recreate the painting.

Now consider the Christmas feast as performed in *Fanny & Alexander*. Helena, as the matriarch of the Ek Dahl family, is in the centre. Isaac is at one end of the table (stage left), possibly because he is the eldest (honorary) member of the family. Oskar (as the eldest son) is at the other end of the table. The rest of the family are grouped in terms of age, and by marriage. The final feast is very similar, although Isaac has moved closer to Helena and Maj and her baby are now seated next to Emilie and her new baby. What does that suggest to the audience about those relationships and changes in status?

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN...

Look at the following section of the script. Notice that the bishop's power is already starting to influence how the family behaves. Considering status, age and emotion, stage this section to communicate very specific information to the audience. Who should we sympathise with? Who should we recognise as the highest status character in this moment?

A breakfast is served for the BISHOP and the chief mourners.

Pea soup, with Sorrel and sour cream, beetroot salad, a glazed ham and six roast chickens, fiskbullar, kötbullar, rutabargar with rotmosk pork, a side salad of sour apple and fennel.

Claret and white Burgundy are both served...

Outside the cathedral. A brass band. A huge funeral procession, with the BISHOP at the front.

GUSTAV ADOLF

'Isn't this — ?'

CARL

'Chopin. The funeral march.'

FANNY giggles. The BISHOP, who is next to EMILIE, whispers in her ear.

The Bishop declares himself to be full — and so Emilie does not serve the cold roast lamb or the potato salad. She also holds back the dessert. Peaches with almond cream. Oskar's favourite.

SOCIAL OCCASIONS

A year after Oskar's death, the Ekdahl family are holidaying at their summer house. The stage directions tell us:

A riverbank, near the Ekdahl's country house in the Stockholm archipelago. The family are picnicking, several of them have midsummer garlands of leaves and flowers on their heads.

How will you stage this in the performance space to communicate:

- The tension in the relationship between Alma and Gustav, now that Maj's pregnancy is general knowledge?
- Helena as matriarch, but who is tired of being the person who always soothes, guides and appeases?
- The cruelty with which Carl treats Lydia, and his desperate unhappiness?
- Creating a space for Oskar to appear to Helena later in the scene?
- A sense of openness and freedom which contrasts with the bishop's palace that Emilie has come from in order to confide in Helena?
- Isaac's relationship with Helena, and her need for someone to advise and support her? Remember that Helena and Isaac have previously been lovers, although a great deal of time has passed since then.
- For inspiration, have a look at Impressionist paintings of people having picnics. Look at how depth is created and also the use of levels. How does this relate to the staging of the picnic scene in *Fanny & Alexander*? Can you see some similarities?

Using what you have learnt from the activities above, stage the scene where Emilie and her children have their first dinner with the bishop and his family. How will you use spacing and proxemics to show the complete shift in power?

BISHOP, EMILIE, HENRIETTA, FANNY and ALEXANDER, all sit silently eating soup.

AUNT ELSA is being fed by JUSTINA. Silence. Just the clinking of spoons against bowls. The BISHOP stares at EMILIE, who looks up and catches his eye. He smiles at her, and she smiles back.

HENRIETTA

'The children don't seem to have any appetite at all.'

EMILIE

'They're just a little troubled by everything being so new and unfamiliar. You must understand that, Henrietta.'

HENRIETTA

'It could be that they don't like our good bread and our tasty meal.'

BISHOP

'Sister, this is our first evening together. We should be joyful.'

HENRIETTA

'Of course I don't want to ruin our first evening. But in the future — yes, well it is probably just as well that I say this at once — no one will be permitted to leave the table until they've eaten everything on their plate.'

EMILIE

'Dearest Henrietta — it is in fact up to me to decide what my children will do. I think —'

HENRIETTA

'There is a fundamental rule in this house — forgive me, Emilie — which no one is allowed to disobey — not even you, dear sister-in-law, and that is respect for the Earthly gifts.'

EMILIE

'I think that you've misunderstood something quite essential my dearest Henrietta. But I suggest we postpone this discussion for a more appropriate opportunity.'

FOUR — ENSEMBLE WORK: CREATING RELATIONSHIPS

Fanny & Alexander is a huge ensemble play, and a complex story about relationships. There are elements of push and pull, where relationships shift and change and each character has a need that they have to fulfil. The following exercise helps you to notice the physical elements of this, and to think about where the tension can be created non-verbally for an audience, as well as through the use of the script.

