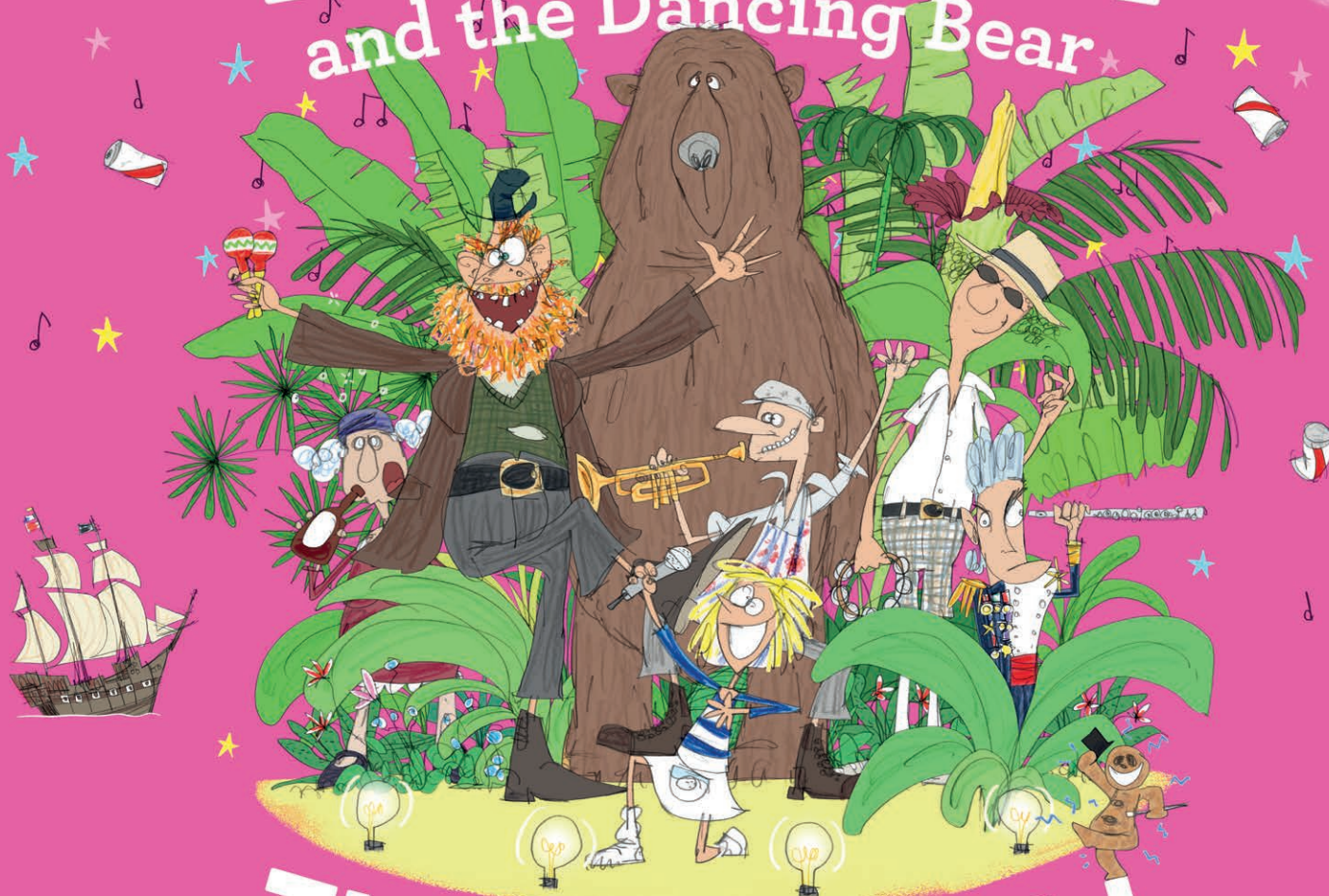


National  
Theatre

# MR GUM

and the Dancing Bear



# THE MUSICAL!

book and lyrics by Andy Standton  
music by Jim Fortune

Rehearsal Diaries



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

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## Good evening. Welcome to the National Theatre's rehearsal diaries for *Mr Gum and the Dancing Bear – the Musical!*

These are the rehearsal diaries for *Mr Gum and the Dancing Bear – the Musical!*, as written by the show's Staff Director. They'll give you a behind the scenes look at all the fun, and all the challenges, of staging this play. At the end of the rehearsal diaries, you will also find a glossary of terms that come up regularly in theatre. If you don't recognise a word, why not look it up and find out what it means!

