WISE CHILDREN AT THE OLD VIC



TEACHING RESOURCES

OCTOBER 2018

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Further details of this production can be found at oldvictheatre.com

CAST

SAM ARCHER
Young Peregrine

Theatre includes: *An Ideal Husband*, *We Will Rock You, Oliver!, Bugsy Malone* (West End); Chariots of Fire (Hampstead/West End); *Wonder.land* (National Theatre/ Châtelet Theatre, Paris); *Earthquakes in London* (National Theatre/UK tour); *The Soldier's Tale* (Metropolitan Theatre, Tokyo); *La Bohéme* (RAH); *Metamorphosis* (Joyce Theatre, New York); *The Red Shoes*, *Cinderella*, *Lord of the Flies*, *Swan Lake*, *The Car Man*, *Play Without Words*, *Nutcracker*, *Edward Scissorhands* (Matthew Bourne's New Adventures Company); *Gloriana* (ROH); *The Wind in the Willows* (Linbury Studio Theatre); *Oklahoma* (Chichester); *Mary Poppins* (UK tour). Television includes: *Humans*, *Mr Selfridge*. Film includes: *Allied*, *Muppets Most Wanted*, *Life is a Buffet*.

ANKUR BAHL
Young Melchior

Theatre includes: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Shakespeare's Globe); *This Beach* (Brokentalkers, Ireland); *Volpone, The Empress, The Comedy of Errors, The Tempest, Twelfth Night* (RSC); *Can We Talk About This* (DV8); *Miranda* (Assembly Rooms/Tara Arts); *Britain's Got Bhangra, Where's My Desi Soulmate* (Rifco Arts); *To Be Straight With You* (National Theatre/DV8); *Just Add Water* (Shobana Jeyasingh Dance Company); *Seven Deadly Sins* (Welsh National Opera); *Shades of Passion* (National Dance Company of Wales). Film includes: *Voices of Finance, The Surprise, Honeycomb Lodge, Desi Boyz, Jump Nation.*

STU BARKER
Band

Theatre as composer/musical director includes: *Brief Encounter* (Broadway/West End); *A Matter Of Life And Death*, *Tristan And Yseult* (National Theatre); *Cymbeline*, *Don John*, *The Empress* (RSC); *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *A Winter's Tale*, *Romeo And Juliet* (Shakespeare's Globe); *946 The Amazing Story of Adolphus Tips* (Kneehigh/UK tour); *Hansel And Gretel* (Bristol Old Vic); *The Bacchae*, *The Wooden Frock* (Leeds Playhouse); *Nights At The Circus*, *The Red Shoes* (Lyric Hammersmith); *The Wild Bride, Rapunzel*, *Midnight Pumpkin* (BAC); *Pandora's Box* (Northern Stage). Other theatre includes: *The Grinning Man* (West End). Television includes: *The Cult Of The Suicide Bomber*, *Beyond Grief*. Radio includes: *Tracks*.

OMARI DOUGLAS
Showgirl Nora

Theatre includes: *High Society* (The Old Vic); *Five Guys Named Moe*, *Elegies for Angels*, *Punks and Raging Queens* (West End); *Rush* (King's Head Theatre); *Peter Pan*, *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Regent's Park Open Air Theatre); *Tristan & Yseult* (Shakespeare's Globe); *The Life* (Southwark Playhouse); *Annie Get Your Gun* (Sheffield Crucible); *When the Waters Recede* (Theatre by the Lake); *Hairspray* (Curve, Leicester/UK tour).



Mike Shepherd

MIRABELLE GREMAUD

Young Nora

Mirabelle has worked with companies including: Acrojou (circus/theatre); Urban Conceptz Theatre (dance/theatre); Georgina Starr (performance artist). Other work under the name 'Le Mirabellier', includes: a solo dance piece at the Resolution Festival 2018 at The Place, London and the Fun Fatale Festival 2018, Prague. She graduated from the Accademia Teatro Dimitri and has a post-graduate degree from the Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music Dance. Her performance involves elements from circus, acrobatics, contortion and hand-balancing.

ALEX HEANE

Band

Theatre includes: *Hetty Feather* (Rose Theatre Kingston/ West End); *The Tallest Horse on Earth* (Silly Boys Theatre); *Jane Eyre* (National Theatre); *The Little Matchgirl and Other Happier Tales* (Shakespeare's Globe); *Cinderella: A Fairytale* (Travelling Light/Tobacco Factory Theatres); *100: The Day Our World Changed* (Wildworks Theatre). Alex is a musician with the bands Branwell and With Flares.

PAUL HUNTER

Melchior

Theatre includes: *My Perfect Mind* (Told by an Idiot/ Young Vic/New York); *The Play What I Wrote* (West End/ Liverpool Playhouse); *The Little Match Girl and Other Happier Tales*, *The Mystery Plays*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Under the Black Flag* (Shakespeare's Globe); *Napoleon Disrobed*, *The Farenheit Twins*, *Don't Laugh — It's My Life*, *You Haven't Embraced Me Yet*, *I'm So Big*, *On The Verge of Exploding* (Told by an Idiot/UK tour); *Life of Galileo* (Young Vic); *The Water Engine* (Young Vic/ Theatre 503); *Rapunzel*, *The Red Shoes* (Kneehigh UK tour); *Les Enfants Du Paradis* (RSC). Television includes: *Black Books*, *Marvellous*. Film includes: *Maleficent*, *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *Cinderella*, *Snow White and the Huntsman*.

MELISSA JAMES

Showgirl Dora

Theatre includes: *Eugenius!* (West End); *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (Shakespeare's Globe); *One Love: The Bob Marley Musical* (Birmingham Rep); *Annie Get Your Gun* (Sheffield Crucible); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Theatre Royal Bath); *The Bodyguard*, *Cats* (UK tour); *Guys and Dolls* (Chichester); *West Side Story* (RSC). Television includes: *Training Days*, *Ransom*, *Dead Pixels*, *Waffle the Wonderdog*, *Thanks for the Memories*, *Holby City*, *Silent Witness*, *WPC 56*, *Doctors*.

BETTRYS JONES

Young Dora

Theatre includes: *Wait Until Dark* (West End); *War Horse* (National Theatre/West End); *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Comedy Of Errors* (RSC/West End); *Hamlet*, *The Little Match Girl and Other Happier Tales*, *As You Like It* (Shakespeare's Globe); *The Tin Drum* (Kneehigh/UK tour); *Life Of Galileo* (Young Vic); *We Want You To Watch*, *Edward II* (National Theatre); *Praxis Makes Perfect* (National Theatre Wales); *Sleeping Beauties* (Sherman Theatre); *The Mouse And His Child* (RSC); *The Snow Queen* (Rose Theatre Kingston); *The Dark Philosophers* (Traverse); *And The Horse You Rode In On* (Drum Theatre/ Barbican); *The Crucible* (Regent's Park Open Air Theatre); *Measure For Measure*, *Cariad* (Theatre Clywd); *To Kill A Mockingbird* (Leeds Playhouse/Birmingham Rep).

PATRYCJA KUJAWSKA

Wheelchair/Lady Atalanta/Blue Eyed Boy

Theatre includes: *Drop Dead Gorgeous*, *Let the Mountains Lead You to Love*, *Punch Drunk*, *Broken Chords*, *Fairy Tale*, *Test Run*, *If We Go On*, *Motherland*, *Underworld* (Vincent Dance Theatre); *Don John* (Kneehigh/RSC); *Midnight's Pumpkin*, *The Red Shoes*, *The Wild Bride*, *Tristan and Yseult*, *Dead Dog in a Suitcase*, *946 The Amazing Story of Adolphus Tips*, *The Tin Drum* (Kneehigh/UK tour); *The Grinning Man* (Bristol Old Vic). Other work includes: physical theatre with Dada Von Bzdulow and City Theatre in Gdynia. Patrycja studied violin at the Academy of Music, Poland.

