

**ROSE
THEATRE**

THREE MEN IN A BOAT



Rose Theatre presents



A RIOTOUS NEW COMEDY

BY AL SMITH

WITH ORIGINAL SONGS BY GRANT OLDING
BASED ON THE NOVEL BY JEROME K. JEROME
DIRECTED BY CHRISTOPHER HAYDON

Supported by

**Kingston
University
London**

LEARNING RESOURCE PACK

CONTENTS

Cast and Creatives	3
Jerome K Jerome - Chronology	4-5
Journey Map	6-7
Synopsis	8-9
Characters	10
Artistic Director Note	11
Writer Note	12-13
Music Note	14
Movement Director Note	15
Insight – Puppet Design	16-17
Set and Costume Design	18-19
Rehearsal Diary	20
Classroom Activities	21-24
Credits	25
	24
	26

WELCOME

Welcome to this learning resource pack for Three Men in a Boat, a Rose Original Production. The Rose Theatre has one of the largest participation departments in London. Through creative and curriculum inspired in-school and on-site opportunities, the Rose opens its doors to surrounding communities and enables participants to join in, and take part in, exciting opportunities led by world class practitioners.

If you would like to hear more about our activities, please contact: participate@rosetheatre.org or visit our dedicated schools website [here](#)

CAST

Jerome
Jonny Weldon

Harris
Bronté Barbé

George
Richard David-Caine

Montmorency/Puppeteer
Calum Donald-Bruce

CREATIVE

Based on the novel by
Jerome K. Jerome

Writer
Al Smith

Music & Lyrics,
Orchestrations, Musical
Direction & Sound Design
Grant Olding

Director
Christopher Haydon

Movement Director & Comedy
Consultant
John Nicholson

Set & Costume Designer
Simon Kenny

Lighting Designer
Simisola Majekodunmi

Puppet Designer & Maker
Charlie Tymms

Puppetry Director
Chris Pirie

Choreographer
Simon Hardwick

Fight Director
Riad Richie

Casting Director
Juliet Horsley CDG

Voice & Dialect Coach
Claudette Williams

Associate Director (Drama
League Rose Directing Fellow)
Rebecca Wear

PRODUCTION

Production Manager
Dan Rainsford

Props Supervisors
Kirsty Durman

Costume Supervisor
Laura Rushton

Company Stage Manager
Amanda Hillhouse

Deputy Stage Manager
Georgia Rose

Assistant Stage Manager
Mikaela Mondlane

Wardrobe Manager
Lucie Smith

Automation Crew
Fraser Mallows

Stage Crew
Jacob Towey

Production Sound Engineer
David Gregory

Production Electrician
Emma Sayers

Lighting Programmer
Paul Milford

Production Carpenter
Seorais Graham

Set Builder
Liverpool Scenic Workshops

Lighting equipment supplied
by
Sparks Theatrical Hire

Pyrotechnics Consultancy &
Supplier
Mark Thomas

Health & Safety Consultant
**John Young Creative
Industries**

Rehearsal & Production
Photography
Helen Murray

Rehearsal & Production
Videography by
By DMLK

Artwork Designer
MUSE Creative

Programme Designer
Sarah Heather

PRODUCTION THANKS

Sadlers Wells,
Donmar Warehouse,
Stage Sound Services

JEROME K. JEROME

CHRONOLOGY

- 1859** 2nd May Born Jerome Clapp Jerome in Walsall, Staffordshire. Later becomes known as Jerome Klapka Jerome.
- 1871** Jerome's father dies, leaving him to provide for the family. Finishes school and starts work as a clerk for the London and North Western Railway
- 1882** Co-editor of *Idler*, an illustrated magazine that features contributions from prominent writers of the time, such as Mark Twain and Rudyard Kipling.
- 1886** *The Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow* is published
- 1889** *Three Men in a Boat* is published
- 1897** Jerome and Georgina have a daughter, Rowena
- 1902** *Paul Kever*, an autobiographical novel, is published and is widely praised by critics.



Alamy image reference: GH392K

- Father's coal mine closes and the family moves to Worcestershire and then on to East London. Enrols at St Marylebone Grammar School. **1868**
- Becomes an actor for three years **1877**
- On the Stage – and Off* is published, inspired by his experiences as an actor. **1885**
- Marries Georgina Elizabeth Henrietta Stanley Marris, known as Ettie. Becomes stepfather to her daughter, Elsie. That same year, he goes on a boating trip with his two friends, George Wingrave and Carl Hentschel. The trip – and other previous excursions – would inspire material for *Three Men in a Boat*. **1888**
- Three Men on the Bummel* is published. The story follows Jerome, George and Harris on a cycling trip around Germany. Although it received good reviews, it was not as popular as the original book. **1900**

- Too old to join the army, Jerome volunteers to work as an ambulance driver in France throughout WWI. **1914**
- Jerome K Jerome's memoir, *My Life and Times*, is published **1926**
- Dies in Northamptonshire and is buried in Ewelme, Oxfordshire. 14th June **1927**
- The Passing of the *Third Floor Back* was Jerome K Jerome's most successful published play and is the first time he is recognised as an established playwright. **1908**
- Stepdaughter Elsie dies **1921**
- Awarded Freeman of the Borough of Walsall **1927**



The original Three Men: George Wingrave, Jerome K Jerome and Carl Hentschel

A GUIDE TO THREE MEN ON THE THAMES

Oxford

In the play, we find out that Jerome is an Oxford University graduate. This is one of the oldest universities in the world, with some evidence of teaching taking place as far back as 1096. Oxford University grew in stature in the 12th century after King Henry II banned English students from attending the University of Paris. A total of 36 different colleges now make up the University, each offering a different range of subjects.