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**Sarah Eastaff**  
Programme Manager, NT Learning  
May 2019

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**Further production details:**  
[nationaltheatre.org.uk](http://nationaltheatre.org.uk)

# The National's production

The Company

Cast, in alphabetical order

Alan Taylor / Friday O'Leary

**Richard Cant**

Mr Gum

**Steve Furst**

Swing

**Tom Giles**

Polly

**Keziah Joseph**

Billy / Captain Brazil

**Helena Lymbery**

Padlock / Old Granny / Dance Captain

**Kate Malyon**

Jonathan Ripples

**Gary Wilmot**

Keys / Accordion

**Tarek Merchant**

Drums / Percussion

**Joley Cragg**

Violin / Guitar / Banjo / Dulcimer / Mandocello

**Nick Pynn**

Saxophone / Bass / Synthesiser

**Ross Hughes**

Director

**Amy Hodge**

Set and Costume Designer

**Georgia Lowe**

Music Director

**Tarek Merchant**

Lighting Designer

**Lee Curran**

Choreographer

**Fleur Darkin**

Sound Designer

**Carolyn Downing**

Puppetry

**Jimmy Grimes**

Voice and Dialect Coach

**Simon Money**

Staff Director

**Hannah Noone**

Production Photographer

**The Other Richard**

This production had its press night on  
31 July 2019, in the National's Dorfman Theatre.



# Rehearsal diary: week one

Staff Director Hannah Noone's diary tracks the six-week rehearsal period for *Mr Gum and the Dancing Bear – the Musical!*, beginning 17 June 2019

Andy Stanton's book 'Mr Gum and the Dancing Bear' is part of a series of books featuring Polly, Mr Gum and all the other residents of Lamonic Bibber. In this musical version of Stanton's book, a bear wanders into town, only to be captured and forced to dance by Mr Gum. Heroine Polly decides to return the bear to the Kingdom of Beasts where it belongs.

*Mr Gum and the Dancing Bear – the Musical!* is a musical adaptation of book five of Andy Stanton's award-winning children's book series. Over the last month I've had the delight of getting to read and analyse all eight books in the series as part of our preparation for the show. These are laugh out loud, clever, wildly weird books, with rich characters and stories; think Roald Dahl, meets *The Mighty Boosh*, meets Brecht.

Some of the tasks Amy Hodge the Director gave me, included collecting details about Lamonic Bibber, the hometown of the characters and where the musical mainly takes place. Some of my favourite finds have included Squirrel Mcwirrel's Shop, which is run by a goldfish, the statue of Sir Henry Violin, the inventor of the saxophone, and Mr Gum's favourite TV show *Bag of Sticks* – which is just footage of a bag of sticks for half an hour. I was very pleased to find out this week in the production meeting that the plan is to have *Bag of Sticks* playing on some TV screens during the interval and I might be involved in the creation of this masterpiece.

The word 'anarchic' has been cropping up a lot this week to describe the world of Mr Gum. Amy uses a great example from book one in the series, that really highlights this:

'Polly ran past a dustbin filled with rubbish and then another one filled with rubbish and then another one filled with rubbish and then another one filled with princesses...'



Another surprising discovery was just how cleverly self-aware the books are. The script too has many Brechtian-like moments, that give the piece depth and charisma and more importantly, make the reader and audience feel like we're always 'in on it'. These core elements have been beautifully realised in the design of the piece and as we sit down to look at the model box on the first day, which fully incorporates the four-piece band into the story, there is a communal sense of excitement at getting to start building this mad world together.