ETTA MURFITT

Nora

Theatre as choreographer with Emma Rice includes: *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* (Kneehigh/Curve Leicester/ West End); *The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk*, *946 The Amazing Story of Adolphus Tips, The Wild Bride*, *Midnight's Pumpkin*, *Steptoe and Son* (Kneehigh/ UK tour); *Twelfth Night*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Shakespeare's Globe). Other theatre as choreographer includes: *Dead Dog in a Suitcase*, *Tin Drum* (Kneehigh/ UK tour). Theatre as an Associate Artistic Director and performer for Matthew Bourne's New Adventures includes: *Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella* (Sadler's Wells/LA); *Dorian Gray, Edward Scissorhands, Nutcracker!* (Opera North/Sadler's Wells); *The Car Man, Swan Lake, The Red Shoes* (Sadler's Wells/West End/LA/Broadway). Etta is an Associate Artist with Kneehigh Theatre Company.

KATY OWEN
Grandma Chance

Theatre includes: *UBU-Karaoke* (Kneehigh); *Twelfth Night, A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Shakespeare's Globe); *The Little Matchgirl and Other Happier Tales* (Bristol Old Vic/Shakespeare's Globe/UK tour); *946 The Amazing Story of Adolphus Tips* (Kneehigh/Shakespeare's Globe/ UK tour/USA tour); *Rebecca* (Kneehigh/UK tour); *The World of Work*, *The Night Before Christmas* (Chapter Arts Centre); *Apparitions of Spirits with the Forsythe Sisters* (Gaggle Babble); *Maudie's Rooms, Plum — And Me*, *Will*, *Cinders* (Sherman Theatre); *The Little Matchgirl*, *The Tempest* (Theatr Iolo). Film includes: *Daddy's Girl*. Television includes: *Casualty*, *The Story of Tracy Beaker.*

IAN ROSS
Band Leader

Theatre as performer and Music Director for Kneehigh includes: *The Red Shoes*, *Don John*, *The Wild Bride*, *Tristan and Yseult*, *Dead Dog in a Suitcase*, *The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk*. Theatre as composer includes: *Twelfth Night* (Shakespeare's Globe), *The Very Old Man with Enormous Wings*, *The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk* (Kneehigh). Ian is an Associate Artist of Kneehigh and Director of Music for Wise Children.

MIKE SHEPHERD
Peregrine

Theatre as director includes: *Dead Dog in a Suitcase* (Kneehigh/European tour); *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings* (Little Angel); *The Tin Drum* (Kneehigh/UK tour). Theatre as performer includes: *Tristan & Yseult, Steptoe and Son, Midnight's Pumpkin, The Red Shoes, The Bacchae, Cymbeline, The Wooden Frock, A Matter of Life and Death, Don John, UBU-Karaoke* (Kneehigh). Film includes: *Anna Karenina*, *Pan.* Mike is the Artistic Director of Kneehigh Theatre and works with the Paraorchestra and Good Chance Theatre.

GARETH SNOOK
Dora

Theatre includes: *Phantom of the Opera, My Fair Lady, Aspects of Love, Sunset Boulevard, The Rink, Les Miserables, The Hired Man, Guys and Dolls, Cats, Girlfriends, Closer Than Ever, Made in Dagenham, Hey, Mr Producer* (West End); *Assassins, Company* (Donmar/ West End); *Romantics Anonymous, Romeo & Juliet* (Shakespeare's Globe); *Fiddler on the Roof* (Chichester); *A Pacifist's Guide to the War on Cancer* (National Theatre); *Casa Valentina* (Southwark Playhouse); *Show Boat* (Royal Albert Hall); *The Full Monty, Martin Guerre* (UK tour). Television includes: *Taboo, Law & Order: UK, Emmerdale, French & Saunders*. Film includes: *Les Miserables, Paddington 2.*



Mirabelle Gremaud, Sam Archer, Bettrys Jones, Gareth Snook

CREATIVE TEAM

EMMA RICE
Adaptation/Director

Theatre includes: *Romantics Anonymous, Twelfth Night, A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Little Matchgirl and Other Happier Tales* (Shakespeare's Globe); *The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk, Tristan & Yseult, 946 The Amazing Story of Adolphus Tips, The Wild Bride, The Red Shoes, The Wooden Frock, The Bacchae, Cymbeline, A Matter of Life and Death, Rapunzel, Brief Encounter, Don John, Wah! Wah! Girls, Steptoe and Son* (Kneehigh); *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* (West End) *Oedipussy* (Spymonkey UK tour); *The Empress* (RSC); *An Audience with Meow Meow* (Berkeley Repertory Theatre). Emma has been Artistic Director at Shakespeare's Globe and Kneehigh and is now Artistic Director of her new company, Wise Children.

VICKI MORTIMER
Set & Costume Design

Theatre includes: *Follies* — Critics' Circle Award for Design, Olivier Award for Best Costume Design, *The Plough and the Stars*, *The Threepenny Opera*, *Here We Go*, *The Silver Tassie*, *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *Waves*, *Cat in the Hat*, *Three Sisters*, *The Seagull*, *Closer*, *Paul*, *The Last of the Haussmans* (National Theatre) and work for other companies including: Kneehigh, Young Vic, Royal Court, Chichester, RSC, Almeida. Opera design for companies includes: ROH, Glyndebourne, Aix and Salzburg Festivals, ENO. Ballet design includes new works by Wayne McGregor and the Royal Ballet.

IAN ROSS
Composer & Musical Director

See previous Cast page for this biography.

MALCOLM RIPPETH
Lighting Design

Theatre and opera includes: *Brief Encounter* — WhatsOnStage Award for Best Lighting Designer, Village Voice OBIE Award for Design, *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg, Calendar Girls, Six Characters in Search of an Author* (West End); *Romantics Anonymous, Twelfth Night* (Shakespeare's Globe); *The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk, The Tin Drum, Tristan & Yseult* (Kneehigh); *Titus Andronicus* (RSC); *Decade* (Headlong); *The Boy in* the Striped Pyjamas (Chichester); *The Dead* (Abbey Dublin); *The Birthday Party* (Royal Exchange, Manchester); *Spur of the Moment* (Royal Court); *My Brilliant Friend* (Rose Theatre Kingston); *Pleasure* (Opera North); *The Skating Rink* (Garsington Opera); *War & Peace* (Welsh National Opera); *Alcina* (Santa Fe Opera).

SIMON BAKER
Sound & Video Design

Theatre includes: *A Christmas Carol*, *The Caretaker*, *The Master Builder*, *Future Conditional*, *High Society*, *Electra*, *The Norman Conquests*, *Hedda Gabler*, *The Real Thing* (The Old Vic); *Girl from the North Country*; *Groundhog Day* (The Old Vic/Broadway); *The Moderate Soprano*, *Shakespeare in Love*, *Mojo* (West End); *Matilda The Musical* — Olivier Award for Best Sound (RSC/West End/Broadway/UK Tour); *Twelfth Night*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Shakespeare's Globe); *Pinocchio*, *The Light Princess*, *Amen Corner* (National Theatre); *The Roaring Girl* (RSC); *The Grinning Man* (Bristol Old Vic/West End); *Tristan & Yseult*, *Brief Encounter*, *The Red Shoes*, *The Wild Bride*, *Don John*, *Steptoe & Son*, *946 The Amazing Story of Adolphus Tips*, *Rebecca*, *The Flying Lovers* (Kneehigh).





Katy Owen; Melissa James

ETTA MURFITT

Choreography

See previous Cast page for this biography.

BETH CARTER & STUART MITCHELL

Animation

Beth is a visual artist, working in sculpture, drawing and print. Her figurative work is displayed in galleries in the UK, Belgium and the US and held in international collections. Stuart is an interdisciplinary artist, experimenting with digital technology, painting and print. He has worked with public arts commissioners, art galleries, film and animation festivals, visual artists, musicians and choreographers and his work has been shown in galleries and at art fairs both in the UK and internationally. Beth and Stuart have collaborated to work on animation in recent years.

LYNDIE WRIGHT

Puppetry Design

Lyndie has worked for companies including: Kneehigh, RSC, Shakespeare's Globe, Opera North, Puppet Players, Silent Tide, Little Angel Theatre and created international puppet collections. She and her husband, John Wright, founded Little Angel Theatre in 1961.