- Working with a partner, take a bamboo cane and hold it up using the palms of one hand each so that it is suspended between you. Maintain eye contact with your partner and move around the room together. Take it in turns to push and pull. Once you are confident of how to keep the bamboo suspended, experiment with using levels and moving under or over the bamboo being used by other pairs in the room. Work in silence so that you can focus on the physical sensations of this relationship.
- Now team up with another pair, and do the same with a larger group. Notice how the movement of one person will ripple through to the other three people and change the way they move. Notice who you tend to maintain eye contact with. Is there someone who always tends to lead, or is it a more democratic process? Again, work with levels and notice how you are moving in relation to other groups in the room who are doing the same exercise.
- Keep adding to the number of people in the groups until you have one whole ensemble working together. You might like to film this in order to notice the small nuances of how movements and relationships change and how one movement further up the chain can have implications and reactions further down.

Discuss what you have noticed, and how you might use that in a scene or section from *Fanny & Alexander*, or any other large ensemble script that you might be approaching. *Fanny & Alexander* is a large family saga and so this approach is particularly helpful to explore the relationships and tensions between the different characters.

When staging smaller duologues, this exercise is also helpful to notice the tensions. How does the Christmas scene between Isaac and Helena at the beginning of the play compare to doing the same cane exercise between them in their interactions at the summer house?

FOUR — WORKING WITH THE SET: TRANSITIONS

Read our interview with Movement Director Toby Sedgwick in this pack. He talks about finding the dynamics of a scene or a transition. In The Old Vic production of *Fanny & Alexander*, the ensemble execute most of the scene changes and often use physicality to suggest a change in atmosphere, location and mood.

Create a set for the bishop's office. You might need a table, three or four chairs, and some items of set dressing such as papers, the cane used to punish Alexander, candle sticks, etc. You are then going to create a visually interesting transition between this and the summer house. For this you might need a rug, picnic basket, parasol etc to suggest a more relaxed, outdoor existence.

Once you know which items you are responsible for moving, experiment with movement and the task of changing one interior location into an exterior and more pleasant one.

Think about:

- Moving items through the space — use the space above you as well side to side. Remember that Alexander's imagination is what gets him into trouble so what internal thoughts might you create here?
- Use a metronome to create a steady beat — either fast or slow. Perhaps your movements need to be mechanical, or do they become more fluid as you move towards the freedom of the outdoors?
- You might also like to consider how different characters are manipulated, or manipulative. Do they have any influence over the movements during the transition? Consider that Aaron's puppets have a strong influence in Act 3 — could you take inspiration from the idea of puppets and manipulation?

Rehearse the transition until it is slick and fits within a certain time frame. Then add the dialogue to both scenes (Act 2, the caning scene and the exchange between Helena and Emilie)

FIVE — CREATING GHOSTS

The ghosts of Oskar, Esmerelda and Pauline are all very strong influences on Alexander. Oskar is benevolent, whilst Esmerelda and Pauline are frightening for the boy who is locked in the attic after making up stories about the real daughters.

It is very easy to rely on cliché and stereotype when creating a ghostly presence on stage.

Look closely at the moments where Oskar appears. In the production, he suddenly appears from a crowd, or slowly appears upstage and walks towards the character with whom he is interacting. His arms tend to remain by his side, and his white suit creates much of the idea that he is a ghost for the audience. His voice does not change, but the dynamic of his movement is slightly more fluid and is slower than how he is depicted when he is alive.

Stage the following two exchanges so that you can experiment with the subtle differences in vocal and physical elements to create a living Oskar and a ghost (you will also need to consider who Oskar is speaking to in each scene and the relationship between them):

OSKAR lights the magic lantern and turns it so its beam — and all the bright colours and glow — are concentrated on the chair.

OSKAR

'Do you see that mysterious light? That's right. It glows in the dark. See? Why does the chair glow? Why does it shine in the darkness? I'll tell you — but remember — it's a secret. Anyone revealing this secret is doomed. That's why you have to swear to keep silent.'

CHILDREN

'We swear to keep silent.'

OSKAR

'Ssssh. Not so loud. Your mother might hear us — and that, believe me, would end the performance. This precious little chair is made from a metal that is only found in China. It was made by the emperor's master jeweller — a birthday present for the Empress. She spent her whole life sitting in that chair. Two eunuchs went with her everywhere she went — '

ALEXANDER

'What's a Eunuch?'