Henley

The Henley Royal Regatta is a famous rowing competition that was first established in 1839. In 1851, Prince Albert became the first royal patron of the event. Originally held as an afternoon event for the local community, the regatta now lasts for 6 days and attracts competitors from all over the world.

Marlow

Marlow is a town situated on the Thames. Over the years, it has been a popular residence for authors, including Mary Shelley and T.S. Eliot. Famously, Jerome K. Jerome spent some of his time in Marlow whilst writing *Three Men in a Boat*.

Kingston

As the name suggests, Kingston Upon Thames is steeped in royal history. Seven Saxon Kings were crowned at the Coronation Stone, which can be found in front of the Guildhall building - just opposite the Rose Theatre! The population of the town grew in the late 1800s, with the arrival of the trainline and several improvements to the town. Rumour has it that Jerome, Harris and George set off on their journey from Emms Passage, which is now the location of the Rose Theatre's stage door!

Reading

In the 19th century, Reading expanded from a market town to an industrial centre - with companies manufacturing lots of different products. It became known as the town of the three Bs: Biscuits, Beer and Bulbs!

Henley

Shiplake

Reading

Windsor

Kingston

London

Hampton

Shiplake

This is the site of the swan attack in the play! As far back as the 12th century, the ownership of swans was considered a mark of high status, with the reigning monarch being the most notable. Swans were considered a delicacy and often served at banquets. From the 15th century, two London companies, the Vintners and the Dyers, were granted the right to own mute swans, which is the common breed in the UK. Swans are 'upped', meaning they carry the mark of their owner. Originally, a mark on the beak identified the owner, but this has now been replaced with a ring around the birds' leg. It was a criminal offence to injure or kill a swan - or even steal the eggs - and these birds are still protected by law to this day.

Windsor

Dating back the 7th century, Windsor is another landmark with connection to royalty. The famous castle was built after the Norman invasion and has been a refuge for many monarchs over the centuries. On their journey, our Three Men signed by Runnymede, the site where King John passed the Magna Carta in 1215. The Magna Carta decreed that monarchs were also subject to the rule of law and included clauses designed to protect the church, limit unauthorised taxes and ensure that citizens had the right to a fair trial.

Hampton Court

At the start of play, Jerome waits for Harris and George in the centre of the Hampton Court maze. This is the oldest surviving maze in the UK and dates back to 1700. The maze was commissioned by King William III and designed by George London and Henry Wise. Instead of the popular single path maze that spiralled into the centre, this was designed as a puzzle maze, with many twists, turns and dead ends.

London Waterloo

Opened in 1848, London Waterloo remains one of the capital's busiest train stations. It was popular during the 19th century with commuters and day-trippers travelling to Epsom racecourse. Extra platforms were added to cope with demand, but the layout was confusing for passengers, as Harris and George experience in their quest to reach Kingston. The station was eventually rebuilt between 1899-1919.

SYNOPSIS

THREE MEN IN A BOAT

ACT 1 SCENE 1

Jerome has arranged to meet Harris and George in the centre of Hampton Court. Harris and George are late, having struggled to get a train to Kingston. Jerome explains the plan for their journey, which is not quite as George and Harris expected. The men get lost attempting to leave the maze until Monty, Jerome's dog who has been tied to the entrance, comes to the rescue.

SCENE 2

Jerome and Harris are on the boat with several pieces of luggage and a large glass display case containing a fish. Harris is loading an enormous bag on to the boat while Jerome is trying to write. We discover that Harris is due to marry his fiancé, Petronella, in Oxford in a week's time. Harris questions Jerome's motives for the trip, who insists it's a final adventure for the three friends before the wedding. Jerome explains that he has been commissioned to write a new piece for his publishers. Harris also discovers that Jerome needs to return the prize trout in the glass display to the Oxford University Anglers Association. George arrives with a whole pig carcass, intending to make sausages for the journey, and is dismayed at the poor state of the boat. Just as they set off, Monty the dog eats the travellers' map. Chaos ensues and Jerome ends up in the river

SCENE 3

Without their map, the travellers are struggling to work out where they are. Whilst drying off, Jerome is reading one of George's medical journals. He believes he is suffering from several illnesses and convinces Harris that he too is also terribly unwell. George, pretending to take their concerns seriously, performs a fake operation on Harris, who thinks he has saved his life. In celebration, the men consider eating some of the Tullis Promise cheese that Harris has brought for the journey. The cheese is so potent, it's kept in a metal safe. After opening a lid and experiencing the pungent smell, they decide to give it a miss.

The conversation turns to the framed trout. Jerome explains the Oxford University Anglers Association's rules for declaring a catch of fish. The weather changes and the men find themselves in a storm.

SCENE 4

Wet through, George and Jerome are attempting to put up a tent and start a fire, with little luck. George presses Jerome for more information about the book he's writing. He explains that advice from a Norwegian author inspired him to write should strive to give voice to the unutterable truths that lie between him and the person he loves. Jerome outlines the premise of his book, which includes bagpipes and a series of mysterious murders. Harris then runs in, closely chased by some angry swans. The men are unable to fend off the swans until Monty the dog comes to the rescue, attacking several of the birds. The friends realise that these are in fact the King's swans and soldiers are in pursuit. They escape in the boat, leaving most of their belongings behind.