SARAH WRIGHT

Puppetry Director

Theatre as puppet director includes: *Nice Fish* (West End); *Dancing Frog*, *The Tin Drum*, *Dead Dog in a Suitcase*, *946 The Amazing Story of Adolphus Tips*, *Brief Encounter*, *Red Shoes* (Kneehigh); *Life of Galileo*, *A Season in the Congo* (Young Vic); *The Little Match Girl* (Shakespeare's Globe); *Angelo* (Little Angel Theatre); *Silent Tide*, *Adventures of Curious Ganz* (Silent Tide); *Sleeping Beauty* (Matthew Bourne's New Adventures). Theatre as performer includes: *The Tin Drum*, *Dead Dog in a Suitcase* (Kneehigh); *Venus and Adonis* (RSC); *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings* (Little Angel). Sarah is Artistic Director of the Curious School of Puppetry and Associate Artist at Kneehigh and Little Angel Theatre.

RACHEL BOWN-WILLIAMS & RUTH COOPER-BROWN OF R–C ANNIE LTD FIGHTS

Puppetry Design

Theatre includes: *A Monster Calls*, *Woyzeck* (The Old Vic); *The Little Matchgirl* (Bristol Old Vic/ Shakespeare's Globe); *Emilia, Othello*, *The Secret Theatre*, *Boudica*, *Lions and Tigers*, *Much Ado About Nothing*; *Twelfth Night*, *The White Devil*, *Comus and Imogen* (Shakespeare's Globe); *Tartuffe*, T*he Duchess of Malfi*, *Salome*, *Snow in Midsummer* (RSC); *God of Carnage*, *The Price*, *Switzerland*, *Dusty* (Theatre Royal Bath); *The Village* (Theatre Royal Stratford East); *Girl on a Train*, *Sunshine on Leith*, *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*, *Barnbow Canaries*, *Great Expectations*, *Richard III* (Leeds Playhouse); *A Clockwork Orange* (Liverpool Everyman); *Common*, *Ugly Lies the Bone*, *Peter Pan*, *The Threepenny Opera*, *The James Plays*, *Cleansed* (National Theatre).

JAY JONES

Associate Sound

Theatre as sound designer includes: *OV200 Gala* (The Old Vic); *Gate Gala* (St Paul's, Hammersmith); *Plastic* (Ustinov Studio). Theatre as associate designer includes: *A Christmas Carol* (The Old Vic); *Girl from the North Country* (The Old Vic/West End); *The Grinning Man* (West End); *Brief Encounter* (Empire Cinema Haymarket); *The Little Match Girl and Other Happier Tales* (Bristol Old Vic/Shakespeare's Globe/UK tour); *Tristan & Yseult* (Kneehigh/UK tour); *Dead Dog in a Suitcase* (Kneehigh/ world tour); *946: The Amazing Story Of Adolphus Tips* (Kneehigh/Asylum/World tour). Jay worked as Head of Sound at Shakespeare's Globe for two years under the artistic leadership of Emma Rice.

TOM JACKSON GREAVES

Assistant Choreography

Theatre as director includes: *Run For Your Life* (Kneehigh/Asylum); *Neptunalia* (Cscape); *Seven Deadly Sins* (UK tour), *Vanity Fowl* (Sadler's Wells). Theatre as choreographer/movement director includes: *The Dancing Frog* (Kneehigh/Asylum); *Sweet Charity*, *The Borrowers*, *Frankenstein*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night*, *Romeo and Juliet* (Watermill Theatre); *Paint Your Wagon*, *Fiddler On The Roof* (Liverpool Everyman); *Teddy* (UK tour); *Boudica*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Shakespeare's Globe); *The Glass Menagerie* (Headlong); *Spring Awakening* (Hope Mill Manchester); *The Life* (Southwark Playhouse); *Peter and the Starcatcher* (Royal & Derngate), *The Crocodile* (Manchester International Festival). Tom received the New Adventures Choreographer Award in 2012 and is an associate artist at The Watermill.

BALISHA KARRA

Baylis Assistant Director

Theatre as assistant director includes: *How to Spot an Alien*; *Island Town*, *Sticks and Stones* (Paines Plough); *Present Laughter* (Chichester); *Freeman* (Strictly Arts/UK tour). Theatre as Trainee Assistant Director includes: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Young Vic). Balisha has held positions as Resident Trainee Director at Paines Plough and Resident Director at Birmingham Repertory Theatre's Foundry. She is the current recipient of the Florence Kleiner Bursary.

LIZZIE FRANKL

Props Supervisor

Theatre includes: *An Ideal Husband*, *The Exorcist*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Don Juan in Soho*, *Nice Fish*, *Mojo, Wind in the Willows*, *Aladdin*, *Funny Girl*, *A Christmas Carol* (West End); *Dynamo*, *Derren Brown* (UK tours); *Blithe Spirit* (Ahmanson, Los Angeles); *The River* (Circle in the Square, New York); *Monty Python Live* (O2 Arena); *The Testament of Mary* (Walter Kerr, New York). Other theatre includes productions for: The Old Vic, Donmar Warehouse, Chichester, Theatre Royal Bath and ENO. Lizzie Props Ltd also provided the props for Stormzy at the Brit Awards 2018, Mariah Carey's Christmas tour and Robbie Williams' world tour.

LUCY MARTIN

Costume Supervisor

Theatre as costume supervisor includes: *Woyzeck* (The Old Vic); *Red Velvet* (West End); *Summer and Smoke* (Almeida/West End); *Little Shop Of Horrors* (Regent's Park Open Air Theatre); *Romantics Anonymous*, *Boudica*, *The Little Match Girl* (Shakespeare's Globe); *Così Fan Tutti* (Central City Opera, Colorado); *Dry Powder*, *IHO or The Intelligent Homosexuals Guide To Capitalism*, *Socialism with a Key to The Scriptures* (Hampstead); *Absolute Hell*, *Julie*, *The Deep Blue Sea* (National Theatre); *Elegy*, *The Vote* (Donmar); *Macbeth*, *La Musica*, *Creditors*, *The Cherry Orchard* (Young Vic); *Crouch*, *Touch*, *Pause*, *Engage* (National Theatre Wales/Out of Joint) *Mametz* (National Theatre Wales), *IGNIS* (Print Room); *Dedication*, *The Nutcracker* (Nuffield Theatre); *The Master and Margarita* (Complicité/Barbican/European tour).

CO-PRODUCER

WISE CHILDREN

Wise Children is a new theatre company created and led by Emma Rice. It is the beginning of a new chapter, and the culmination of the practice and ethos Emma has developed over her unique 30 year career. From our base in the South West, we will create landmark work with exceptional artists, challenge outmoded touring models, train the next generation of creative practitioners through Emma Rice's School for Wise Children and discover the creative spaces of the future.

Wise Children is supported by Arts Council England as a National Portfolio Organisation and this production is made possible by the generous support of:
The Broughton Family Charitable TrustThe London Community FoundationCockayne — Grants for the Arts

SYNOPSIS

Angela Carter's novel 'Wise Children' has been edited and adapted for performance and so some events in the original text may have been removed or subsumed within other scenes.

ACT ONE

The production opens with our introduction to our narrator, Dora Chance, and her twin sister, Nora, on the occasion of their 75th birthday. They tell us that they are from Brixton (South London) which is considered by the characters to be the 'wrong' side of the tracks. The twins live at 49 Bard Road and a storm seems to rip through the house, bringing with it an invitation to a party to celebrate the 100th birthday of their father, Sir Melchior Hazard.

'Let's have all the skeletons out of the closet, today of all days'

Sir Melchior Hazard also has a twin — his brother Peregrine. Both sets of twins share their birthday with William Shakespeare. Melchior is considered 'the finest Shakespeare actor of his generation', his own father being Ranulph Hazard — another actor of great renown who made his name performing Shakespeare on the other side of the Atlantic.

Dora tells the story of her grandfather Ranulph who married Estella (the actress who played Cordelia to his King Lear) and then became jealous when she struck up a flirtation with fellow actor, Cassius Booth. Ranulph's gambling and philandering loses him the crown he wore as Lear. Estella makes him a cardboard crown which keeps reappearing throughout the story. In the novel, the cardboard crown is a symbol of patriarchy and power throughout the story.

In a drama which mirrors that of *Othello*, Ranulph kills Cassius and Estella in a fit of jealousy, and then kills himself, leaving Melchior and Peregrine to fend for themselves. Whilst Peregrine mysteriously disappears for a few years, Melchior finds his way to 49 Bard Street where he meets Grandma Chance and Kitty, who instantly falls in love with him . Nine months later, and Melchior has disappeared to make his name in theatre, Dora and Nora are born but their mother Kitty dies. Grandma Chance brings them up as her own.