OSKAR

'Never you mind. And when the Empress died she was buried, sitting in that chair. For two thousand years, she sat in her burial chamber. The chair glowed in there — glowed right through the tiny Empress's body — like a candle through a paper lantern. But then, a band of plunderers came and broke into the burial chamber. They pushed the Empress out of the chair and — woof — she immediately turned to dust. Now the chair belongs to you. Take good care of it — Sit carefully, carefully. Speak to it. And at least two times a day — breathe on it.'

The children all breathe on the chair. OSKAR tiptoes away and comes back with his jacket over his head like a cowl.

'Haha! What a horribly stupid little chair. So terribly worn, and ridiculous. And extraordinarily ugly it is, as well.'

He takes the chair and sits on it. Immediately screams and jumps up.

'Aaah! A thousand curses! I think that damned chair is trying to bite my bottom. I'll teach you!'

Picks up the chair and starts to shake it violently.

The summerhouse. HELENA is asleep in the chair with a novel open on her knee. A clock strikes four in the afternoon. Suddenly OSKAR's ghost is sitting beside her in a chair. OSKAR caresses HELENA's cheek. She half wakes.

HELENA

'You see, Oskar — one is old and one is a child — all at the same time... Are you really here, my sweet boy? It doesn't matter. Even if you're a dream, I'm happy to see you. May I take your hand?'

She does. They smile.

OSKAR

'Now I could play Hamlet's ghost, eh, mother?'

HELENA

'Yes, my darling — '

OSKAR

'Now I could play him very well.'

They laugh for a moment.

OSKAR

'I came to talk to you, Mother. It's very important. The terrible thing is — I've been watching you for so long — I've forgotten what I wanted to say.'

HELENA

'My beautiful boy.'

OSKAR

'I think I might be a tiny bit overawed.'

'Have I been dead for a long time?'

HELENA

'Yes. Quite a long time.'

OSKAR

'I wish I could say it was peaceful. There are so many things I wish I could have said. Done.'

'Was I a good husband? Perhaps you'd better not answer that.'

HELENA

'Oh, Oskar. Of course, you were.'

OSKAR

'Please. Tell me the truth.'

HELENA

'I'm not absolutely certain what a 'good husband' is, my darling. You loved your wife. You adored her. You loved your children — '

OSKAR

'I did. I adored Emilie. But I couldn't touch her. I feel so ashamed of it now.'

HELENA

'Oskar — '

OSKAR

'I feel ashamed. Of making her unhappy.'

HELENA

'You made her so happy, Oskar. You made all of us happy. Listen to me — '

OSKAR

'I put her on a pedestal. I worshiped her. And then I was afraid — I was afraid to touch her.'

HELENA

'There is more than one way to love, Oskar. And we cannot give more than we have. Please try to forget it now. You did everything you could to make us happy. You were a wonderful son. When you died, the whole world flew apart. And it's still broken, Oskar — it's still in pieces. I don't even try to put it back together again. The pieces make more sense somehow.'

OSKAR

'There are so many things I'd like to say to you, Mother. If only we had the time. So many little apologies. So many expressions of love.'

HELENA

'Don't we have the time?'

OSKAR shakes his head.

Working in groups of three, now look at the scene in which Alexander is visited by Pauline and Esmerelda in the attic. These ghosts are supposed to be frightening — a very different presence to Oskar's. Experiment with tension in the arms and legs, and how they interact with the set. (The attic has some old chairs, a thin mattress and blanket and a very prominent crucifix with a figure of Jesus).

PAULINE (*Now visible*)

'My name is Pauline. My sister Esmeralda is over there by the crucifix.'

ESMERELDA is crouching behind the crucifix. Her limbs are strangely contorted.

'She is angry with you Alexander.'

ALEXANDER

'What for?'

PAULINE

'She wants us to punish you. Why are you looking so surprised? You know full well why we are angry with you.'

ALEXANDER

'I don't know at all.'

PAULINE

'You told lies about our father. You said that he locked us in. That isn't true. The gates to the levees had been closed for weeks and the river was frozen. We'd been given new ice skates for Christmas. The ice broke, and we fell into the water. Mother tried to save us but the current dragged us under the ice. Now you know the truth, you poor, ignorant little boy. My sister and I have been thinking up a plan.'

ALEXANDER

'What plan?'

PAULINE

'A plan to free our kind father from your terrible hatred. We've decided to scare you until you go mad. Then they'll send you to an asylum, and you'll have to sit there, in a locked cell with chains on your hands and feet — '

ALEXANDER

'What are you doing?'

ESMERELDA has stood up, and is floating toward ALEXANDER.