ACT 2 SCENE 5

George and Harris are alone in the boat. Jerome is nowhere to be seen, but his clothes are folded in a neat pile. The two men are starving. They search in Jerome's bag for food and drink and George finds his notebook. Jerome emerges from the river and clammers onto the boat with milk and a newspaper. He's wearing nothing but a pair of rubber swimming trunks. George scours the newspaper for information. There's mention of a troupe of Himalayan Contortionists, who were due to appear in Oxford, but have been denied entry in Dover. George eventually finds an article about the swan attack and realises they are wanted by the police. They consider how to evade arrest and where their next meal will come from. Faced with no other option, they consider the Tullis Promise cheese and Harris recounts the convoluted story of how it came to be in his possession. Whilst searching for a cheese knife, Harris discovers a tin of pineapple in the bag. His elation turns to despair, when he realises he has not packed a tin opener. After desperate attempts to open the can with an axe, the pineapple ends up in the river and the axe in the bottom of the boat. Jerome's trunks are used to plug the hole in the boat and the men resort to eating the cheese.

SCENE 6

George has been helping himself to the Tullis Promise and, in a cheese-induced dream, he is having an in-depth conversation with Monty the dog about Jerome's many flaws. George snaps out of the dream and looks for a way to get out of rowing duties. He ties the boat's towline to Monty's collar and then attaches Jerome's shoe to the end of a make-shift fishing rod. Monty happily follows the bait, whilst gently pulling the boat along. All is well until he spots a squirrel and sets off in pursuit. The boat is pulled in all directions and they are drawn into the turbulent water of the Pangbourne Weirstream. They cut the towline and the boat capsizes.

SCENE 7

The men are on the riverbank, soaked and trying to recover the boat and oars. Most of their possessions are lost, but Jerome has managed to salvage the framed trout. Harris is concerned that his fiancé is having doubts about the wedding. Jerome and George attempt to get to the bottom of the issue through a series of role plays.

George reads aloud from Jerome's journal. He reveals Jerome's intention to use his friend's troubles as the basis for his book. George confides in his friends about his late wife's illness and final days before her death. An insensitive comment from Jerome is the last straw for George. He launches himself at Jerome and smashes the prize trout and glass container on his head. Full of regret, George apologises and the men console each other. The wind starts blowing and they construct a sail to set off on the last leg of their journey

SCENE 8

The friends are now sailing towards Oxford and George is attempting to glue the trout and glass case back together. As they approach a bridge, they spot policemen on the lookout. They consider all manner of options to avoid being arrested. Monty drops the newspaper at George's feet and he is reminded of the troupe of Himalayan contortionists, due to perform in Oxford. Convinced this is their only option, the men decide to disguise themselves as the contortionists and make their way towards the bridge.

SCENE 9

The scenes cuts to the Cowley Hippodrome in Oxford where the men take to the stage in disguise, accompanied by Jerome and his bagpipes.



CHARACTER LIST

JEROME

Jerome is a struggling writer who has organised a trip on the river Thames with Harris and George. He has a habit of embellishing the truth, much to the annoyance of his friends. Jerome has been commissioned to write a novel and, unbeknownst to his travelling companions, intends to use their experiences as inspiration for the book.



GEORGE

George is a struggling doctor and has been recently widowed. He is due to be Harris's best man but appears to be underprepared for the task. George enjoys a drink and is dismayed to find out that they will be camping instead of staying in the local pubs. He is particularly irritated by Jerome's lying and admits the two friends have drifted apart.



HARRIS

Harris is a struggling office clerk and is due to get married in Oxford in one week. He is concerned that his bride to be is having doubts about the upcoming wedding. Harris isn't the brightest of the three travellers, but is loyal to his friends and thinks the best of everyone.



MONTMORENCY

Known as Monty, this fox terrier has a particular liking for Jerome's right shoe. He is not officially owned by Jerome but follows him everywhere. Untrained and uncontrollable, particularly if there's squirrel around, Monty is both the bringer of chaos and the three men's saviour.



DIRECTOR NOTE AND WELCOME



I knew of *Three Men in a Boat* long before I had actually read it. It's one of those titles that (excuse the pun) seems to always be floating in the ether. There was a seventies TV version of it starring Michael Palin, Stephen Moore and Tim Curry; Dara O'Brian, Griff Rhys Jones and Rory McGrath recreated the journey for a documentary in 2006; and the book has been referenced by writers as varying as PG Wodehouse and Elena Ferrante.

Yet, I paid little attention to it until a couple of years ago when I took my two small children on a trip to Hampton Court Palace. We went with the explicit intention of solving the maze – how hard could it be? After a very long time, we eventually found our way out – disorientated, confused, a bit frightened (well, I was, the kids were fine) – and I came across a sign nearby that told its history. It included a list of all the ways the maze has featured in popular culture. And I was struck to learn that, not only did it appear in *Three Men in a Boat*, but that that book itself was set, in part at least, in Kingston.

I had been artistic director of the Rose for a few years by then, so I was a little humbled to learn that this famous work of 19th century literature had such a strong local link that I knew nothing about. I decided to read it immediately. Yet I was sceptical about whether it would still be funny – after all, comedy can date notoriously quickly and the book was well over a century old.

It was hilarious. It bobbed along with a wit and lightness of touch that quickly made it clear why it continues to be such a classic. It felt like a precursor to so much classic comedy that has come since: *Jeeves and Wooster*, *Morcombe and Wise*, *Monty Python*, etc. So, turning it into a stage show felt like a no-brainer.

Another no-brainer was that **Al Smith** should do the adaptation. Al brings an acute comic precision to everything he writes. And it's been a delight watching him as he's limbered up and achieved such fantastic feats of linguistic gymnastics in the play.