'We girls are illegitimate in every way'

When the twin girls are five years old Uncle Peregrine arrives at Bard Road, informing them of the impending marriage of Melchior to Lady Atlanta Lynde. In order to save his embarrassment and avoid having to admit his paternity, Melchior has come to the agreement that it is Peregrine who will assume the paternal role to Dora and Nora. He becomes a magical figure to them, appearing and disappearing with great frequency throughout the story. Peregrine, Grandma Chance and the girls dance together, forming a family unit. Peregrine pays for the girls' dancing lessons and shoes and regularly sends them gifts from Harrods and Hamleys.

‘What a joy it is to dance and sing!’

Seven year old Dora and Nora visit the theatre where Melchior Hazard is also in the audience. He refuses to acknowledge their relation to him and Grandma Chance decides it is the right time to explain the facts of life to Dora and Nora. This is also their first introduction to the role that fathers are expected to take. Peregrine takes thirteen year old Nora and Dora to Brighton where they enjoy a picnic and discover that Melchior is playing the title role in *Macbeth*. Peregrine takes them to Melchior’s dressing room where the girls ‘never felt so illegitimate in our lives’. Melchior denies them once again, and announces that Lady Atlanta is pregnant and that he shall ‘dote on any child of mine more than life itself’. Lady Atlanta gives birth to twin daughters, Saskia and Imogen.

‘It is a Wise Child that knows its own father, but wiser yet, the father who knows his own child.’

Peregrine loses his fortune in the stock market crash, and Nora and Dora go into pantomime and music hall to make ends meet. Lady Atlanta and her daughters see their performance and Lady Atlanta realises Melchior’s paternity, sending them forget-me-knots in recognition.

Dora and Nora dye their hair black and create their image as The Lucky Chances. Whilst Nora constantly falls in and out of love, Dora is more reticent and cautious with her own heart. As 17 year-olds celebrating their birthday, Dora asks Nora if she can borrow her boyfriend, the Blonde Tenor. Nora agrees, they swap perfumes (to fool him) and Dora sleeps with him without his knowing of the swap.

Melchior arrives and as a special ‘gift’ to them, asks them to star in his revue *What You Will*. Just as Melchior seems to be acknowledging his relationship to them, Peregrine arrives.



Omari Douglas and Melissa James

ACT TWO

Dora and Nora open *What You Will* whilst Peregrine looks on with great pride. The revue is a great success and the girls are courted by various wealthy men. Grandma Chance objects to the myriad bouquets because she is convinced that flowers and plants feel pain.

'To Shakespeare, without whom none of this would be possible!'

At the after-show party, the Blonde Tenor emerges as one of the waiters. He has fallen on hard times. He mistakes Dora for Nora, and once again he does not realise that he is not with Nora, despite noticing her change in perfume.

A fire breaks out in the theatre, Melchior drags out his throne to sit on and drinks champagne whilst a panicked Dora searches for her sister. Out of the flames emerges Peregrine who has rescued both Nora and the cardboard crown that is so precious to Melchior. The Blonde Tenor thinks that Nora has rescued Dora, and takes her from Peregrine, leaving Dora alone and without the man she loves.

Back in the present, Dora and Nora look at the scrapbook that Grandma Chance proudly kept throughout their careers. They do not fully appreciate her dedication until, in May 1940, she is killed in The Blitz whilst going to the shop for more stout. After her death, they go to Lady Atlanta whose daughters Imogen and Saskia now have places at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA) — a contrast to the music halls and revues in which Dora and Nora must perform.

At Imogen and Saskia's 21st birthday party Peregrine reappears on his way to give a speech on butterflies at the Royal Society. He presents a caterpillar to both of them as Dora and Nora realise that Peregrine is really Saskia and Imogen's father. At that moment, Melchior makes his own announcement: he is divorcing his wife Lady Atlanta to marry the Prinking Minx — best friend of Saskia and Imogen who is playing Cordelia to his King Lear in his newly announced production of *King Lear*. This event echoes precisely the actions of Melchior and Peregrine's father Ranulph in the previous generation.



Ankur Bahl and Melissa James

‘My feeling was that neither of the brothers were built to be good husbands, but I didn’t say a word.’

Following their volatile reaction, Melchior disowns Saskia and Imogen, who then force Lady Atlanta to sign her wealth over to them. As a scuffle breaks out, she falls down a flight of stairs and is badly injured — becoming reliant on the wheelchair by which Dora and Nora nickname her. She goes to live with them.

Back in the present, Nora and Dora dress for Melchior’s party, looking through all of the clothing that Grandma Chance kept. After shopping at the market for gaudy clothes, the twins and Lady Atlanta attend Melchior’s party, which is also attended by Peregrine.

‘Comedy is tragedy that happens to other people.’

Melchior realises the relationship that has occurred between Peregrine and Lady Atlanta as Dora tells Saskia and Imogen that Melchior is not their father. Dora and Peregrine go to bed together, referring to the possibility that this has happened before. Peregrine asks Dora if she has never considered that Grandma Chance was actually her real mother.

In amongst all the coats on the bed, the precious cardboard crown is found once again and, also from the coats, a new set of twins emerges. This time they are a boy and a girl. Dora and Nora, at seventy five years old, become mothers to the two children.





Bettrys Jones; Etta Murfitt

THEMES

LEGITIMACY AND ILLEGITIMACY

This is explored in a number of different ways. As well as the question of Dora and Nora's parentage, the idea of being from 'the wrong side of the tracks' permeates the story. Low art vs. high art, the importance of boys rather than girls and the legitimacy of memory vs. fact are all ways in which characters in the play seek recognition.

PATRIARCHY, FATHERHOOD AND THEIR SUBVERSION

Sir Melchior Hazard represents the power of the patriarchy and is even represented by the cardboard crown that survives time, transatlantic travel and even fire. However, the cardboard symbolises the fragility of that patriarchy as the women in the story emerge as the strongest with the greatest survival instinct. As Nora herself says, 'we're both of us mothers and both of us fathers': they have the strength to be both.

Neither Melchior nor Peregrine are selfless enough to be full-time fathers. Peregrine is as flighty and fickle as the butterflies that he follows, whilst Melchior enjoys the status but not the responsibility of being king of his family. He prefers the comfort and status of being considered king of theatre.



Mirabelle Gremaud, Katy Owen, Bettrys Jones

TELLING STORIES AND TELLING THE TRUTH

Both the play and novel are narrated by Dora. However, other voices (including William Shakespeare, Cole Porter, George and Ira Gershwin, influences from other fairy tales and folklore) are threaded throughout. Carter also plays with time, as symbolised by the grandfather clock in the novel, which never strikes the right time. The reader/audience are therefore encouraged to suspend their disbelief, but with an awareness that not everything they are seeing is as it was.

THE WORLD OF THEATRE

Emma Rice's decision to have a chorus of dancers is designed to highlight the sheer hard work and dedication required to work in the theatre. They communicate through a physical language inspired by the epic mime of ballet. Emma Rice says, 'the book throbs with the pain as well as joy of dancing'. [1] The story contains hope, passion, pain, loss and poverty — all of which are representative of life in, and shown by, theatre.

The world of pretend does not just take place on stage in this story: so many of the characters are pretending to be both themselves and each other.

ILLUSION, APPEARANCE AND REALITY

In this production, Emma Rice has used gender and race blind casting to cast the actors playing the twins at various ages. She talks of the power of suggestion. [2] In both the novel and the production, the reader/audience are asked to accept the various different versions of truth, including the Dramatis Personae that is at the back of the novel which doesn't actually answer all of our questions. A Dramatis Personae is a list of characters that is usually found in the front of a play text. It includes important information about relationships between characters and can also include age, appearance and other information to help an actor play the role. The time shifts, casting, and reliance on memory all suggest that not everything is as it seems.

SHAKESPEARE

Shakespeare's influence is significant throughout *Wise Children*, in particular *Twelfth Night*. Not only is the original novel structured in five acts, as a Shakespeare play would be, many of the events and characters are derived from his plays. 34 of his 37 plays are referenced in the production, and at least two generations of twins share his birthday.

