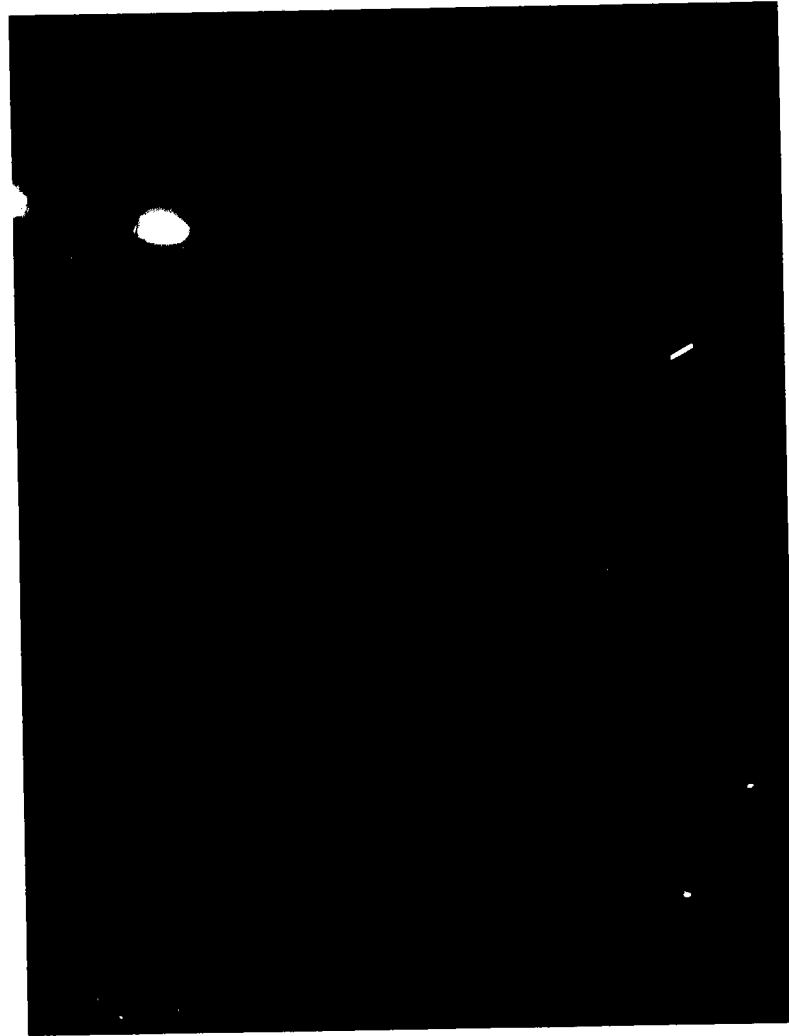


# **THEATRE!**

**-In London**



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English 252  
Professor Russell Peck

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## Fix Up

Kwame Kwei-Armah's Fix Up combines a blend of strong characters and symbolic action to produce a powerful look at races' place in our society. Fix Up touches on a wide variety of themes; forgiveness, the deep meaning of love in relationships, walls both physical and mental between us and the outside world and meanings of a life fulfilled. An interesting stage set-up had important effects on both the characters and the audience. Though the production had a very small cast and was set in a very small space, I was powerfully moved by the intensity and message of the presentation.

This production is a presentation about lives fulfilled. The desire for fulfillment is seen as both selfish and a gesture of humility. Each character was bathed in a complete sense of hopelessness and loss, and therefore, <sup>were</sup> ~~were~~ searching to fill that empty part of themselves; Alice in search of her birth father, Brother Kiyi in search for redemption and peace, Kwesi's search for wealth and power, Norma's search for meaning in an empty relationship, and Carl's search for forgiveness. This empty part of each character drives an intense and selfish need to get what they think is best for themselves.

*well past*  
Set in an African American neighborhood, Brother Kiyi's bookstore is the entire set for the production, in a sense, a very closed set. On set, there are only 3 passages to the outside world; a door to the street, a door leading to an upstairs apartment rented by Kwesi and a door in the floor that perhaps leads to a basement area. These doors are extremely important parts to the production as they symbolize the very heart of Brother Kiyi. Kiyi is at the center; in his shop surrounded by priceless books filled with the history of his past. Kwesi is above him, and through his door, brings the darkness of militant radicalized thinking and Kiyi's eventual demise. Alice is outside of Kiyi, and comes inside to bring him her troubles, her issues of abandonment,

*are these all  
two passages  
to the  
world?*

and lack of fulfillment throughout many fatherless years. I visualized an actual human heart, pumping new blood in and old blood out. Fix Up is very much centered around the human heart, both hypothetically and actually. When Brother Kiyi's wife's heart stopped beating, stopped bring in the new and flushing out the old, Brother Kiyi's heart never beat the same again. Instead, Kiyi set up a new surrounding and shut himself inside, letting the new still be brought in and the old flushed out, but allowing it to happen outside himself, instead of inside, when the heart belongs.