Al was drawn to the Victorian tradition of variety and Music Hall as a framing device. And this quickly led us to our second major collaborator: composer and songwriter **Grant Olding** – whose work on *One Man Two Guvnors* was such a joy. I don't have a musical bone in my body, so whenever he would send over a new song it always felt to me like the most remarkable magic trick – he ties together melody, story and wordplay with such verve.

Finally, as you will see tonight, the human body is capable of doing some very silly things indeed. The responsibility for all of this nonsense lies with our Movement Director & Comedy Consultant **John Nicholson** who has carved quite a career out of the art of making people fall over. He, and our remarkable cast have gone out of their way to tie themselves in knots (literally).

On a more serious note, I would like to dedicate this show to my friend **Adam Brace** who passed away, far too young, a few years ago. Adam has been on my mind a lot lately – he was a friend to Al as well as me, and he specialised in developing and directing comedy. As proud as I am of this show, I have no doubt that it would have been even better had we been able to have his input. He is much missed but never forgotten.

Christopher Haydon
Artistic Director at Rose Theatre

THE EMOTIONAL WORLD BEHIND THE VICTORIAN STIFF UPPER LIP

In searching for a narrative rooted in the region, **Christopher Haydon** and I remembered the epic river journey in Jerome K. Jerome's classic novel, *Three Men in a Boat*, begins right here in Kingston upon Thames. Digging deeper into the book's origin, however, we hadn't realised quite how intimately connected Jerome was to the town himself. That local resonance sparked the foundation for this project: a desire to make a piece of theatre built squarely for the Rose's audience, celebrating a piece of literature anchored on its own patch.

I'd read Jerome's 1889 classic as a teenager, and remembered it as a hilarious, gentle satire full of meandering digressions about human folly. However, translating an episodic, internal monologue-heavy travelogue into a dynamic play required a little narrative re-jigging. I saw that challenge as three-fold.

First, the original novel offers little reason for the journey to take place. Second, almost all the anecdotes involve people not on the boat. And third, none of the characters learn anything new, or change. That's all well and good for a novel but poses a few hurdles for a play.

My offer has been to adjust those anecdotes so that they presently affect and challenge the characters on the boat. While the story remains that of a jaunty holiday taken by three comfortable Victorians seeking relief from their real and imaginary woes, they're now characters on a gentle mission, and each travels their own arc enroute to meeting it. I hope these adjustments have allowed us to introduce a little theatrical friction while diving deeper into the emotional reality under the Victorian stiff upper lip. All the while, I've kept front and centre the novel's signature warmth, absurdity, and quick-witted repartee.



'LOCAL RESONANCE SPARKED THE FOUNDATION FOR THIS PROJECT'

To truly unlock the theatricality of the story, Chris and I knew we needed music. Songs have a unique way of accentuating the themes of the piece, and we've been extraordinarily lucky to collaborate with **Grant Olding**, whose brilliant score and lyrics give the piece a vibrant, infectious pulse. We're blessed too with **John Nicholson's** wonderfully playful comedy direction. Bringing that vision to life has required a formidable level of craft, and we couldn't be more thrilled with our exceptional cast: **Jonny Weldon**, **Bronté Barbé**, **Richard David-Caine** and **Calum Donald-Bruce**. Watching them tackle John's intricate physical gags, Grant's minxy musical numbers, and the play's rapid-fire back and forth with such energy and skill has been an absolute delight.

'I SAW THAT CHALLENGE AS THREE-FOLD'

Jerome, George, Harris (not to mention Montmorency's) journey is far from smooth sailing. It's a story of friendship, ineptitude and grief, and moves along with increasingly large waves of farcical and physical chaos. Yes, it's a little different from the original, but given Jerome's lifelong habit of poking gentle fun at his own artistic ambitions, I like to think he would have warmly embraced our spin on his beloved river trip and enjoyed taking centre stage right here in Kingston, at the Rose.

Al Smith
Writer, *Three Men in a Boat*



THREE MEN IN A SONG

When **Christopher Haydon** asked me aboard *Three Men in a Boat*, the conversation quickly turned to song. **Al Smith's** hilarious adaptation is shot through with vaudevillian panache: physical comedy routines, long runs of clever wordplay, a tangle of Himalayan contortionists... There is a sense that the three main characters are always performing - their own lives as much as anything else. Reading the script, it felt as though the footlights of the Edwardian music hall were only ever a few feet away. So when Chris asked if I thought the play could take a few songs, I immediately said, "Absolutely."



Fifteen years ago I wrote and performed the songs for Richard Bean's *One Man, Two Guvnors* at the National Theatre - a play that had a similar variety-show spirit. In that production we used songs to help establish the period, to flesh out the world of skiffle player Francis Henshall (James Corden), and to introduce thematic ideas without advancing the plot. I assembled a four-piece band called The Craze, complete with sharp 60's suits, and we took to the stage before the show, during the interval and between each scene, performing original songs inspired by Lonnie Donegan, The Kinks and the Beatles, with a little of the Beverley Sisters thrown in for good measure.

The songs in *Three Men in a Boat* would have to do a slightly different job. This time, the three main

characters would perform every song themselves. Each number having the flavour of a music hall turn, but with the lyrics carrying story as well as character.



I am fascinated by the kind of subtext that song can bring out. Not necessarily in the way Rogers and Hammerstein did so brilliantly in *If I Loved You*, where the characters are denying what we know is in their hearts by publicly feigning disinterest, but in a more meta-theatrical way. What if the characters have just had a blazing row, yet find themselves singing about their enduring brotherhood through gritted teeth? What if, because of the mess the characters are in, they suddenly forget all the lyrics? What if the songs become another way of magnifying their frustrations, triumphs, and disasters?