Melchior's revue, *What You Will,* is not only a play on Shakespeare's first name; it is also the subtitle of *Twelfth Night*.

Like Shakespeare, Angela Carter relies on a large number of references to folk and fairy tales, jokes and mistaken/concealed identity, appearance vs. reality, twins, magic and mystery. Like *The Winter's Tale*, *King Lear*, *Cymbeline* and *Pericles* the theme of fathers and their daughters runs strongly throughout the story.

GLAMOUR VS. POVERTY

As with the theme of legitimacy and illegitimacy, glamour vs. poverty has several different strands. Imogen and Saskia are able to attend RADA for their acting training, whilst Dora and Nora rely on Peregrine to fund dance classes that take place in the living room. When Peregrine loses his fortune in the stock market crash, they are forced to perform in revues, pantomime and vaudeville.

Poverty might also relate to the poverty of lacking parental affection. Whilst Dora and Nora are illegitimate, they have a more reliable source of love than Imogen and Saskia.

HOPE

'Expect the worst, hope for the best' is Grandma Chance's mantra but the arrival of the twins at the end of the play is a strong suggestion that hope continues to exist. Dora and Nora have a remarkable survival instinct that will allow them to deal with whatever life throws at them.

[1] Wise Children podcast, episode 1, 3 September 2018

[2] Podcast, as above

AN INTERVIEW

WITH EMMA RICE, DIRECTOR AND ADAPTOR

In this interview, Emma Rice reveals how a production is taken from the research and development process through to the final product, as well as explaining her theatrical vision and approach to making theatre.

How long did the Research and Development (R&D) process take and how was it structured?
There's a long answer and a short answer to that. The short answer is that we had two week-long periods of R&D. During these weeks, I worked with some performers, Choreographer Etta Murfitt and Composer Ian Ross. This gave us a valuable chance to explore the script, the structure and the physical and musical language of the show in advance of rehearsals. The long answer is that I've been working on this production for more than ten years — thinking and dreaming about it, letting it slowly bubble away in the back of my mind. I wrote the first draft of the script about five years ago and it's been there, gently tugging at my subconscious for all that time — so, in a way, it's been quietly developing for years.

What are the benefits of having time to do R&D?
Enormous. R&D gives you the chance to follow your instincts in a fearless way. You can try risky, even seemingly crazy things — which is both a great luxury and absolutely essential in a creative process. You need an R&D period to explore your vision in an unpressured environment. It gives you the chance to try something which might genuinely fail; which, even though the experiment was unsuccessful, will also inform what is 'right' for the show. However, if an idea succeeds, you will have discovered something you might have been too fearful to attempt otherwise. R&D allows, and actively encourages, you to be brave.

What additional research have you done, or what have you asked the company to do to help create this new piece?
I have circled around the subject matter and tried not to dive in too logically — I find it helps me to not be too literal when approaching the text. I have read and re-read Angela Carter's other work, in particularly her short stories, her biography and her poetry. Some of the poetry has been transformed into song lyrics, and her short stories have reminded me to keep a sense of folk tale in this domestic piece. Her biography reminds me of how unapologetic Carter was, how ahead of her time and how politically and sexually direct she was. These are all great provocations when bringing her work to life on stage and have supported me to be brave.

I have also enjoyed exploring the music of all the times that are covered in the novel. The Angela Carter Estate gave me a playlist of all the music that Carter was listening to when she was writing the book which was an inspirational treasure trove, and I have particularly enjoyed listening to music of the 1980s when the book is set. Ah! It takes me deliciously back to my teenage years!

How did you go about adapting the novel into a script?
Working out what to keep and what to lose from an adaptation is always hard, because when you love a book enough to want to make it into a show you're in love with it all. In this instance, I knew we'd have to lose a lot because it's such a huge book, so I was ruthless: I decided early on that we couldn't make it into the third generation of Chance/Hazards, and that we wouldn't go to Hollywood. I've had a lot of complaints about cutting Daisy Duck though!





Mike Shepherd; Patrycja Kujawska

At its heart, the book is about two incredibly complex, theatrical and strong women. I knew that I wanted their voices to be front and centre so all decisions started there. Next, after reading the novel carefully, I put the book down and worked from memory and instinct. These underrated tools are the best editors you will ever have so use them carefully and constantly! The memory naturally forgets what feels unimportant and treasures what doesn't. Working fast and using both my instinct for narrative and what my memory has retained I put together a rough structure — all on big sheets of paper laid out on the floor. I cannot work small! I need to see the show and its shape before I can start to fill in the detail. Once you have the overall structure in place, it all gets easier. You can then take individual chapters and begin to colour them in, one by one. At this stage, you don't even have to work chronologically — you can just dive into the situations that you have a taste for on that day. I loved adapting this novel and every day it emerges more vividly and more clearly. I just need to stay fearless and open-minded. I also need to stay alert and sensitive to the book, the production and the voices in the room that are giving me vital clues. With this wealth of information and support, what could possibly go wrong?

What an honour and a pleasure it's been to bring 'Wise Children' to the stage!

The casting of Nora and Dora is not conventional. What are the reasons for these choices? What elements of their characters are you particularly trying to draw attention to?
No, it is not conventional. Firstly, each character is played by three actors. This decision was made to represent how bloody long life is and how much we change throughout it. Nora and Dora have endured so much and I wanted to see them at all the key stages; childhood, the working years and retirement. I decided early on that to try and cast people who looked alike would be a limitation and ultimately a disappointment, so my twins are the opposite of identical. This choice meant that I could literally cast anyone — and I did. I cast my actors for their spirit and talent and wanted a team that was as diverse as modern Britain. I was not bound by preconceptions about gender or cultural heritage as I looked for my leading ladies.

I wanted people who could dance, sing and act brilliantly and who could bring a naïve glamour to the parts. Gareth Snook sings like a dream and is a master of text and twinkle. He was always my Dora. Etta Murfitt speaks through the medium of dance so I wanted her tender and romantic physicality as my Nora. Omari Douglas and Melissa James are at the top of their game and can dance, sing and act big time. They are actors who not only look gorgeous but who are also fearless, instinctive and excited to be on stage — it feels like they might just take flight at any minute! I didn't hesitate to cast them as my Show Nora and Show Dora. My Young Nora and Young Dora are played by Bettrys Jones for her wit and improvisational comedy and Mirabelle Gremaud for her extraordinary and almost magical physical presence. Each time, Dora has the sharpness and Nora the tender softness. These qualities are what will make sense of the casting and bring these characters and twins together.

I am absolutely open-eyed about my casting and choose people that I think will bring something surprising and new to a role.

For more on my approach to casting, read my article 'Eyes Wide Open!' on the Old Vic's blog. [3]

Do you have a favourite character?
I try to love all the characters equally, but I think that I'd have to choose Grandma Chance if pushed. She is so eccentric and yet so truly good. She cares for those girls without asking for anything in return and is fierce in her love and protection of them. She is also a naturist and a stout drinker — what's not to love?!

I also had to add Gorgeous George back into the show after I'd originally cut him, because my Producer told me she missed him too much.

When choosing a new story to tell, how do you approach the devising aspect?
This is a question I get asked a lot, and the answer is simple. 'Devising' is a fancy word for 'making' and if you've got the right group of people in the room — people that you love, trust and enjoy playing with — the making comes naturally.

The key thing is to get the right group together and to create the right environment for them to work freely, joyfully and creatively in. I always make sure we're somewhere beautiful and comfortable, with everything we need near at hand. I then set up an atmosphere of playfulness and trust where we can be silly, get things wrong and laugh at each other. We play lots of games, we sing lots of songs, we dance together. And then we start telling stories.

[3] This blog post can be found at
oldvictheatre.com/news/2018/09/eyes-wide-open

What advice can you give young drama students about how to approach what is often a very daunting process?
Don't be daunted! Essentially all we're doing is telling a story — the simplest thing in the world. My advice would be to choose your story carefully. Find one that resonates with you and your experience — then start telling it. Tell it to each other, and then tell it again in a different way, and then flesh out your telling with some action. Would some music help? A costume? A prop or a piece of furniture? It's really that simple! Think about why you want to tell this story. Think about who's telling the story and through which lens you are seeing the story. Why are the storytellers there? Who are they?