We dive in headfirst this week, learning group songs and puppetry skills, doing character analysis and even getting to play around with the giant inflatable balloon in the docks, which will act as Jonathan Ripples' hot air balloon. It's quickly apparent how ensemble heavy this piece is, but also how beautifully collaborative and organic the process is already starting to feel. A particularly thrilling moment happens on Friday afternoon. Despite actor Richard Cant only having one session with his puppet Alan Taylor, and with the song barely learnt, Amy and Jimmy Grimes (our designer and director of puppets) get him and Keziah Joseph, who is playing Polly, to explore what it feels like to interact with one another. It initially looks like a significant challenge for them, since there is a lot of technical skill needed to operate the puppet and interaction between Polly and Alan Taylor feels slightly alien. However, they persist and begin to discover things that feel useful and interesting. Then, Amy shoves on some music, and something changes for both actors. They begin to let loose and suddenly it feels like the small plastic blob on the end of the stick is alive and playing with his best mate Polly. As they kart wheel and snow-angel in unison, I get a glimpse of how much heart and joy this piece is going to have.

## Rehearsal diary: week two

Our second week begins with a bang. We jump into a mega split-call day, working on the Mr Gum and Billy scenes in the morning with Steve Furst and Helena Lymbery, whilst the rest of the company learn complex hand-jive gestures for the 'Get a Big Balloon' song with Fleur Darkin, the choreographer. Whilst this is technically our first scene rehearsal, as the actors begin to work through the Mr Gum and Billy scenes with Amy in Act One, it's apparent how much the work from last week informs and invigorates their playing already. Prior to rehearsals Amy asked each actor to collect facts and questions about their characters from the script and books, which we then discussed as a group. An important observation made is how genuinely fearful Billy appears to be of Mr Gum and for a lot of these characters there are moments of real pain, fear, joy and rivalry in their own story arcs, within the books and the script. Andy Stanton remarks that this was his hope in the writing. On a meta-level, these characters are caricatures of a kid's story (the round man, the hero, the villain, etc), but on another these characters are rooted in their own truth, that the audience hopefully connect and relate to. Amy notes that there is mega-fun to be had in the playing of this, undercutting expectation when we least anticipate it.

With these thoughts in mind, we work through the first few scenes, monitoring events. We are struck by how useful it is if Mr Gum is really hurt when Polly kicks him and Billy out of the first musical number, as it allows the villains' vendetta against Polly and the town to be rooted in something real. We also reflect on the additional story Andy shared with us last week from a spin-off Mr Gum book, which is about how Billy and Mr Gum met in 'Billy William the Second's Palace of Spit'. In an Andy Stanton kind of logic, it demonstrates how much Billy relies on Mr Gum; Mr Gum is told he can have Billy by Billy's dad, and in realising Billy

doesn't know anything (having never left the spit shop), Mr Gum teaches him everything, and to this day Billy still believes screw drivers are called 'Matthew Robinson'. Helena begins to play with the extremity of both loving and fearing Mr Gum, whilst Steve finds the fun in not paying any attention to Billy and pushing the sense of unpredictability. It's both hilarious and slightly unnerving to watch, and there's a real feeling that these two characters are going to cause proper havoc...and it's going to be fun to watch them try.

The big movement numbers, 'Lamonic Bibber' and 'Get a Big Balloon', begin to take shape this week. I love watching choreographers work, particularly on a piece like this where the material feels very different to a typical musical. Fleur's process is right up my street, beginning with a fragment of an idea or an exercise which she then shapes and develops in the room with the group. The cast spend a morning working very carefully on body-shaping and sculpturing, which progresses into an exercise where they write their character name with their body, using a different point for each letter and imagining they're in a small, confined lift. We watch them back and they are brilliantly weird, watchable and funny moves, which Fleur then films and incorporates into the opening routine the next day. As they tackle more routines that week, including 'Help Yourself', where they're all dressed as giant snacks, Fleur remarks that if it's making you laugh putting it together, we're on the right lines, as this is all about playing in the garden of childhood. There has been a lot of laughing this week, particularly when we get the cardboard versions of the giant snack outfits in the room to play with and Richard gets to try out his extreme jumps and fancy footwork dressed as an enormous sausage.