For *Three Men in a Boat*, I've found the formal elegance of the Edwardian parlour song, together with the lyrical dexterity of music hall and light operetta, to be a wonderfully playful sandpit to romp around in. Above all, I hope the songs provide the perfect soundtrack for messing about on the river.

Grant Olding

Music & Lyrics, Orchestrations, Musical Direction and Sound Design, *Three Men in a Boat*

INSIGHT WITH

JOHN NICHOLSON: MOVEMENT DIRECTOR & COMEDY CONSULTANT

John Nicholson is an Olivier award nominated writer and director, and co-founder of the comic theatre company, Peepolykus. John has written for TV sitcoms and sketch shows and regularly works as a comedy consultant in theatre and TV.

WHAT IS YOUR STARTING POINT AS A MOVEMENT DIRECTOR? ARE YOU GUIDED BY THE TEXT, OR THE CHARACTERS?

It will really vary from project to project. For this play Chris Haydon (Director) wanted to develop ideas for some specific scenes, prior to rehearsals. One of these is an opening visual sequence of two characters getting lost in a maze (on the revolving stage) with moving screens/hedges. We sat with a model of the revolving stage and threw ideas around. Another example is a set piece when the characters are attacked by "dozens of swans". This would have implications for Simon Kenny's set and costume design, so we needed to come up with ideas early doors. My main focus is to help ensure things will be funny. It can also be useful if there is an opportunity to do some basic physical comedy with actors at the start of the rehearsal process - tripping over, walking into doors etc. Also showing actors that, most often, the biggest laugh comes from the actor's reactions.

HAS THE SET DESIGN INFORMED HOW YOU APPROACH THE MOVEMENT ON STAGE? HAVE THERE BEEN ANY PARTICULAR CHALLENGES THAT YOU HAVE HAD TO SOLVE?

Having not just a revolve but a double revolve is probably the biggest challenge on this show because we won't be able to actually try things out on it until tech week in the theatre - at the end of rehearsals. So we can rehearse ideas, but those ideas might have to change once we are *literally* on the move.

DOES ALL OF YOUR WORK AS A MOVEMENT DIRECTOR HAPPEN DURING REHEARSALS - OR ARE YOU ABLE TO PLAN IN ADVANCE?

With this show we had the full script in advance, so we were able to think through many of the challenges. However, until we're actually in the room with actors, we can't be sure how the routines will work and, specifically, how funny they will be. Actors also bring their own ideas and might have certain physical limitations, so those factors get accommodated in rehearsals. In general though, I will teach a rough pre-prepared outline of a routine and then add detail in rehearsal.

There is one very complicated routine in the show I taught to other members of the creative team, to see if it worked before teaching it to the actors - and also to save rehearsal time. The routine involves characters passing multiple objects between them. I often ask of the script 'what is the underlying game of this section?' In that routine it was 'Nobody is allowed to put any tools down because I don't want to risk anything falling into the river.' Once the game is clear, the comedy can take off.

WHICH CREATIVES HAVE YOU WORKED MOST CLOSELY WITH?

There has been a lot of conversations and brainstorming with Chris Haydon. I'm also having constant conversations with Chris Pirie (Puppetry Director) during rehearsals where I might say, 'can the puppet dog fly in slow motion through the air there?' or, 'what if we went into a matrix type sequence here?'. I've also worked with Grant Olding (Musical Director), on a routine where objects are thrown off into the wings on one side of the stage and then they immediately appear from the other side of the stage. It wasn't quite working, so I asked Grant to create some cartoon sound effects to accompany the action. It suddenly worked much better!

INSIGHT WITH PUPPET DESIGNER AND MAKER, CHARLIE TYMMS



Charlie Tymms is a freelance puppet designer and maker working in theatre, film and the visual arts. At the core of her work is a love for storytelling and bringing a character to life. Charlie gives us an exclusive insight into inspiration and design process behind Monty the dog.

WHAT'S YOUR STARTING POINT FOR A NEW PUPPET?

I start with a conversation with the director and scenic designer about the setting, what the puppet needs to do, its scale, how many puppeteers are needed and key elements of its character.

For Monty, we decided on a one-person-operated wire fox terrier, slightly larger than life for a big stage. He needed to run, jump, chase swans and fall in and out of the boat—and be everywhere!

From there, I study the breed's anatomy, skeleton and joints to design the armature. This is crucial because, however Monty looks, his movement needs to feel believable and help the puppeteer bring him to life.

WHAT INSPIRED YOUR PUPPET DESIGN FOR MONTY?

Our director, Chris Haydon, and designer, Simon Kenny, were exploring Vaudeville as a theatrical style. As I read the book, Monty's personality really stood out: a mischievous, reluctant traveller who is brave and cowardly all at once.

I wanted his design to capture that contrast—innocent but naughty, a little bit posh but scruffy around the edges. He likes his comforts, so I bought Harris Tweed offcuts to make his coat.

Of course, a lot of Monty's character will come from the puppeteer bringing him to life.

WHICH CREATIVES DO YOU WORK MOST CLOSELY WITH?

I work most closely with the director and scenic designer throughout the process.



WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE YOU FACED WITH THIS DESIGN, AND HOW HAVE YOU OVERCOME THEM?