The last theme that I think Fix Up really thrusts into the minds of the audience is the idea of 'walls'. There are the obvious walls, part of the physical set, adorned with books and shelves. And then there are the other walls, the walls that prevent communication between the characters, between the characters and themselves. A wall represents a separateness from one thing or idea and another thing or idea. Here, walls are placed between many of each: between Brother Kiyi's shop and the worlds of Alice, Norma, and Kwesi. Kiyi separates himself from all of these places, things and ideas. Yet, the wall between the audience and Brother Kiyi's bookshop does not exist. We as audience members are allowed to see inside, allowed to view parts of each character that others are not allowed to see. In this way, the set plays a large part in symbolizing the ability for the characters to communicate to the audience what they could not to each other. Fix Up represents a world planted firmly on the selfish desire for fulfillment at any cost and the consequence of that world's destruction.

## The History Boys

Alan Bennett's The History Boys is a coming of age story that hits home several different elements of life: sexuality, prestige, fulfillment and a variety of social and culturally constructed characteristics of adulthood. More than the magnificently designed set pieces, or the bar-none spectacular performance of Frances De La Tour as Totty, I was most impressed with the message of the production. Even the word 'history' reeks with powerful connotation, age old theory and idea. In our short discussion of The History Boys, we talked about History as a variety of different ideas, as allusion, as a cheat sheet, as a testimony, and as an examination. I want to think of history in relation to The History Boys in context of the following ideas: History as a warning system, and History as nothing more than misfortune

"History is a vast early warning system."<sup>1</sup> In The History Boys, 8 young men set out on a path towards an eventual Oxbridge examination and the start of the rest of their lives. Through this journey that travels through homosexual crushes, sexual perversion, and death, there is an unavoidable quality to each event that took place. The audience was able to view the events in only a snapshot of their lives instead of at the start of an event and then following it to an ending. We the audience understood that there was a reason each boy tried to get out of riding with Hector on his motorbike, but we don't know when Hector first began his behavior. Because of this, the fondling that happens on the motorbike is portrayed as something usual, something that is unavoidable. We understand that Posner has a crush on Dakin, yet do not know when Posner's behavior began to indicate homosexual feelings and therefore it seems to us that Posner is and has forever been homosexual. Hector feels like his life as wasted away and at one point, breaks down in anger and frustration in front of the boys. Totty is able to give her small speech about women's small and unfortunate place in history when she is quizzing the boys. There is certainly

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.quoteland.com> Norman Cousins

a twinge of regret, remorse and pain in her voice. There is also a certain silent understanding that each teacher wants something to become of these boys because the teachers themselves know what happens to a life unfulfilled. I saw the relationships that the boys had with the teachers, especially Hector, to be one of learning from the mistakes of the past. Hector and Totty served as constant reminders to the boys that if they were not successful in their exams, they may turn out wasting their lives away teaching young people useless information.

“Indeed, history is nothing than misfortune.”<sup>2</sup> History as nothing more than misfortune seems to be one of the most pressing themes of History Boys. As I was watching the performance, I was struck by the sensation that what I was watching was, in fact, becoming a part of history, and that one day I would have to write about it. Moving through present time creates the past and with the past comes history. More often than not, I’m inclined to recall the terrible things that have happened more quickly than I will the better things. It seemed to me that throughout History Boys, the plot seemed to move from one problem to another, one misfortunate person to the next. I thought that the most interesting part of all the misfortune that befell the characters was the interplay that each problem had within the relationships the characters had with each other. Posner’s sexual identity crisis is unfortunate because the man of his dreams doesn’t share his love but is more terrible because that person has abundant love for others. The interplay between Posner and Dakin is alike to Hector and Irwin; both don’t really appreciate the other but have to put up the other’s presence because of outside circumstances. Posner never got Dakin, and Irwin, who later on lost the use of his legs, never really got a leg up in life, no pun intended. I really thought<sup>t</sup> that it was fitting that both Posner and Irwin, in the end, were forlorn for the past, for history.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.quotationspage.com> Voltaire

## Journey's End

This production of a single bunker in WWII was brilliantly staged and emotionally stirring. I was most interested in how the title, Journey's End, fit perfectly to the performance. I was also interested in how, for the first time on the trip, I felt that the set was an actual character on the play. I also think Journey's End touched many hearts in the audience as the world that many of us know is fighting a war with no foreseeable end. The 'end' of the any journey is the epitome of the journey itself. The end of a journey gathers all the small experiences and moments into one large piece that can be learned from and will become a part of history. The end of Journey's End certainly made a call for honor and pride, loss and memorial, but also left the audience stunning visual feat that cemented the end of that particular journey and opened the doors for the next to begin.