## Rehearsal diary: week three

On Monday, we welcome back one of our actors who was off last week due to illness. With our full ensemble back, we begin learning another big song called 'The Docks.' This is a fast, fun, unapologetically musical-theatre number, which thrusts us into the next location of the story: The Docks! It also takes delight in the use of rhyme, with the group of sailors on stage turning to the audience after the first verse to tell us '...we wrote this song with a rhyming dictionary.' Unlike previous numbers, where Fleur created routines from a palette of moves made by the cast from improvisation and exercises, this one is a routine that she teaches from scratch. It is gesture-fantastic, closing with a satisfying, complex, one-gesture-per-word big finish. We note that this one will need drilling, but as we begin to revisit it throughout the week, the cast edge closer to landing the gestures together, and I see a glimmer of how satisfyingly big, complex and thrilling this number is going to be, when we get it to tempo!

We also look at the scene which follows The Docks, where Mr Gum gets Padlock to dance for money. We read through the scene before getting it on its feet and are struck by the potential for this scene to be quite dark, brutal and actually genuinely upsetting to watch. Also, as an ensemble we've all started to get an idea of who Padlock is, through the beautiful work Kate Malyon is doing in bringing 'Padders' to life. One of the actors reflects on this, and notes our responsibility in creating a show for younger audiences; is it right that we should feel like Mr Gum genuinely forces Padlock to dance? Amy agrees that's it's crucial we keep sight of who this piece is for, but notes how actually in her opinion it would be irresponsible if we didn't allow the corner to be turned, and the joy of the show allows us to go there. She observes how this scene embodies a core theme of the piece, which is that the way we treat 'the other', is not ok. Once we are on our feet, Steve experiments with different levels of violence towards Padlock, using his belt to whip the barrels to make him dance. Watching the scene within an Act One stagger, I reflect on Amy's thoughts and see exactly what she means; we jump from a high energy, hilarious dance number, into a more troubling scene, and then just as quickly return to another big joyful song. It's heartbreaking and gripping to watch. It reminds me of the scene in Dumbo, when his mum is whipped and put in chains after trying to keep the men away from her baby. As a kid, I remember feeling so outraged and angry by it, but still wanting to watch the film on repeat.

We revisit the first Alan Taylor scene this week with a new, improved puppet. Since we last looked at the scene Jimmy has adapted the Alan Taylor puppet so that it has a mechanism that allows Richard to move individual arms and the head, with greater detail. As we work through it, Richard notices that he can't help but



embody the expressions of the puppet himself, even though he is not the focus. Amy and Jimmy say that this is actually quite helpful, and whilst initially it was felt that they wanted to hide the puppeteer, now, it feels more interesting to declare his presence. Georgia Lowe, the costume and set designer, even suggests that Richard wears part of the costume in the scene, to celebrate this more. It's fascinating to watch the technicality required to breathe life into each puppet and how different the styles are between operating Padlock, a big life-sized bear and Alan Taylor, a purposefully naive, 30cm gingerbread man puppet. We finish the week with a stagger of Act One, which is very satisfying to do at this point in the process. We all begin to see a shape and more importantly a sense of the rhythm to the first half of the play. It moves at quite a speed! Amy reflects on this, saying that she's aware of the ambition of the piece, and whilst we likely have a hard few weeks ahead of us, she's confident we all have it in us to achieve something great.

# Rehearsal diary: week four

This week we were lucky enough to begin to rehearse with the enormous band-platforms, which will stand tall at the back of the set overlooking the Dorfman Theatre. This will be the main performance space for our four musicians. The integration of the musicians is a crucial part of Amy's vision for the piece and this is a company of players, rather than a pit band. We even have our brilliant Music Director, Tarek Merchant, playing keys, taking on the role of 'Sailor 2' and operating the puppet 'Wurpy', the hilariously miffed seagull. Amy's also been keen to find moments in the piece to have the actors playing up on the band-platforms and chances to bring the musicians down onto the stage. These ideas have been realised within the design of the set as well, by having ladders in front and behind the platforms.