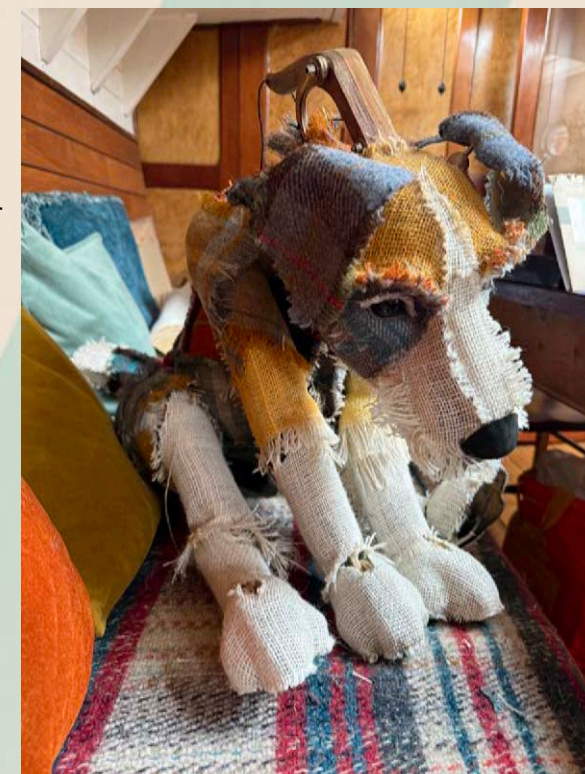
Time is always the biggest challenge! In my dream world I would make a basic prototype puppet first and test how Monty's character and action develop through physical workshops with puppeteers and actors before making the final version. There is rarely the time or the budget for this luxury and a fully formed puppet is inevitably needed from the first day of rehearsals. On the upside it does mean that when the actors and puppeteers meet Monty they are directed by him!

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUNG PEOPLE INTERESTED IN PUPPET DESIGN?

Get creative at home and make a puppet! It can be as simple or as complicated as you like. Start with a story, or let the puppet inspire the story—there are no rules.

Puppets can be adventurous, wild and unruly. They can defy gravity, evade death and create extraordinary moments that delight and surprise us. There are lots of online resources for making armatures from everyday household materials, or, if you have access to a workshop, you can experiment with more structured construction.

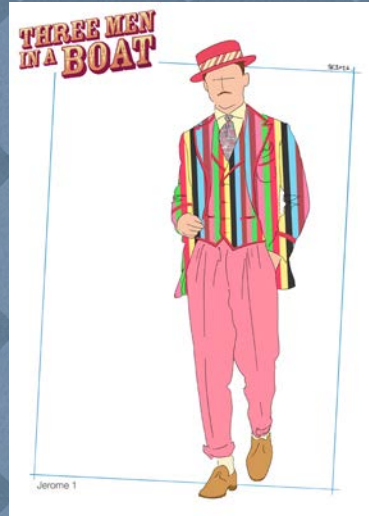
Most importantly, **don't limit your imagination.** And if you can, get work experience with a puppet designer-maker to develop your skills and understanding further.



SET AND COSTUME DESIGN

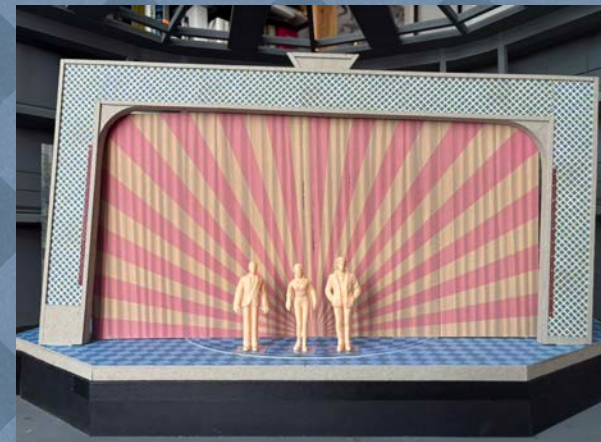
SIMON KENNY

ORIGINAL SKETCHES OF THE COSTUME DESIGN



SET DESIGN MODEL BOX

THIS WAS USED IN PRODUCTION MEETINGS WITH THE CREATIVE AND TECHNICAL TEAM



REHEARSAL DIARY BY REBECCA WEAR

Associate Director for Three Men in a Boat

Rebecca Wear is a freelance director, dramaturg, and educator, currently based in California. Rebecca has worked as a Director and Assistant Director on numerous projects throughout the US and is the 2026 Drama League Rose Directing Fellow. Rebecca give us an insight into the first week of rehearsal for Three Men in a Boat.

DAY 1:

Intros, Design Presentation, and Tablework

We kick the week off with a general round of introductions between the cast, stage management team, and creative team. Everyone is warm and witty, which seems appropriate for the show. Simon Kenny (Set and Costume Designer) show us the costumes and a model box, which interweaves bright colors, vaudeville, a boat on the Thames, and more. We finish by starting to work on the script.

DAY 2-3:

Tablework

We continue tablework and break the script into units of action. Everyone articulates new, learned facts and shares any questions that the language generates. We interrogate the text with Al Smith (Writer), with occasional edits.

DAY 4:

Music, Movement and Puppetry

Today, we jump into some of the show's other, dynamic elements. The day starts with singing and music with Grant Olding (Music & Lyrics, Orchestrations, Musical Direction and Sound Design). In the show, the songs juxtapose the scenes and their general vibe is Gilbert and Sullivan meets Edwardian parlour, with a bit of bawdy musical and Cockney sing-along thrown in.