The plot setting for Journey's End was a small bunker in WWII where Captains and officer sate their meals, met for discussion and bedded down the nights. The play continued through the life of Captain Stanhope, a man driven to the edge of sanity by the war. Throughout most of the first act, the characters and the background of characters were set into place by some amazingly slow moving dialog. The second act, however, was fast paced and moved quickly into action scenes above the bunker. During the first act, I was a bit bored by the lack of intensity but later realized that this was the entire point of the set. The set drove me to boredom, and had I been forced to eat, live, and sleep there, I would have been driven to the edge of my wits, just as Captain Stanhope had been. Another part of the set that intrigued me <sup>was</sup> were the entrances and exits. The main entrance and exit was the set of stairs that apparently led to the battle fields where the remainder of the troops were living. The other parts of the bunker were side rooms for the staff and for other staff officers to sleep. I thought that the idea of having the bunker be



underground or beneath the ground level was extremely brilliant as it utilized a set of stairs. Most often, stairs are stationary pieces on which a person can transport themselves up or down, depending on the location of their destination. I connected the bunker with safety, and home, while the upper part of the stairs I connected with unfamiliar territory and danger. The question for me was why leave the safety of home and move upwards towards danger willingly. This question was also addressed in the performance when Captain Hardy refused to go up on his scheduled watch. The answer that Captain Stanhope gave to Hardy was that it was not only his duty, but that it was his end, his journey's end to go up, side by side with him and conquer the enemy. The stairs on the set actually moved the characters to their own journey's end, moving from the safety of home to almost certain death, and yet they went because it was their end, their epitome for all the suffering and hardship endured until that point.

Journey's End also gave a brilliant curtain call while forcing the audience to listen to resounding noise of war. For a very long few minutes, there were no symbols, no visual effects, only sound. Looking around at that moment, many of the audience members seemed lost in thought, offering up a few thoughts and prayers for loved ones they lost in wars before, or who are fighting in the wars today. As the curtain rose to unveil a list of names with silent statuesque soldiers standing in front, there was now a visual memorial-like image to associate with an ending to a journey. Not only was this performance about life and death, the toils of war and hero's that are made in it, it was also a powerful reminder that each of us walk our own journey and that someday, somehow it will all come to an end. I thought that the message of the production was not so much the journey, or the ending, but of the quality of every single moment inbetween. Those are the moments that make the journeys' end and Journey's End so worthwhile.

### By the Bog of Cats

By the Bog of Cats touched on many issues that I have very strong personal feelings about. Thematically, abandonment, the desire for love, the rejection by the world and an overall unfulfillment and dissatisfaction with life are all central to the plot and characterization of Hester Swain. The main two themes that I thought were fantastically portrayed were a mothers' love and a strong contrast of a life unfulfilled. Both elements were represented in many characters and also other performances that we were able to see on this trip. Alice from Fix Up plays a strong double of Hester, and the relationship that we view between Hester and her brother is much alike to the relationship we view between siblings in Festen.

These relationships all play a large part in the dramatization of a lost mothers' love. The levels of desperation that Hester Swain feels are mostly due to the abandonment of herself by her mother long ago. Coupled with the knowledge that her mother had a double life with another family, Hester feels worthless, rejected, and shamelessly alone. Psychologically, this performance is an exploration of the human mind wherein the mind is tortured by situations and life experiences that the body cannot help. I think By the Bog of Cats portrays a mothers' love as being one the central components of a woman's soul. Hester longs for her mother, as her daughter Josie longs for Hester. Caroline Cassidy longs for womanly love, as we see her warming up to and understanding the plight of Hester late in the second act. The only real mother-child relationship that the audience is able to view is Carthage's relationship with his mother, a witless fool. Carthage's mother is portrayed as something of an idiot, ranting and raving about how much money she saves and how lovely her glittering shoes are. She does not so much care about her son as about her own wealth and personal abilities to save it. This stands in stark contrast to Hester's mental description of her own mother, retelling stories of her singing

with the voice of a goddess around the bog. There is a certainty within Hester that knows that her mother will come for her, even when everyone else knows for certain that it will never happen. The slow realization that Hester faces when she must understand that her mother will never return is psychologically disturbing. Yet, it is Hester's end to a very long and fruitless journey, and for her character, there is no other way out.