Even more brilliantly this week, we have two days of rehearsal with the band themselves, beginning with a session with musician Nick Pynn and his fiddle, who opens 'The Docks' with a sickeningly cool virtuosic violin solo. This guy is good. Fleur encourages him to play as if physically conjuring the devil (or in this case Mr Gum) with his music, getting wildly into it and then scurrying away as soon as Mr Gum is paraded on stage by his side-kicks. Fleur and Amy continue to add character details to the members of this ensemble, which vary from opium-addiction for Richard Cant's 'Sailor', to a Melania and Donald Trump-vibe for Billy and Mr Gum. The opening of the number starts to become more angular and dark as we work through it and it feels like an important upping of stakes when Padlock is brought here to be sold!

The following afternoon we get to hear the whole band perform some of the numbers in situ. The sound world that they've found feels perfect in every way. I chat to Jim about it in the break and he tells me that the orchestration process of this has been heavily led by the musicians themselves, which is how he always intended it to be. They all play a variety of instruments (including a coco-lele, which is a coconut made into a ukulele) and from the sounds of things, the previous two band sessions were about jamming through the songs and trying out different combinations to find the right vibe and feel for each song. We hear the opening song 'Lamonic Bibber'. It's a wonderfully kooky arrangement, with a honky-tonk toy piano sound introducing us to the world and suddenly becoming heavy and wobbly with the arrival of Jonathan Ripples, the fattest man in town, side stepping into a quick country hoe-down and before ending with a big musical finish. I can't think of an opening to a musical like it. And the thing I love the most about it, is that it's still driven by the melody. Jim has a



talent for writing ear-worms, which allow the text to ping and sparkle and this feels so vital when remembering that this is the first time we meet these wonderfully odd individuals.

We finish the week with a visit from a group of school children, who we perform a few numbers and scenes to. Amy has been keen to incorporate this visit into the rehearsal process, to ensure that we don't lose sight of who we are making the show for. The majority of our guests are nine years-old, the same age as our protagonist, Polly. The group find the first scene particularly hilarious and I watch with delight at the moment they realise that Mr Gum and Billy are looking for beer and that they've just poured the last can away, in their nonsensical attempt to look for it. Fleur and Amy also use the session to try out a couple of dance moves that they potentially want kids to join in with. We try out a couple of options and it's a unanimous yes to the 'arm switcheroo routine', which I have to say, once you get it, feels as satisfying as learning to floss.

## Rehearsal diary: week five

The opening number has gone through quite a transformation this week. Over the weekend, Amy and Andy had the chance to reflect on the musical as a whole and decided they want to try a slightly different structure for the opening. Thankfully their edit doesn't mean the detailed, choreographed routines need to be changed, just the way in which the sequences play out. This version is a significant improvement, allowing each character to be clearly introduced to us, before the first part of the plot takes place, when Jonathan Ripples announces he wants to leave the town. We also get to play with the CO2 canister, which Polly uses to inflate the balloon on Jonathan Ripples' head, right in the middle of the song. This needs to happen within eight seconds in order to fit the musical structure. Eleanor Smith from props and the stage management team have cleverly worked out how to do this perfectly, filling up the canister with exactly the right amount to fill the balloon, so that Keziah will never over-inflate and pop the balloon. The canister is also encased with a rubber sleeve and is made wearable with a strap, as apparently if this thing drops it'll shoot off like a rocket. We run it in the sequence, and it is so delightfully satisfying that it gets its own applause from everyone.

Amy also asks Helena and Steve to try gate crashing the opening song with more punk and gusto, and suddenly all these new elements combined transform the opening. It's no longer just impressively complex, quirky and funny, it now begins to clearly hit the important plot turns, within the musical number.