PAULINE

'Oh, she can't answer you. Esmerelda's lungs were filled up with water and weeds. She can't speak at all.'

ALEXANDER

'Get away. Stop scaring me — stop.'

ESMERELDA is hovering over ALEXANDER now. He tries to crawl away but can't. She opens her mouth and spews all over him. He screams. From offstage we hear the sound of an argument. The GIRLS disappear.

What do you notice? Where is the temptation to fall into the trap of stereotype? How can you use movement and levels to intimidate Alexander without the need for very exaggerated or potentially comedic movements? Consider how costume might also assist with this. In The Old Vic's production of *Fanny & Alexander*, we do not see the girls' faces — they are obscured by very long hair, mirroring how they might have looked when their drowned bodies were discovered.

EXTENSION DISCUSSION

The script provides dialogue for the ghosts. Do the audience need to see physical ghosts in front of them, or can you use sound and distortion to create an equally frightening effect? What would the actor playing Alexander need to do to enact the scene without the two girls there in front of him, in a way that would still engage the audience and make them feel sympathy for him?

SIX – DISCUSSION: THEMES, IDEAS AND A 21ST CENTURY RESPONSE

WOMEN AND MEN

In the play very few of the women escape from being criticised by men. Even Helena, the matriarch of the family, is criticised by her son after she announces her retirement. Carl is increasingly cruel towards Lydia, and the relationship between the bishop and Emilie is abusive in the extreme.

How does a 21 century audience response compare to how the original 1982 TV/film audience may have done? Although this is not very long ago, the shifting relationship between men and women is very much present in the news and media at the moment. How do you respond to the male-female relationships on stage? We should also remember that this is a British 21st century adaptation of a film released in 1982, which depicts a family in 1907 Sweden. We are therefore seeing the story through several different lenses.

You might also consider the illicit relationships that take place in the play. Isaac and Helena were lovers during her marriage to her late husband. Alma is fully aware of Gustav's affair with Maj, and Emilie is unfaithful to Oskar prior to the play. What does this tell us about attitudes towards marriage, love and trust in this play? Does it match your expectations of 1907 Sweden?

NURTURING THE IMAGINATION: ALEXANDER'S FANTASIES

Alexander is an intelligent and sensitive boy who has been raised by a theatrical family. His imagination has been encouraged and he uses it as a coping mechanism as well as for entertainment and fun. Is Emilie to be held responsible in any way for the trouble that Alexander's imagination causes later in the play?

EMILIE AND THE BISHOP

Remembering that the play is set in 1907 and so the social, historical and cultural context is different to our own, discuss why Emilie marries Edvard. He is the polar opposite to Oskar. What might Emilie see in Edvard that would fulfil a need perhaps not met by Oskar? Remember that Emilie has previously had an extra-marital affair which resulted in the birth of Fanny so she is not necessarily simply an innocent or passive wife.

FILM TO STAGE ADAPTATIONS: DESIGN

Stage adaptations of popular films are not unusual. However, this production chooses a very pared back approach to creating the various locations in the story. Compare this to the opening 30 minutes of the original Ingmar Bergman film, which is lavish and shows very close attention to detail. As well as the practical restrictions that might prevent a designer choosing a completely naturalistic set design, discuss the merits of a more minimal approach. Remember that this is a play about theatricality and the imagination...

SPECIAL EFFECTS

There are a number of moments in this stage production which would be extremely easy to achieve in a film, but are not so easy on stage. For example, ghosts, the fire at the palace and the 'magic' that is suggested to be invoked by Ismael. What ideas do you have for staging your own version of *Fanny & Alexander* and how might you deal with the challenges of these moments using resources that you have to hand?

THE PLAY'S THE THING – FANNY, ALEXANDER AND HAMLET

‘Stop playing Hamlet, Alexander. I am not Queen Gertrude and your kind stepfather isn’t the King of Denmark. And this isn’t Elsinore, even if it does look rather solemn.’

Fanny & Alexander

Bergman’s interest in both theatre and film make crossovers both interesting and inevitable. The original *Fanny and Alexander* film shares a number of themes and ideas found in *Hamlet* and The Old Vic adaptation expands on this to reference Bergman himself. Bergman directed several Shakespeare plays during his career and his own production of *Hamlet* toured to New York and London in 1988.