I thought that Alice from Fix Up and Hester Swain were similar in many ways, more than even Hester to her own daughter Josie. Alice, also abandoned at birth, continues her quest for her mother, and eventually her father as well. She too is on the journey of fulfillment through finding her parents and just as Hester comes to realize, there is no mother waiting for her at the end of her journey. There is nothing left for Alice but a broken old man, a shadow of the father he once was. Likewise, there is nothing left for Hester, nothing more than a little girl who is a constant reminder of a lost mother's love and a man who betrayed her. For these two women, love and a mother's love was the dream that fulfilled their lives. Without it, one went mad, committed murder then suicide, while the other was left no better than before, lost and alone. Their lives remained unfulfilled, their pasts left to haunt them forever.

I thought that the set, along with the powerful stage presence of Holly Hunter, really propelled the show forward through the plot. The empty stage, smeared with the blood of the dead was ominous right from the start. The wagon, empty, seemingly and then actually haunted, acted as a memorial and shrine for Hester's mother, as well as a constant symbol of hope for her eventual return. I was most impressed by the dinner scene, with an entire long table pushed to the hilt of the stage. The table was not long enough for the ends to reach backstage, and left about 2 or 3 feet beyond the ends to the backstage areas. These areas left for the exits and entrances of characters, people within the house, people outside the house, all moving within the one set, into

the dinning area. A similar scene in Festen portrayed a large dinner party, but the space to the ends was a bit farther but the area directly behind the table and characters was both visible and usable for direction. Keeping the back area closed off and the side areas open, the room was almost freely open and it seemed anyone, including a very intoxicated and very scantily dressed Hester was able to waltz in unannounced. Unlike By the Bog of Cats, the scene in Festen was most closed, felt more intimate and shut off, and left for little other character interplay between rooms. I think this is significant because of the nature and theme of By the Bog of Cats. The isolation that Hester feels bleeds like an open wound to all those within her community and family. Although Hester may wish to be completely closed off, there is no place where someone cannot get to her, or she cannot get to someone else. The lack of personal area, even the bog which Carthage threatens to take from her is not hers' alone. Eventually, there is nothing left of Hester Swain. She murders her own child in selfish desire and then murders herself. The bog is <sup>the</sup> only lasting reminder, the only place that Hester ever really wanted, that even in death, Hester is not alone, and will never have her peace or fulfillment she so earnestly desired.

Sc 1

Excellent discussion.  
1. Who is really more isolated?  
1. The writer parallels  
between situations in  
By the Bog of Cats and Scandal  
at the end.

## Sleeping Beauty

The Young Vic performance of Sleeping Beauty was a rare treat, enjoyed at the ripe age of 22 years that I am. A fairy tale such as this is never too often repeated or too often produced. I was very impressed by the elaborate stage pieces that the theater had for this performance, as well as the directors' use of every conceivable inch of the stage itself. The fairy tale was retold and changed, though the changes were only to replay a second version of the story to make the ending twice as happy. This production boasted one of the best stage set ups that I saw on this trip, as well as some of the best acting and most profoundly hilarious themes.

Most impressive to me was the elaborate stage piece that revolved and opened and elevated and lifted characters above and below the stage itself. The circular movements of the stage created a time-warp like continual where fairy goody could walk around it and be somewhere completely different, in another place or another time. The circular staging also had a great effect on the actual spinning of the fairy tale. It was a most convincing way to move 800 years forward in time and yet it didn't seem like a stretch to believe it.

This story of Sleeping Beauty hinges upon the ability for a man to physically overcome obstacles in order to kiss the sleeping princess and free her from a life of eternal sleep. Coincidentally, the man in the story is the spawn of an evil ogress, who is actually a man, playing the role of a woman. This ogress wishes to consume humans, even her own child, and then her child's children. The consummation links the ogress to the other mother-figures that we've seen in Festen, By the Bog of Cats, and His Dark Materials. The role of the mother is one of constant love, and yet each of these mother-figures for one reason or another, desire to consume their children. The interesting similarity between the consumption of a child and the desire to return the child to the mothers' womb plays a large part in this performance. The lack

of desire on the parents behalf to see their children grow up or come of age is at the center of their desires to consume them. A child is formed in this world through living in the mother's body and then, when the time is fated, the child must exit the body by one means or another, or else the mother will perish with the child. I saw the Ogress representing and fulfilling this need to put her child back into the womb, thus negating the foolish action her son of leaving her, marrying a human and bearing children of his own.