We also spend time rehearsing with the automated-plank, which Amy wants to move in different configurations during Polly's nightmare and 'Saddest Song in the Show.' Because of the complexities of the programming and the time restraints, we make a head start by videoing Amy moving the mini-plank from the model-box to the music, noting where and how



she wants the plank to change, to send over to the programming team. This allows David to programme a pattern which we look at in the Dorfman mid-week. Keziah and Kate then practice sitting and standing on the plank, in order for Amy to get a sense of what is possible. The different undulations the plank can do are subtle, but really quite effective, and enable Amy to create a draft routine which satisfyingly mirrors the climatic build of the music. The ambition of this show is as big as the giant inflatable ball hanging over us in rehearsal, and it's something Amy has owned and been excited by from the start. Everyone knows what this show can be and are working tirelessly to get there. We have multiple break-out sessions this week in order to make time for things like the plank automation and it's a real lesson in scheduling, ensuring you're finding time to attend to details with the actors, whilst also keeping a firm grip on the overall picture.

A second group of kids visit us mid-week. They are aged 10 to 11 and more reserved than last week's group. This time however, Amy asks the actors to speak to them in groups of four, so that they can get more personal feedback and thoughts from the group. Despite their quietness, the group I chat to tell me how cruel and wrong it is that Mr Gum whips Padlock to make him dance and love that Polly comes to save him. I love that from all the scenes we show them, that's the moment they want to talk to me about. We finish the week with our first full run-through. We have to pause on a couple of occasions to bring in the make shift trap and the suspended inflatable ball to rehearse the balloon flying sequence, but despite this, the company rise to the challenge and the heart and hilarity shines through.



## Rehearsal diary: week six

This week we continue to integrate more technical elements into the rehearsal room, including the giant balloon that inflates and deflates on stage at the end of the show. The challenge of accomplishing this onstage, without disturbing the narrative, has been on our radar since day one. There have been a couple of occasions this week when the actors haven't been in the room, so Amy had the brilliant idea of writing our two wonderful assistant stage managers, Eve Kerr and Lyndon Baines, into the moment.

Our stage management team have incredibly busy tracks for this show and during scene runs they have naturally been running on to help with scene changes and quick prop hand overs. What's been interesting to discover is that because of the self-aware nature of the show, just as the piece allows us to acknowledge the theatre and stage set through the words, it also allows us to fully embrace our stage management team. Rather than hiding them away, week by week, we've been playing with how much we not only see them onstage moving props, but also how much we openly acknowledge them and write them into the show. We've in fact ended up with a catch phrase from Mr Gum for the brilliant Lyndon, for moments when he needs something as part of his narrative journey: 'sort it out, Lyndon.' One of the most bonkers moments is when Helena has to do a quick change into Billy (she also plays Captain Brazil) and appears onstage bone dry, after having supposedly jumped into the water. Mr Gum shouts 'Sort it out Lyndon, I can't stand continuity errors', which cues Lyndon to walk on with a bucket of water, pour it over her head and disappear. It really works and helps to solve a number of issues without interrupting the flow of the plot.

Amy speaks to Andy about a similar rewrite for the balloon inflation/deflation, but this time introducing Eve onto stage too, since the balloon preparation is certainly a two person job! This works beautifully, because plot wise, it is the moment Polly is rescued by her friends, who declare that the light of friendship binds us altogether and then turn to the audience to 'beam broadly in radiant light'. Andy and Amy echo this with Eve and Lyndon, as another example of the light of friendship. We try it in our final rehearsal room run and it gets a big laugh, whilst again solving a tricky technical corner.

We end the week strangely, with our first tech on Saturday night. It blows my mind the first moment I walk into the theatre to see the tiny model box set at full scale, and for this show it feels particularly exciting as there's so much stage space! I've not seen the Dorfman in this configuration in thrust, and where the band platforms are pretty much on the same level as the first balcony level. Perhaps the most exciting thing to see in the space is the Lamonic Bibber sign and the different colours it can flash; it sounds a small thing, but as Amy and Lee Curran, our lighting designer, plot through the opening number, it transforms the space; we are definitely making a musical! As the cast step on stage, it becomes unbearably exciting. It's as if the sketches of the characters have stepped out of the books and onto the stage. Still a way to go yet, but there's definitely something a bit special happening in this theatre, that will be crying out for an audience in about a week's time.