If you keep asking questions and telling the story, answers and ideas will follow. Promise.

Hold your nerve, be instinctive, be truthful and be brave.

Sometimes it really is that simple.

Is the music composed before you begin rehearsals or is it created in the room?
It's a bit of both. I work with my composer before we get into the rehearsal room creating a musical palette of ideas and themes. By the time we start rehearsing we have a strong sense of the musical world we're in and there is significant material prepared in advance. But nothing is decided or placed! It's never worth making too many decisions before you get to know your actors, because they've always got something to add and the best ensemble work will use the talents of everyone in the room. I think of preparation like building beautiful planes. I build a lovely musical plane, a design plane, a text plane, and animation plane and a chorography plane — I just don't know where, at what point or in which order I am going to land them!

The creation of a new theatre company must be an exciting but daunting process. What steps are necessary to create a new company or ensemble?
That's a big question! It's worth explaining that Wise Children doesn't have a permanent 'company' of actors, we're not that kind of 'company'; instead we're a small producing team connected to a large community of collaborators who we call on and bring together every time we embark on a new project.

The very earliest stage of forming Wise Children was working out what I wanted to achieve by starting a company and asking myself what kind of work I wanted to make and how I wanted to make it. I think the most important thing to focus on if you're starting something from scratch is to ask yourself whether you really need this organisation to exist, and whether the world needs it. And if the answer to those is yes, then get going!

What skills are needed in the individuals who you invite to join you in your new venture?
Too many to list! There are some roles that always need to be filled in a theatre company, and that's where I started when I began putting together the team; Producer, Administrator, Finance etc. However, something I've found throughout my working life is that you get the best out of people when you let them follow their passion and inspiration. There's nothing more exciting than when someone who you've been working with in one capacity suddenly comes to you with an idea for something completely outside the scope of their normal job — and sometimes you have to take a leap of faith to let them have a go. In almost every case, I've found that it works: that you get something magic if you let people do what excites them. So I'm quite a fan of unconventional job titles and roles, and people in my team tend to have slightly unusual jobs, which utitlise the things they love and excel at.



Gareth Snook, Paul Jackson Green

What do you look for when casting performers for the company and/or *Wise Children* as a piece?
Assembling the right cast is arguably one of the most important jobs in the creation of a new piece of work. Of course, you have the story to consider, but you also have the process to bear in mind. This group of people will be the fearless explorers that bring ideas to life. This group will find the surprises and clues lurking in the corners of the subject matter and will bring their own theatre and life experience to the table. They will form the 'collective imagination', as I like to call it.

I often choose personality over talent. That sounds rude (and is patently incorrect as I have the privilege of working with some of the most talented people on the planet) but what I mean is that it doesn't really matter to me how famous or even how inspired someone is as an individual. What matters is how they will inform and engage with the material, with the rest of the group and ultimately with the audience. My work demands generosity on an industrial scale and I need people that are fundamentally team players. I need performers that will go out there and make each other look good — night after night. These generous, brilliant, unusual people are rare and precious. When I find them, I try to work with them time and time again — if they'll let me!

What has been the most challenging aspect of rehearsals so far?
I don't find rehearsals challenging. Really! It is when I am most happy, most alive, and most creative. It is when I am with my community and anything and everything is possible. I celebrate this time and protect it for as long as I can — at least until the audience arrive and we let the rest of the world into our bubble!

Of course, there are still challenges. The biggest challenge for *Wise Children* is making sure that the piece is not too long. It is a huge novel and there is a danger that it will go on for hours — and no one wants that. Someone once said to me that, 'there is no piece of theatre that wouldn't benefit from being twenty minutes shorter.' This was great advice and I try hard to distill, select and edit rigorously as we rehearse. I have learnt through experience that it is much easier to cut in rehearsals than to wait until previews when the stakes are so high and time is so short. So! As well as being fearless and imaginative, you have to also be efficient and ruthless. Easy.

Is there one task/activity/game that you like to play to encourage creativity when devising/ choreographing?
Games. I've said it before and I'll say it again, but there is nothing like a game to get everyone in the right state to work. Games are great levelers, and because they are not 'important', everyone relaxes and stops worrying about how they're doing, or what others are thinking of them. Games get our pulses going, and they take us out of our heads — and they're perfect for turning a group of individuals into the kind of instinctive, responsive team I need them to be to make my work. We play ball games at the start of the day, word games when we come back from lunch and silly games when we're stuck, scared, tired… Games rule. 'Play on', say I!



Omari Douglas

AN INTERVIEW

WITH SIMON BAKER, SOUND DESIGNER

Can you describe the process of creating the music and sound design for this production?
I've worked with Emma and Ian (Ian Ross, Composer for Wise Children and Director of Music for the *Wise Children* company) a lot so we know each other very well. This helps when working on a new show. It means we already share a common language and understand each other's aesthetic.

Music is integral to the novel and is integral to an Emma Rice production so it's a great fit.
Emma likes to score through a show so music is present from the very start of the process. She will often list song ideas in an early draft of the script and we'll all send music ideas, playlists etc back and forth to each other. We will often start with songs at the R&D stage of a production. Getting everyone to sing together is great way to start a rehearsal session.

The sound design process is twofold, there's the technical delivery and the creative delivery.
Both work hand in hand to deliver the story. The basics are easily dealt with. We know that Emma likes to use music and a way of managing this is to put all the actors on radio mics so that we have some control of the show's dynamic. In other words, we can move between dialogue and songs simply without it all feeling a bit weird. We can also have music under text. You can do this without mics but it limits your choices and it's far harder to do.

Having everyone on a radio also allows the band to hear the actors as they move around — this is also key. Wearing radio mics means the sound department and wigs and wardrobe all have to work closely together to disguise them and make them comfortable for the actors.

We also have to decide what other equipment the show will need: microphones for the band, which mixing desk to use, which loudspeakers to use and where to place them and how we might playback sound effects. We also have to design systems to control those loudspeakers and consoles. in addition to designing and specifying communication systems so the other departments can talk to each other when running and rehearsing the show. This is all compiled into what's called the Bid List and sent out to rental shops for pricing — along with paperwork on how the show should be built, cabled and packed. *Wise Children* is touring so we have to imagine that every theatre we play has no equipment at all therefore everything is toured in by us. It's the same with the scenery, props, costumes and lighting. This is the way we can ensure that the show you see and hear in London is the same show you see and hear in Oxford or York, for example.

We have to get all the things the production needs within the production budget. Sometimes we might modify a design in order to bring it into budget.





Ian Ross; Alex Hearne

Once rehearsals are underway we start to move into the creative area.
I create the sound effects that are the *concrete elements* — things like phone rings, door bells — essentially things in the script that are directly called for. Then there are the things that I think will help aid the story or accent certain moments. I'll think what those might be and what world they might come from. That part tends to come quite late to me — sometimes not until the cast are on stage. Fortunately once I've had an idea I'm very quick at making sound FX. [4]

Music plays a big part.
I tend to steer clear of too much textural sound work until I think the score has settled. You never want both music and sound design to do the same job.

Once we are in theatre everything starts to pull together. The technical elements of the system work to deliver the creative elements. I spend a while tuning the system. This is largely about time spent correcting all the speakers and looking at which sound frequencies are causing us issues in the auditorium. This is more holistic than mathematic for me. I use the maths but also make decisions based on taste rather than on maths alone. We also have to set the mixing desk up so that our operators are comfortable mixing the show — that the fader moves from infinity (no audio) to 0 (loudest audio) is smooth and responsive and effective on the right part of the fader travel — this is harder than it should be but a key thing to do.

I start to add the sound effects and see how they work with the story and action and we all work together to make sure everything is exciting in the same world. We spend a long time balancing the band, followed by balancing the vocals, and then making sure the two elements balance together. This happens throughout the technical rehearsal and dress rehearsal process. Once we are in previews we keep refining and refining — working with Emma and Ian to keep making it better and better.

How are musical influences used in the show?
Music can do many things in show. It can drive narrative forward, it can define a mood and it can define a period. I use music a lot for defining period: during the performance, look out for subtle clues as to what place and time we are in. Emma was given a CD of music that Angela Carter had been listening to when she was writing the original book. Many of the influences from that CD are woven into the show. A lot of the pieces featured on the CD are American song book standards that represent the glamour the Chances aspired to and loved. We also listened to a lot of British Music Hall material, so the score will somehow traverse the two.