There is a symbolic theme underlying the mothers within the children as well. The children, Lyra, Christian, Hester, and the Ogress' son all must face their mothers in a 'final battle' and win the day by finally freeing themselves from their mother's tyrannical rule. The idea of a mother being the sole provider of love and nurturing, and yet being this presence of desire, malevolence, and evil sets the stage, so to speak, for the moment of epiphany on the part of the children. That idea that a mother figure can be both love and hate, desire and repulsion plays on the idea of performance as tragedy. It is, of course, very tragic to see one's own mother in plain light, without the heroic idolization that children have. This movement that an audience can see develop in a character from scared child to fearless adult is a common storyline, as we have seen in many 'coming of age' or 'growing up' stories.

Sleeping Beauty categorized different themes from many of the plays that we saw, but in a way that was highly entertaining and comical. There was a lightness to the story, which is a very sad and tragic story, which made the formidable themes seem like less of a burden for the audience to bear.

## Festen

Festen was a brilliantly written play with powerful messages on some extremely taboo subjects. The raping of children is terrible, but when the raping of children is within your own family, father to son and daughter no less, the crime is ghastly and unforgivable. Festen exposed the psychological madness that stems from abuse, along with the breaking down of a family unit that was once strong and unified. In a sense, the characters were completely dominated by their roles within the family structure. The interplay between Michael and Christian made for an interestingly fraternal, exclusive bond that Michael desired while Christian did not. The two brothers undergo a character change throughout the play, and in the end, sort of become the other, without effort. The last part of the play that I thought was interesting were the various speeches that kept happening throughout the performance. Although Christians' first speech was the most revealing, as each other speech happened, the audience grew more and more aware of just how entrenched the family mindset was to ignore Christian's pain. These speeches of heroism reminded me of classical Homeric literature, where great men stood up in the midst of their brothers and enemies to made grand speeches about themselves and through their words, won their honor. If there is a hero in this performance, it is Christian and in the end, I think he won his honor.

Psychologically, Festen was fantastic. The sound effects of water while a child laughs and plays was hauntingly effective. The game of "getting hotter, getting colder" was also chilling to watch, as the sister looked as if she was following some unseen ghost around the room and finally resting on a note left by her dead sibling. What struck me most was the dead-set look on Christian's face. His anguish never changed, not even after he told his family, not after his family beat him, not after his family found out the truth. Here was a man, psychologically wasted

and completely worn down by his past and the recent suicide of his twin sister. The ramifications ✓ of the abuse linger around Christian like a bad aura.

Christian and his family are gathered in a large family house, for his father's birthday. All events that take place within the performance happen in the house, in a single day, in a single family. The celebration that is supposed to take place hits a bump in the road when Christian stands up to toast his father and instead regales the family with the tale of his past sexual abuses from his father. This completely functional family is suddenly thrown into a frenzy and yet, even the chef is the first to acknowledge that if Christian does not stay the night, there will be no change and the family will continue on as usual. The similarity that I mentioned earlier between Christian and a Homeric hero continue as the Homeric hero's speech was worthless unless both his friends and enemies were listening. There is no Homeric honor in dying bravely if no one is there to hear your last words. Christian chooses to gather his family together as his friends and his enemies, and bravely speaks his mind and heart. Even after being physically tied up and abused by his family, Christian is relentless, and continues to make speech after speech about his father's lies and sexual perversions.

I don't believe that Christian acted out of selfless interest. I think his uncovering of the truth was a purely selfishly motivated move, designed to hurt his father on the one day he was able to do it. I think unknowingly, Christian needed this confrontation in order to begin to heal, ✓ begin to move forward and begin to forgive. His brother Michael, a shamelessly hot-tempered young man was, throughout the play, increasingly violent towards Christian, completely unbelieving, and obscenely racist and prejudice<sup>d</sup> towards his sisters black boyfriend. After the truth comes out, Michael is changed. He changes his focus from being mad at the world and his family to protecting it from the real monster of his father. Sadly, there is no recovery for



Christian, and the many others who have suffered abuse in their lives. No speech, no letter from a dead sister, no celebrations can recover the time they've lost to monster's like Christians' father. We can only hope and pray that eventually, truth will prevail and life can be breathed once again.

comment on the role of the  
servants in the household -  
those lower regions where  
Christians spent so much of his  
time. How do they matter?

## His Dark Materials I and II

There are almost no words to describe this amazing performance. This was a visual dream come true, a once-in-a-lifetime chance to see theater in top form. Because there are so many topics and themes to write about, I'm going to only write a short bit on many I thought were important, instead of a bit more on others and leaving some out.