## Rehearsal diary: week seven

This week we all fall into the exciting but daunting vortex of tech and first previews. I've never been involved in a musical of this scale or a production that's felt so collaborative. We work at quite a pace, trying desperately not to get hung up on anything too much. For instance, Lee graciously accepts that he won't be able to finish all of his plotting for the big musical numbers by the time of the dress rehearsal, and takes one for the team by putting in rough states to allow us all to keep pushing forward. Similarly, Caz (Carolyn Downing) our sound designer, is able to sound-check almost all the numbers fully apart from the last few, which we need to give over to working out the balloon inflation and deflation with our cast and stage crew, in addition to the final umbrella drop. This is a very busy show, with dressers and stage crew barely stopping when the show begins, but we always knew this would be the case from day one in the rehearsal room.

However, the level of trust between everyone in the room and respect for their roles, allows us to keep pushing towards the same goal and amazingly get to the end of the show, ready for the dress rehearsal on Thursday. Even though some scenes are rougher than others, it feels psychologically important more than anything else to get to the end, before we invite an audience in. The day before, Amy makes sure that she checks in with the full company, including the cast, to explain that whilst we know this has been a challenging tech for all of us, and some parts feel more technically ready than others, it still feels important to invite an audience in tomorrow.

The dress is shaky but we get there. After a dinner break it's soon time to get back into costume and prepare for preview one. This time the audience fill the downstairs area right up close to the action. This immediately breathes more life into the space and preview one kicks off with a bit more of a buzz. There is a show stop when the inflation of the balloon stops behaving. While stage management beautifully handle this on-stage, Gary Wilmot kicks into action and begins entertaining the audience with his 'al-right/ok game', and even an extract from Romeo and Juliet, when he spots a very enthusiastic young girl sat in the balcony who happens to be called Juliet...the thing that makes my heart swell is when I also spot Alan Taylor and Padlock interacting with some little ones in the front row. Kate Malyon tells me afterwards that a little boy asked Padlock if he's excited to go home to the Kingdom of the Beasts, reminding us that despite technical things taking place on stage, this amazing little boy's imagination was still totally in the story.

After the first preview, Amy reflects on the work and takes notes from the building, which she then discusses



with the full production team, before making a careful plan of how to implement changes with everyone, within a restricted amount of time. Brilliantly, she decides to feed in rewrites chronologically, deciding only to introduce them into a preview if we've had time to work them. We are then told that Monday's preview is cancelled in order for us to be able to finish doing a full and proper tech, which is an enormous relief to everyone and again shows that all stake holders believe in what this show can be and are willing to all pitch in to help us get it there.

# Theatre glossary

## **Meet and greet**

Usually held on the first day of rehearsals, the meet and greet is a chance for the company and production team to meet everyone who is involved in the production as well as staff from marketing, learning, fundraising, etc. The director – and sometimes the writer – may take this opportunity to explain a bit about their vision for the production.

## **Round the table / table work**

Some directors like to start rehearsals by reading through the script, and getting an understanding of the play, characters and setting without adding movement or blocking.

## **Blocking**

Working out where actors should stand or move on stage, and at what point.

## **Put on its feet**

The point in rehearsals where the company start to add in blocking and try out movement for scenes. Some directors like to put a play 'on its feet' from the very start, and work out the intention of the play and the characters at the same time as the movement.

## **A run**

Rehearsing each scene of the play in chronological order, without interruption. Runs help directors and actors to see which parts of the production may need more attention or reworking. The first run-through of a play is often referred to as a 'stagger-through', as there are usually delays and mistakes.

## **Off book**

Once an actor has learnt their part, they no longer need to use their script in rehearsals and are described as being 'off book'.