In the second half of the day, we move to the physical elements. Chris and John Nicholson (Movement Director & Comedy Consultant) have developed an opening sequence where the characters get lost in the Hampton Court Palace maze. We play through it, defining theatrical rules, devising answers to questions, and doing our best to imagine how a revolving stage will eventually impact the clown choreography.

Simultaneously, Chris Pirie (Puppetry Director) and Calum Donald-Bruce (Puppeteer) workshop ways in which Monty can help, hinder, and gloriously wreak havoc onstage. The day ends with a rehearsal of what we colloquially call "the swan massacre...". Without revealing too much, puppets, drop kicks, and mass quantities of feathers put the riot in riotous. When the day ends, we're all enamored with Monty.



DAY 5:

Active Read-Through

We start the final day of the week by meeting the larger Rose Theatre team. The cast launch into an active read through: an exercise in which the actors read the script on their feet, exploring the physical dynamics on a taped stage.

At the end of the week, I ask some of the cast and team to describe their favorite moment in the show in one word:

Johnny/Jerome: "Bagpipes"

Richard/George: "Applause"

Bronte/Harris: "Rodent-y"

Calum/Monty: "Ostentatious"

Chris/Puppetry: "Team"

Georgia/Deputy Stage Manager: "Sarcophagus"



CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

TASK ONE

The first activity focuses on the physical control and collaboration required by the actors in Three Men in a Boat. We will then look at how students can use Topography Viewpoints exercises as a starting point for staging a scene.

Warm ups

Focus: concentration, physical awareness and control, group collaboration

Stop Start:

Ask students to walk around the room – making use of the full space and avoiding walking in circles. Ask students to respond to the following instructions: stop and start.

Continue to move around the space and introduce two new instructions: jump and clap.

Now reverse the instructions, so stop now means start, and start now means stop.

Continue, by reversing the instructions of clap and jump.

Jump as one:

Ask the students to form a circle. They must be completely silent and listen into the space. The aim is for the group to jump as one, without any prompt from anyone in the circle. Try a number of times until the group is fully focused and has managed to jump in unison

Follow the Leader:

Ask the group to form a line. The person at the front will move around the space and those behind will copy the movements as closely as possible. Start with very slow and exaggerated movements. Students can take turns leading the group and should be encouraged to experiment with different tempos and **levels**.

EXERCISES – VIEWPOINTS TOPOGRAPHY

Viewpoints is a performance technique that explores how a narrative can be conveyed through movement. Some elements of Viewpoints include shape, tempo, repetition, but for this task we will focus on topography.

Topography definition: "the physical appearance of the natural features of an area of land, especially the shape of its surface" – Cambridge Dictionary

Focus – to encourage how to use the whole playing space and explore the spatial design of a scene.

Pathways:

Ask the students to move around the space, thinking about how they make patterns in the space. Try different shapes – i.e. straight lines, spirals and zig zags.

Now move around the space experimenting with how different emotions might influence the shape of each pathway, i.e. what type pathway would joy look like, how would anxiety differ?

Group Journeys:

Ask the students to get into groups of three. Ask them to map a pathway through the space as a group. The students should work as a team, supporting each other in the journey. Encourage them to do this without speaking, so they can focus on the movement. Consider how they move through the space as a unified group. Show some back to the group and ask the audience to feedback any stories or characters that they see emerging.

Now ask the same groups to move through the space, but this time as a contrasting group. They may not follow the same path, or they can block or disrupt the pathways of others. Show some of these back to the group and ask the audience to feedback their thoughts about the character dynamics.

The Maze:

Now ask the groups to develop a pathway that represents a maze. Each group is trying to find their way out of the maze and they come across at least three different obstacles. At different points they might work as a unified group, or a contrasting group. Ask the groups to remember to use the full space and consider how tempo, levels and different pathway shapes might be used to tell the story.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Apply to the script

Now ask each group to look at the following scene where Jerome, George and Harris are trying to find their way out of Hampton Court maze. Ask the groups to use the Topography exercises above to help them stage the scene.

JEROME: Well, that dog's tethered at the boat's expense, so unless we get out before the tide's up our boat will be lost before the trip's even begun. So, follow me, gents! It's this way!

[They begin their journey out of the maze]

GEORGE: Upstream, you said?

JEROME: Yes.

GEORGE: I thought we were going downstream, to Whitstable?

HARRIS: Yes, a weeknight of oysters and winkles in Whitstable's what you promised.

JEROME: We're not going to sea, you especially. You'd be sick as a dog.

HARRIS: I wouldn't. I don't even believe in sea-sickness. People do it on purpose to get out of helping.

GEORGE: Then if not the sea, where are we going?

JEROME: Oxford!

GEORGE: Oxford!?

JEROME: And not for a night; for a week!

HARRIS: But I'm getting married on Saturday!

JEROME: Indeed! In Oxford! And what better way to end your bachelorhood than aboard a boat with your very best friends! I've cleared it with Petronella; quite frankly she sounded like she couldn't be happier to see the back of you –

GEORGE: I can't take a week off, J – I've patients to see –

JEROME: No, you haven't. I've written to your consultant and told him you're at a very important conference.

GEORGE: A very important conference where?!

JEROME: Oh, it's a moveable conference with two of the world's leading experts on waterborne diseases.

HARRIS: But I've only packed one change of clothes.

JEROME: Not to worry! We can wash what we have, and I've plenty to spare.

HARRIS: Won't it be exhausting?

JEROME: Washing clothes? Can't be that hard.

HARRIS: Pulling upriver.

GEORGE: Yes, wouldn't it be a lot easier to slide down to our winkles, rather than pull up to his alter?

JEROME: Real men do not start upriver. We are the sorts who square their backs and fight against it all, in spite of the heartache.