First, Lyra's character was the basis for every other event in the performance and because her character was so strong, she was able to hold all the pieces together. Lyra represents the child and childhood characteristic that stands in such blatant contrast of almost all the other characters, Lord Asrial, Mrs. Coulter, the Church members, and many more. In this play, good and evil are not as important as fate and destiny. I enjoyed Lyra immensely because she represented to me the child within, that part of ourselves that never wants to grow up and take responsibility for ourselves.

In contrast to Lyra most obviously was Mrs. Coulter. Mrs. Coulter represented the vixen, long dark hair, seductively appealing and of course, selfish to the core. She wants only for herself, and it is because of this that she will never be able to have Lyra. I remember thinking that it was very fitting that although daemons could change when their human counterparts were children, they took one shape and form when they became adults. Mrs. Coulter, along with being a seductive vixen, also happened to be Lyra's mother. Although we have seen many mothers and mother figures discussed in different performances on our trip, Mrs. Coulter brings about a new kind of thematical mother-figure. It was she who deposited her child, willingly. We see a reverse Alice from Fix Up, in that Alice is Lyra, but instead of a dead mother, Lyra finds a tyrannical witch.

she seems eager  
for responsibility  
meaningful action  
press forward  
her effort and  
wisdom, out  
order to remain  
peril.

The daemons' were executed wonderfully. The idea that a soul can remain outside of a human body plays a large part in thinking about His Dark Materials as a play about separation. The famous line of, "I spread my wings and brush a million different worlds" cuts at the heart of the entire production. The allowance to spread wings and fly symbolizes an array of different themes presented in the performance, such as growing up, leaving things and people behind to find your own destiny, and trusting yourself to make decisions that can shape the path of your future. But the most powerful theme of the production was certainly the aspect of fate and destiny through separation. For example, just as Lyra must find her way in the dark realm without her daemon, she also has to make her way through her own world without Will. Lyra was also alone, without a mother and father, throughout her entire youth. It is the point where her parents try to complete her life that she finally understands that she is able to find her own way, and, in a sense, she was complete from the start.

I also found this production to be extremely circular, not only with time, but space as well. With stages rising in and out of stages, worlds being presented on top of other worlds, space was obviously an important concept for both the actors and directors. The circular stage if the Olivier theatre held within it 2 other circular stages that had the ability to hold different scenes, while rising above the original stage floor. The most constant movement of the actors was a pacing around in circles, while the scenery behind them changed, allowing them to change to a different time and space. The circular nature of the staging also interplayed with the circular nature of the play. At the beginning of the play, Lyra is a child, alone in the world without a clue as to where to go next. In the end, Lyra is again alone, but her destiny as Eve has been fulfilled. She now has to live alone in a world without her true love, with the knowledge that he lives on, walking his own path, without her.

## The Mandate

The Mandate was enjoyable performance and yet, in many ways, a very serious production about a very serious subject. The humor, acted out in theatrical gags and overdone projections, acted as a distraction for the serious political nature of the performance. Distraction, used only as a way to move attention quickly from one character to another, was used within the play to allow the characters to change between the rebellious people they were to the communists they were supposed to be.

The Mandate certainly shared the theme of history as a the present. The moments that the family was living was history 'in the making'. The overthrow of the Russian Czar and the acceptance of the Communist government was a crucial piece of history for the entire world. The spread of Communism touched even our own shores, prompting our own history books to declare an entire period 'the red scare'. I thought that the purpose of The Mandate was three-fold: First to illuminate the intense revolutionary efforts made, even by the least of families, against Communism, second, to identify History as both past and present and finally, as a performance that uses humor to cloak serious politics in a way that the audience can identify both.

I thought about the comical humor of The Mandate as a distraction. The distraction works as a wall between three versions of reality, the audience, the communists and the revolutionaries. The play is set up in such a way as to understand the different realities, as even the actors, acting in character set the stage before each act and then act surprised to see the audience in the theater. The actors then act through a series of misjudgments, mistakes and comical errors that eventually mislead even each other. This conversion of each realities upon each other was confusing, and

perhaps was that way to distract the audience from completely understanding the message of the plot.

Along with the three-fold historical elements of the play, I also thought that the importance of mistake and misjudgment played a crucial role in the reflection of the performance as a whole. The play hinges on the mistakes that each character succeeds in making, and then succeeds in misjudging. The program for The Mandate gives the best example of this by saying:

“Words, whether purposefully fallacious or merely erroneously understood, exert an ominous effect on their lives. Some characters, perhaps like some of us in our age, simply have begun to tune it all out.”