In Bergman’s production, Hamlet was portrayed as a character devoid of power, both in his familial relationships and in the political world of Elsinore. The parallels with Alexander are clear: both Hamlet and Alexander use theatre as a weapon against darker forces. For Alexander the imagination is a place of escape, although his frightening interactions with Death mean his talents are sometimes both a gift and a curse. Hamlet is prone to introspection and is often found alone — much as we find Alexander playing alone at the beginning of the play. Both Alexander and Hamlet must confront ghosts, who do not always provide easy answers and for Alexander, perhaps Aaron’s puppets and Ismael’s visions are the equivalent to the value of Hamlet’s travelling players

Hamlet uses theatre to expose the corruption and evil within his own family. Bergman famously moved the ‘To be, or not to be’ soliloquy from Act III scene 1 to the scene in which Hamlet instructs the players in Act III scene II. It becomes more of a manifesto for theatre and life, and how Bergman saw the two as inextricably linked. Bergman used multi-roling in his *Hamlet* — Ulf Johanson played both Claudius and gravedigger, whilst Per Myrberg performed the ghost and the main actor of the travelling players. The motif of acting and revealing truth can once again be applied in *Fanny & Alexander* — from the family discussing their own production of *Hamlet* and revealing their reservations about it, to Aaron’s puppets and Ismael’s visions, the theatre is where truth is ultimately revealed.

Bergman’s *Hamlet* used a colour palette of black, white and red and was particularly focused on violence. Throughout The Old Vic production of *Fanny & Alexander*, there is a clear nod to that colour palette. The Ekdahl family home is a plush red, with drapes around the three sides of the stage and a red rug on the floor. The colour of the women’s costumes — jewel colours of red, blue, green and pink — emphasise the jollity and lavish surroundings. Suddenly, however, the harsh world of the bishop splinters that image, with the central pulpit extending from a white background, with red drapes either side. Those visual contrasts of sharp lines and harsh white light are as uncomfortable for the audience as they are for Emilie and her children and can be seen throughout their incarceration at the palace. Their surroundings become completely monochrome as all joy is removed from the children’s lives.



In Bergman's *Hamlet* Ophelia remained on stage for many of the scenes in which she is not traditionally involved. She becomes a sort of witness to the action and the violence, and also represents those who may not be able to speak for themselves. It could be argued that Fanny, Alexander's younger sister, fulfils a similar role. Although hers is the first name in the play's title, the story very much focuses on Alexander and one might wonder why she is mentioned at all. However, like Ophelia, Fanny bears witness to much of the cruelty, confusion and conflict in the adult world. One cannot help be moved by her determination to support her brother when he is accused of lying by the bishop and the disloyal maid Justina. She can only stand by and watch when Alexander is caned, but her presence means that Alexander's true experience has not gone unnoticed by everyone, despite the adults' inability to act against the injustice.

The script of *Fanny & Alexander* also contains a nod to Polonius' advice to his son Laertes when he advises him, 'Neither a lender or borrower be'. When Isaac visits the bishop in order to rescue Fanny and Alexander, he tells Henrietta, 'In November the bishop came to me, asking to borrow some money. Unfortunately we have a principle in our little community, never to loan to men of the church. Well, you can imagine for yourself, the complications that arise.' For Isaac, this is a powerful statement — his lack of trust of the bishop and his church, and a statement that whilst other people may be afraid of Edvard and his sister, Isaac is resolutely unafraid and has the wellbeing of Emilie and her children as his priority.

It is possible to extend the comparison even further: Laertes accidentally swaps poisoned swords with Hamlet, bringing about his own demise. In *Fanny & Alexander*, Edvard's downfall begins when he drinks ('borrows') Emilie's broth mixed with bromide powders.

The Ekdahl family resist Oskar's insistence that Helena continue to play Gertrude, and Emilie, Ophelia. Indeed it is the ill-fated production of the Ekdahl's *Hamlet* which is the main catalyst for much of the action. Oskar's collapse and subsequent death makes more comparisons possible: it is at this point that Alexander is isolated from his mother in much the same way as Hamlet is from Gertrude. From the moment Emilie says, 'Stay where you are, children. I'll be back'. Alexander must face isolation and knowledge of a truth not always believed by adults. Even Helena (reluctantly) believes that Alexander's postcard means that he is happy in his new life.

Thankfully, Alexander does not suffer the same ultimate fate as Hamlet. Indeed, Emilie's promise that she will be back is one that she keeps. Following the escape from the palace, and the death of Edvard and Henrietta, Emilie and her children are reunited with their family, welcomed back into the bosom of the Ekdahls, into a world where theatre and life are, once again, inextricably linked.



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