[4] FX — the shorthhand term for effects





Stu Barker

AN INTERVIEW

WITH IAN ROSS, MUSICAL DIRECTOR AND COMPOSER

Can you describe the process of making music for *Wise Children*?
I start by reading the book and thinking about the big themes then try to respond to that. There's a lot of duality in this book — in the two sides of the river, in all the sets of twins, in the butterfly symbolism. Then there's show business — both the sequinned glamourous side, but also the gritty, dingy, hard-graft back-end of showbusiness. This is a story of people's lives spent working hard. So I've looked to the world of showtunes for inspiration, and that is a strong influence that runs throughout the piece, but I'm also keen to play against that and put in some more angular edges. There are some moments of real sadness in this work so I've tried to represent that complexity. There's also a lot to do with fatherhood and ideas of what it means to be a man and a father figure. I have explored elements of the clown, the lover and the hero in both Melchior and Peregrine. I've recently become a stepfather myself and so there's some personal reflection in this interpretation. There's also a deeply romantic world of strings.

How do you and Simon Baker (Sound Designer) work together?
Simon and I will work hard to match the pitch of the music with the sound effects so they are well-timed and match the score, in order to make everything sound like it's part of the same world. We have taken some pieces of original recordings and then worked together to bring those to life, so where we might begin with a piece of recorded music seemingly coming from a record player, the band can pick that up and bring it into a live existence. There are some brilliant voices and musicians in this production so I can be quite free.

Any advice for anyone hoping to get into this?
Practice! Practice like mad and just find every opportunity to do it. Make music, invent your own things, be inspired and respond to things that inspire you. Keep doing it and taking every opportunity that comes your way. And don't be put off if you find yourself working on something that you're not in love with, because there'll be so much joy when you are working on something that you love. I absolutely love what I do and am genuinely excited to go into the rehearsal room every day and make the work.



Paul Hunter

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

CREATING A SHOW

Creating a production involves a huge number of people who have a range of skills and expertise. Research these roles within theatre. Do any of them surprise you?

THEATRE COMPANY
The 'office'

- Artistic Director
- Producer
- Casting
- Administrator
- Press
- Marketing
- Digital output
- Social media
- Education
- Finance
- Human Resources

CREATIVES
The rehearsal room and the design studio

- Director
- Choreographer
- Movement Director
- Designers — lighting, sound, set, costume (including wigs, hair & make up), video and projections
- Composer
- Musical Director
- Actors
- Singers
- Dancers
- Musicians — on stage and/or in orchestra

VENUE
The theatre

- Artistic Director
- Finance
- Press & Marketing
- Education
- Stage crew
- Stage door staff
- Front of house staff
- Food and beverage — bar staff, catering, restaurant
- Box office
- Cleaners
- Maintenance
- Human Resources

PRODUCTION ELEMENTS
Getting the show on stage

- Stage Manager (including Deputy & Assistants)
- Production Manager
- Heads of departments
- Technicians
- Scenic artists
- Props makers
- Wardrobe — costume makers, 'running wardrobe'
- Dressers
- Stage crew
- Transport (touring productions)

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

THE LANGUAGE OF THE CHORUS

EPIC MIME

Emma Rice has used the chorus to communicate with the audience, inspired by the epic mime of ballet. Videos which explain this gestural language are suggested in the Further Reading section of this pack.

In pairs, create gestures which communicate the following words:

— I
— you
— here
— over there
— tears
— brother / sister
— king
— banished
— death
— fear
— shock
— loyalty
— love
— grief
— party
— fire
— money

Join up with another pair and share your ideas, agreeing on actions for each word. Then, use them to create various different phrases such as 'I am the king, and banish you'. Each pair could create a phrase, which the other pair has to guess to ensure that each move is large, exaggerated and clear enough for the audience to understand.

Once you have some different phrases, summarise the story of *Wise Children* using those gestures and phrases. Experiment with doing it in silence, or doing it whilst playing some of the music that is used in the show. What happens to the mood and atmosphere of what you are communicating? How might you exploit the opportunity for **juxtaposition** in carefully chosen music and gesture?

DISCUSSION

What are the advantages and disadvantages of using this kind of language with an otherwise silent chorus?

Etta Murfitt discusses how the ballet moves have then developed into the communication of how the twins are feeling in this video: youtube.com/watch?v=VkHWpWt9czM

SHOWING THE PASSING OF TIME

Watch the show carefully for examples of how the passage of time (forwards or backwards) can be created visually for the audience.

What do you notice?

In your drama studio or classroom, how can you use:
— Actors' physicality, if playing the same role all the way through
— The use of props and costume — distressing items to make them appear older, a change in how they are used or placed on stage for example
— Physical ensemble sequences and transitions, with or without set elements

RESEARCH

MUSIC OF THE PERIOD

The show has been strongly influenced by the music that Angela Carter was listening to whilst she was writing the novel. Songs from the Great American Songbook are threaded through the show, and Cole Porter's *Brush Up Your Shakespeare* [5] is quoted on the flyleaf of the novel.

DISCUSSION

Listen to the following songs before you see the show. The songs are linked with the Great American Songbook which, rather than being a literal book, it is instead a collection of songs from the 1920s–1950s which were written for musical theatre (particularly Broadway shows) and Hollywood film musicals. They are songs that have continued their popularity and have been performed by some of the most famous singers and musicians including Ella Fitzgerald, Frank Sinatra, Judy Garland, Barbra Streisand, Tony Bennett, Fred Astaire and Nina Simone.

What expectations do you have of the story, choreography and performance style of this show?

— *It's Only A Paper Moon*
— *My Heart Belongs to Daddy*
— *The Way You Look Tonight*
— *I Can't Give You Anything But Love*
— *Lady Be Good*
— *Brush Up Your Shakespeare*
— *Let's Face the Music and Dance*

RESEARCH

Listen to episode two of the *Wise Children* podcast, entitled *Back To School*. Ian Ross — Director of Music for *Wise Children* and Composer for the show — discusses the approach that he has developed to composing in his long-term work with Emma Rice. How does that change or develop your expectations for what you see and hear in the show?

[4] **From *Kiss Me Kate*, a musical adaptation of Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew***

PRESENTING TWINS ON STAGE

Emma Rice has cast three pairs of actors to play Nora and Dora, — who are identical twins at different stages of their lives. She has deliberately avoided using size, shape or even gender to inform casting and this creates comedy and is entirely in keeping with the magic realism and carnivalesque nature of the story.

Choose a partner and decide whether you will depict either Melchior and Peregrine OR Nora and Dora. What physical mannerisms, gestures and facial expressions can you create to suggest them being twins? Remember that Emma Rice says that one of the best elements of theatre is the power of suggestion. The audience often only needs a subtle hint to suggest something before they willingly accept it. So, experiment with timing, rhythm and small details such as hand gestures or a tilt of the head.

To extend this, work with two other pairs who have depicted the same set of twins. What elements of your characterisations will you retain at three key stages (which you can decide) of their lives?

HINT! Watch for additional moments of Nora and Dora as children in the production which might extend your knowledge of how to present twins on stage.





Mirabelle Gremaud; Bettrys Jones

STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

TWINNING *TWELFTH NIGHT* WITH *WISE CHILDREN*

'We came into the world like brother and brother,
And now let's go hand in hand, not one before another'
The Comedy of Errors

It seems particularly fitting that Emma Wise's new company premieres *Wise Children* at The Old Vic during the 200th anniversary of a theatre so steeped in Shakespearean history. *Twelfth Night* (subtitled *What You Will*) was the production with which The Old Vic reopened in 1950, having closed in 1941 after sustaining significant damage during The Blitz. The Old Vic also has a strong association with ballet, given Lilian Baylis' work with Ninette de Valois creating the Sadler's Wells Ballet and the Vic-Wells Ballet companies which performed at both Sadler's Wells and The Old Vic in the first half of the 20th century.

As the father of twins, Shakespeare wrote three plays which depended on them. The history of The Old Vic, the collaboration between different companies and theatrical styles and the adaptations of *Wise Children* continues to celebrate the importance of strong partnerships.