HARRIS: I'm not.

JEROME: A change of scene and an absence of thought will do us the world of good. So, let us dream away a sunny week amongst those drowsy wakes from whence the surging waves of our nineteenth century will seem far-off and faint.

HARRIS: Ok that does sound humpy.

GEORGE: If we're to be away a week, where will we stay!?

JEROME: We shall camp!

HARRIS: Camp?!

GEORGE: Can't we stay in pubs?

JEROME: No.

GEORGE: Why not?

JEROME: Because what we need is rest. Rest and complete change.

GEORGE: I find pubs very restful.

JEROME: George, you're more in need of rescue than either one of us, and I don't want to lose you to the bottle. So, let's grab this chance to rejuvenate! The three of us, living simply! Talking with each other, man to man, until Harris is lost for good!

[HARRIS pokes his map]

HARRIS: Are you sure we haven't already been here?

JEROME: Well of course we've been here – it's the way we came in.

[HARRIS turns the map upside down. JEROME steamrolls on]

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

TASK TWO

In this exercise, students will experiment with some simple techniques to bring a puppet to life.

For this, you will need: a stuffed toy large enough for two people to manipulate, or students can make a simple puppet by tying elastic bands around a towel to create limbs and a head.

Breath

If your puppet appears to be breathing, it will immediately come to life for the audience! To create the illusion of breathing, keep the torso still and move the head of the puppet moves up and down. In groups, ask your students to experiment. Encourage them to use sound too.

What happen to the puppet's breath if:

The character is scared?

The character is calm?

The character has hiccups?

Focus

This tells us what the character is interested in. Ask the students to try the following with their puppet.

What happens if they are fascinated by something or someone?

How can we tell if they are looking at something close by, or far away?

What happens if they are scared or disgusted by an object?

Weight

Every living thing has to contend with gravity when they are moving. Ask the students to work together to manipulate how the puppet moves in the space.

How are the legs placed on the floor to create a sense of weight?

Can they make the puppet seem very light or very heavy?

Extension:

Ask the student to repeat the exercises above, but this time add a sound and a voice to the puppet. Experiment with different variations to find a voice that feels like a natural fit.

Script task:

Ask the students to experiment with the script extract below. Using their puppets and applying breath, focus and weight, see if they can bring the character of Monty to life. Ask students to consider how Monty's physicality different in the dream, compared to when George wakes up.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

[GEORGE is alone at the oars. JEROME and HARRIS are asleep. MONTY licks clean the pan of Irish stew]

GEORGE: Claiming someone else's labour makes him tired? Stealing thunder when it is I who is Harris's Best Man! He hasn't even been asked to hold the flowers! I don't know why I got into a boat with such a workshy dolt, but I'll be lucky to get off it alive.

MONTY: I agree. If it's any consolation.

[GEORGE stares at MONTY, then the cheese]

MONTY: Perhaps it's just his overscrupulous nature that makes him fear he's having more work than his due, so he's offering it you out of an abundance of caution that you might desire it but are too afraid to ask.

GEORGE: Is this the cheese talking?

MONTY: No, I'm the dog.

GEORGE: You think he's sharing the load out of some skewed sense of charity?!

MONTY: I wouldn't call it charity per se; the master I know lacks any true sense of Christian spiritualism. Instead, what I'd suggest motivates him harks back toward a more Platonic ideal, in that by pulling upriver you might earn a sense of fulfilment through action. I could be wrong but that's my interpretation.

GEORGE: So he thinks this work's for my benefit?

MONTY: He senses that you are in pain yet has no means to convey his empathy, other than to pull up this river in an attempt at encouraging you, Harris and himself to the least extent, to grow. In that sense, it is indeed a Platonic form of romantic love, but I hope you'll forgive me if I say I'm not an expert on that front.

GEORGE: Because you're a dog?

MONTY: Because I adhere to a pleasure-based model of philosophical fulfilment.

GEORGE: Come again?

MONTY: Exactly. I'd do anything to chase a squirrel and have no problem licking my balls in public.

GEORGE: So, I shouldn't complain about this work.

MONTY: I'm suggesting you'll soon realise it's better not to see this rowing as a means to an end, rather as an end in itself. Fulfilment, for you, lies in the struggle.

GEORGE: And why will I soon realise that?

MONTY: Because of what you're about to do.

HARRIS: (Asleep) Mother! My Pancreii!

[Reality returns for GEORGE somewhat]

GEORGE: Your candour is appreciated, Monty. You'd make a wonderful doctor.

[GEORGE pulls on the oars a few more times]

GEORGE: Perhaps I don't much mind about the labour so much. But I have needs too, don't I?

MONTY: Woof.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Below are some links to videos which complement the content in this pack. You may wish to use these as visual aids when studying this production.

- **Music Rehearsal Trailer** <https://youtu.be/NDkT5Ce3JbA?si=p1of5vTmF0gUa1UL>

- **Rehearsals Trailer** https://youtu.be/_G8Ezw-uBsA?si=Vc5xQz82s4xuHA5q

- **Three Men in a Boat Teaser** <https://youtu.be/YD9y2GDghqc?si=Hfq2p4dAh91MSTXx>

- **The creative vision** <https://youtu.be/3okswwMN7bl?si=IBAWDXhvPb7nuz8t>

- **Exploring the comedy** <https://youtu.be/G9fiAw4wUjs?si=p2zRMsOhTzp7oiET>

- **A play with songs** <https://youtu.be/yKi8mQTcteY?si=M6rf5jqdP4jCHRRc>



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