## **The book**

This is another name for the script. A stage manager who is 'on the book' will be in the wings of the stage, ready to help any actor who may have forgotten a line – they are also known as the 'prompt'.

## **Act**

The separation of a play into different sections, which in turn are sometimes sub-divided into scenes.

## **The space**

The area in which the work is taking place. This term can refer to both the rehearsal room and the theatre stage.

## **Staff director**

The National Theatre uses staff directors rather than assistant directors. Staff directors have a variety of jobs, depending on the production and the director they are working with. They can help with background research

for rehearsals, lead improvisations and act as a liaison on behalf of the director. Once a production has had its press night, the director steps away from the production and the staff director takes over. The staff director rehearses the company at 'bring back calls' and also rehearses the understudies.

## **Bring back call**

The National Theatre operates a 'rep' system, meaning that a production will not be playing every day and a company may have a break every other week or so. A bring back call is a short rehearsal on the day when the company return from having a break. The staff director normally holds a line run with the company, and rehearses in more detail complicated scenes, movement sequences or fights.

## **Rehearsal call**

The stage manager will work out a day-by-day rehearsal schedule for a production, in consultation with the director. The rehearsal call sets out the scenes that are being worked on that day, and the actors or production team who are needed, and when.

## **Ensemble**

A company of actors or performers where the emphasis is on collaborative group work.

## **Company**

The cast, production team and other staff associated with the show.

## **Understudy**

An actor who learns the role of another member of the company so that they can perform that part in the event of injury, illness or scheduled absence.

## **Actioning / intentions**

A way of approaching a text, which some actors and directors like to use. Each line is assigned a transitive verb, which may help the actor to explore ways of delivering that line and uncover the meaning behind what their character is saying or trying to achieve.

## **Stanislavskian**

Relating to Constantin Stanislavski, a Russian theatre practitioner usually associated with method acting.

## **Beckettian**

Relating to playwright Samuel Beckett, whose work is associated with minimalism.

## **Alexander technique**

A system designed to promote healthy movement and posture. Named after its creator Frederick Matthias Alexander.



# Theatre glossary (continued)

**Upstage**

The area at the back of the stage furthest from the audience.

**Downstage**

The area at the front of the stage closest to the audience.

**Improvisation**

Action taken by an actor(s) that is unprepared or unrehearsed. During the rehearsal process this is often led by suggestions from the director for the purposes of exploration and discovery. During performance improvisation is often used by actors to cover a mistake or accident on stage.

**Beat**

In the script a playwright may use the term 'beat' to denote a pause or a shift in pace or intention in the play. In rehearsal, the term is often used to describe a particular moment or event on stage. It can also be used to describe a unit of time.

**Line run**

The company say their lines without adding movements. Line runs help actors to feel confident that they know their words before going on stage. Sometimes line runs are done at speed, which can really test how well actors know their roles.

**Model box**

A scale model of the set, used by the director and designer to work out how each scene could look. For the acting company, model boxes help them to visualise where they will be standing on stage and the world their character is living in. Carpenters, production managers, scenic artists and prop-makers will also study the model box, to get an idea of textures and finish on the set, as well as the overall look. Model boxes can also help to flag any issues with elements of staging before they are made.

**Fit up**

The set is assembled on the stage.

**Get in**

The set, props and costumes are brought to the stage, ready for technical rehearsals.

**Technical run (sometimes referred to as the 'tech')**

Running through the play setting all technical cues, including lighting, sound, set changes and automation. This is an opportunity to practice scene changes, characters' entrances and exits, costume changes, and for actors to get used to being on the set.

**Dress run / dress rehearsal / the 'dress'**

A dress rehearsal is a chance to pull together all elements of a production, including sound, lighting and costume, and work through the play as though it is a performance.

**Previews**

Before a production has its press night, it normally has a couple of preview performances. Productions can still change right up to press night, and it is during previews that the company and director get to see how audiences respond to the production, and they may rework sections accordingly.

**Press night**

The night the critics see the production before reviewing it.