I think this is an important part of the performance, and agree that most everything in The Mandate is hinged upon the humor found in the misunderstanding of each character. The effort to communicate properly was lost and over dramatized scenes ensued. I thought it was particularly funny when the table leg broke and the gramophone slid down on top of one of the characters. Now, this fit perfectly with the scene at hand, but it was completely obvious, due to the actress reaction, that this was neither staged nor funny. Thankfully, the stage crew replaced the table and everything was righted again. It was interesting to see how an actual gag on set threw off, if only in the smallest regard, the confusion of the performance. It was a performance about gags and confusion and misunderstanding, and within the performance, an actual gag happened, and confusion and misunderstanding ensued. ✓

## A Doll's House

First, let me say that I had a very enjoyable flight from JFK in New York to Heathrow airport. That is, until the small child that was sitting directly behind me started sneezing and coughing and I said to myself, I'm going to get the flu tomorrow. And did I ever. The second or third day I was in London, I managed to become more ill with a cold/flu virus that kept me sneezing, coughing and hacking my way throughout many of the performances. Shortly before Doll's House, I was feeling particularly awful and when I saw the size of the Greenwich Playhouse, I knew I was going to be trouble for the rest of the audience. Fortunately, I was seated by Mrs. Peck who attended to my coughing with a bottle of water and a mint. But I was still feeling very ill and realized almost 25 minutes into the first act that I had to use the restroom. The playhouse stage was set up so that the door that the audience entered was also used as the hypothetical door leading to the rest of the house. There were two rows of about 15 chairs directly in front of the stage, and 4 rows of about 8 on either side. A door leading to Thorvald's office was between the two rows in front of the audience, all in all, a very small theatre. The reason I go into this detail is only because the performance centered upon Nora's inability to escape from a constricting marriage and a life of servitude. An hour and 10 minutes into the first act, I was past sweating, past feeling sorry for the rest of the audience, and was ready to get up and leave, as obtrusive as it would have seemed. I then realized that these feelings that I was having, that there was no way out, no escape, were the same feelings that Nora was having in the play. So when I say that I felt Nora's pain, I actually felt Nora's pain.

Thematically, I think mistrust and forgiveness played large roles, as well as womanhood, femininity contrasting with masculinity, and the roles associated with each. The levels of mistrust were not high, as one little white lie befell Nora into a situation that she could no longer

control. I think that the miscommunications between Thorvald and Nora spoke volumes about female versus male roles in society, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as well as in our own. The different expectations that males and females put on themselves and each other are contrasted starkly between the two characters; strength versus submission, provider versus provided for, criticizer versus criticized. Thorvald represents many of the typical male-dominated stereotypes that were responsible for the women's rights movements, feminism and many other girl-power oriented organizations and movements. Nora on the other hand, is representative of the 19<sup>th</sup> century woman, at first afraid to revolt against the male dominance in her life, and gives total control of her life to Thorvald. This back and forth between Nora and what the audience knows is deep within her heart is an interesting play on the figurative action of a girl's decision to free the woman inside.

I also thought the comparison of Nora and Helen's relationship to Thorvald and the Doctor's was interesting. The women, come and go almost secretly and sit in the corners whispering about secrets. Contrastingly, the men retire to an office space, sit in chairs, smoke cigars and talk about business and brush the women's interaction off as merely girls being girls. Interestingly, ~~the~~ <sup>how</sup> we the audience ~~as~~ many more conversations between the women than we did between the men. In fact, that alludes to the conclusion that what the women are talking about is, in fact, more urgent, more important, and more substantial than the chit chat between the men. I thought it was ~~an~~ compelling way to portray the different relationships, as well as contrasting the seriousness of Nora borrowing money from a known criminal, her betrayal of her husband and her legal crimes.

## Aladdin

This classic pantomime was a delicious treat that I enjoyed thoroughly. Objectively, I can only contrast this performance in terms of the other performances that I saw on the trip, in an attempt to not write down two pages of praise for Ian McKellen's fabulous cross-dressing-toe-tapping-show-stopping performance.

Unlike any other show we saw, perhaps besides Sleeping Beauty, this play desired audience participation, reaction and strived towards those things in the action that happened on stage. From the look of the set, to the costumes of the characters, this performance was designed to bring the show to the audience and have the audience become a part of the action. Most action was established in humor, and the attempt for making an ordinary scene into something humorous. From having men play women's parts to having song and dance numbers with half-nude dancers, this performance <sup>verb?</sup> in true line with classic pantomime style.

The cross-dressing that we saw, men playing women's roles and women playing men's roles, was not original to this performance. We viewed a very homoerotic themed scene in History Boys, a man playing a very hungry Ogress in Sleeping Beauty, and a young woman striving for the attentions of her lost love in Shakespeare's Two Gentlemen of Verona. All of these performances included cross-dressing at some point, and at some point, alluded to homosexual themes, whether it be male to male or female to female, although male to male was much more common. Cross-dressing played a two-part role; both creating a scene where something is already amiss and can be viewed as humorous and creating a questionable atmosphere between that character and the rest of the characters on stage. The lack of boundary between sexes allows the character and the audience to react to both sexes in the same character.