Wise Children makes reference to at least 34 of Shakespeare's 37 plays (see if you can keep track), The Blitz and ballet but it is *Twelfth Night* which is most obviously influential throughout the novel, not least because *What You Will* is both the subtitle of *Twelfth Night* and the name of Melchior Hazard's Shakespearean revue.

The festival of *Twelfth Night* falls twelve days after Christmas, and the eve of the Feast of the Epiphany. It has its roots in the Roman Saturnalia in which a carnivalesque atmosphere was accompanied by a social inversion. Masters served slaves at the table, men and women dressed as the opposite gender and drunken celebration was the order of the day. In *Wise Children*, inversion, social climbing and the idea of legitimacy are woven throughout the story and at its core, the art of pretense and deception. Look closely at the way in which Nora and Dora use clothes and make up to form their identities — both in their performances and in the way they dress for Melchior's birthday party at the end of the novel.

Carter's novel is an example of magic realism in which the reader must suspend their disbelief and surrender to the fantasy and ambiguity that follows. Magic realism often involves events that are illogical or unlikely: time is usually non-chronological, moral positions or events are usually more than social convention might allow and present events are mirrors or repetitions of those that have gone before. In *Twelfth Night*, Fabian exclaims this perfectly when he says, 'If this were play'd upon a stage now, I could condemn it as an improbable fiction'. For readers of 'Wise Children' and readers of magic realism, the implausibility is just one of its many charms.

The play and novel rely on twins who are from somewhere else. Nora and Dora and from 'the wrong side of the tracks', and Sebastian and Viola have been displaced from their home by a shipwreck. All four of them must make their way through unfamiliar territory. When Peregrine becomes unable to support his nieces financially Dora and Nora turn to their acting and performing skills to earn a crust. Meanwhile, Viola does exactly the same in her gender swapping service to Duke Orsino.

Malvolio's desire to marry the wealthy Olivia in *Twelfth Night* demonstrates his wish to become legitimate — to cast off the stigma of being a servant, and instead become master. His desire to become 'legitimate' is his downfall though, as Sir Toby instead uses it to expose his foolishness. Nora and Dora are never entirely sure of their heritage, but it is perhaps their illegitimacy that makes them so resilient in the face of adversity. They use it to their advantage. Whilst the twins Imogen and Saskia must stoop as low as Lady Macbeth in their fight for status and recognition, for Dora and Nora their unconfirmed parentage perhaps allows them a freedom that the 'legitimate' actually do not possess.

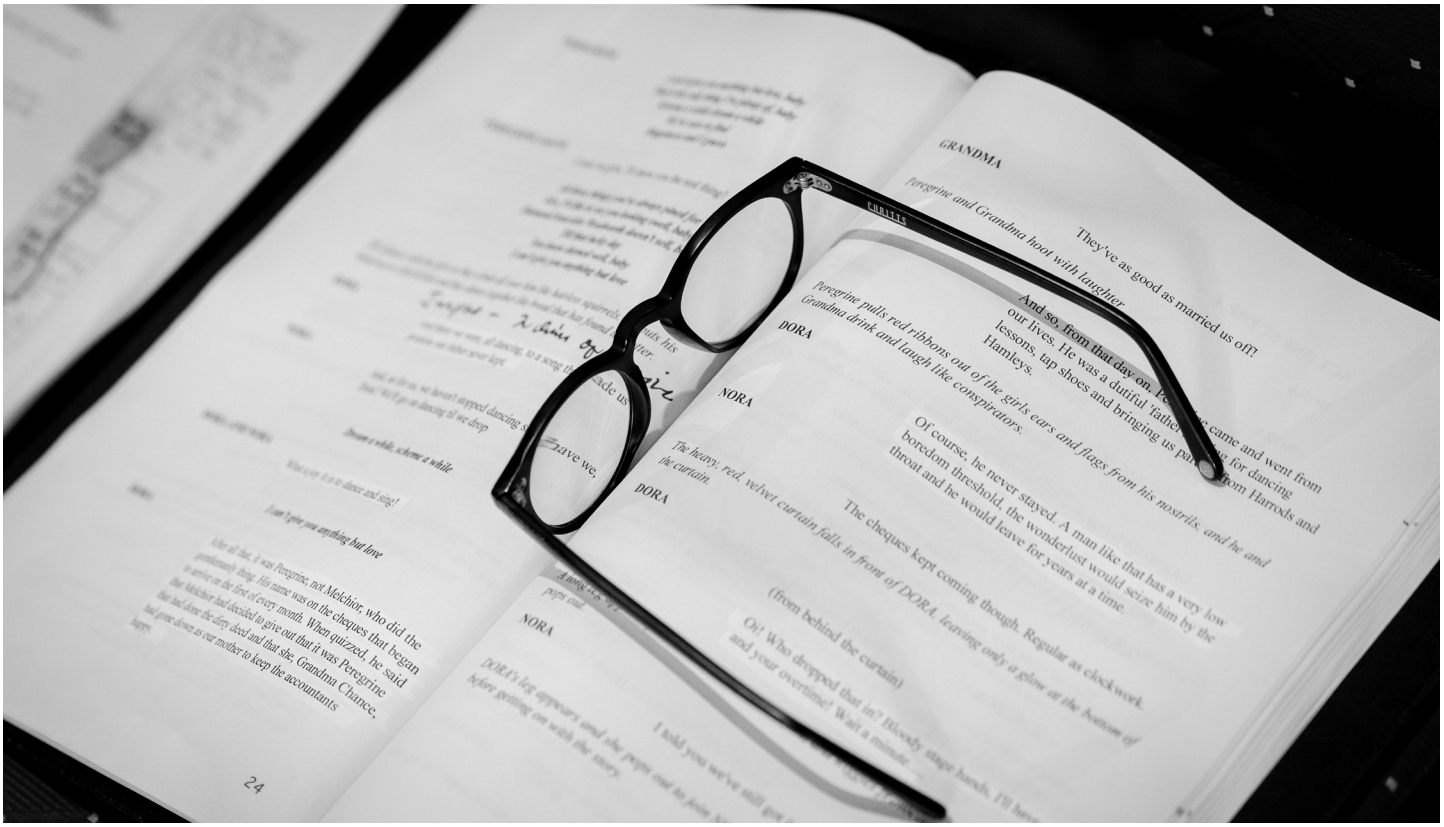
In both *Twelfth Night* and *Wise Children*, disguise and mistaken identity are key to the central plot and themes. The Blonde Tenor experiences love, in whatever form, with both Nora and Dora in the same way that Olivia falls in love with both versions of Cesario (although she is at least successful in holding on to one of them, whilst the unfortunate Tenor ends up with neither). Nora, Dora, Sebastian and Viola all have a survival instinct which allows them to navigate all that fate sends their way although Nora and Dora do not stray far from each other's sides.

This production of *Wise Children* has music at its core, composed by Ian Ross and also drawing from the Great American Songbook. Again, *Twelfth Night* also relies on the songs and music provided by Feste, who although he fulfills the role of the Fool, he is inevitably the least foolish of all the characters. During rehearsals for *Wise Children* actor Paul Hunter has been developing a stand up routine inspired by the novel's Gorgeous George, whose line 'Don't worry, darlin', he's not your father!' Dora joyfully repeats to Saskia as she attempts to denounce Melchior.

At the end of *Wise Children*, two new twins appear but they differ to all of the other twins in the novel in that they are fraternal rather than identical, i.e. a boy and a girl. They perhaps represent a new hope, a breaking of a cycle from the high drama of the previous generations.

Whilst Feste says, 'No pains, Sir, I take pleasure in singing, sir' (*Twelfth Night*, Act II, Scene iv), Nora and Dora declare, 'What a joy it is to dance and sing!'. Carter and Shakespeare, having shown the dangers of deception and disguise, both celebrate the joyous nature of song, dance and theatre.

Whilst Grandma Chance's mantra recommends that we 'hope for the best, expect the worst', perhaps it is the words of Lilian Baylis herself that suit Nora and Dora best. Despite everything they experience, the Chance twins 'Dare, always dare'.



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Emma Rice gender blind blog
oldvictheatre.com/news/2018/09/eyes-wide-open

RESOURCES

Wise Children Podcast
Wise Children have a podcast, which can be accessed through iTunes.

Muse of Fire
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