Another theme I thought was important for this performance of Aladdin was the idea that wishes come true, dreams can be achieved, and lives can eventually be fulfilled. Although it may seem like a dubious error, Aladdin's ability for love and achievement of that love is the soul of his quest, the fulfillment of his life. The throne, Prince-ship, and eventual King-ship, wealth and riches, fame and fortune all play a distant<sup>t</sup> second fiddle to his desire for love. We have seen many plays about this desire for a life fulfilled, and the consequences of a life unfulfilled. Here, these two are set in the starkest of contrasts, a good force and an evil force, Aladdin versus the sorcerer and we the audience know that good will triumph over evil. The only thing I thought it was questionable was that in this performance, Aladdin is able to capitalize on the misfortune of the kings' own fortunes to win the girl, instead of using the lamp, realizing his errors and then winning her over with his character.

I think the full house attendance of this performance was, of course, because of Ian McKellen, but also because the storyline and mythical quality of Aladdin is one that symbolizes the naturally good elements of a society; friendship, love, taking care of, loving and respecting your mother, and most importantly, not allowing anything to stand in the way of your dreams. I was touched to see so many children in attendance, as well as a good number of adults. This play seemed to touch everyone at a different level, thematically for the adults and symbolically for the children.



who through his love for her has revitalized her dancing, without knowing he is dead. Otto mourns his friend the Baron and the secretary who was almost forced to give herself to the perverse businessman, agrees to go on another trip with Otto to see the world. Curtains down, the end.

Otto, who enters Grand Hotel from the outside world, of a different race and different class, is able to completely immerse himself in the lifestyles of the other guests. He is however, unable to see that his friendship with the Baron began only because of his money. Otto is, in a sense, blind to the rest of Grand Hotel, even as he wishes so fervently to see it. This blindness to reality is portrayed equally as well in Elizaveta, who cannot see the homosexual love that her best friend has for her, in the Baron, who cannot see that he has gone too far in debt, and in the Hotel, which is not human, but seems to be alive, and is the is representative of the driving force that blinds each of these people to give up everything for a dream that actually doesn't exist.

Otto, through his friendships with the other members of the hotel, namely the Baron, is able to see that the lives the people in Grand Hotel lead are not the type of life that he expected, nor desires for himself in the last years of his life. I think the overwhelming message of the performance relied on the knowledge that Otto came, and Otto left, and nothing or very little had But is Otto as obsessive as what's really going on in the story? changed inside the hotel. The message that life can actually be put on hold in the time one spends looking for the best way to fulfill it was very powerfully portrayed in the desperate voice of Elizaveta as she waited for the Baron, and for her dancing career to take off once more. She looks in longing, not for the man of her dreams, but for packed houses to rise in applause in celebration of her return to the top. In the end, there is no conclusion, no ending neatly tied in a ✓ box with bows. There in only the message of the performance see in the audiences ability to view people whose lives took one wrong turn too many, and ended up without a life at all.

What is the role of the Baron?  
Why does he stay at the hotel?  
What is his interest in the Baron?  
but also Otto?

you need to understand and not to be a few places in this entire world but also need to follow some of the ideas.

## Simply Heavenly

Let me start this entry by saying that I LOVE jazz. I adore the likes of Charles Mingus, Thelonious Monk, Dexter Gordon, Bill Evans, and so many more men and women who's silky voices and musically unparalleled genius changed the face of music history. That being said, I thought Simply Heavenly was not a performance about life and love, community, race and social issues. The musical Simply Heavenly is about the music. Its about the beat that drives a man to bounce when he walks, and tempts a man to be out late dancing when he knows he should be at home. There is a soul to the music, something real and tangible that has the ability to touch the heart of all those who hear it.

Of course, there are secondary themes which have much to do with life, love, community, race and social issues. Simply Heavenly, for the most part, takes place in a local bar, who's habitual hangouts include mostly African Americans. Race seems to play an important part, in that in the beginning, a white man comes into the bar, and makes very rude comments, and is chased from the bar by a large black woman called Miss Mamie who obviously doesn't appreciate his being there. Jesse B. Simple, or Simple as most others call him, is a young black man who also hangs out at the bar. Jesse is sweet on another character named Joyce, but is tempted by the very whore-like Zareta to bar-hop from town to town. Simple and Joyce's budding romance is lightly tested by Zareta, but is my symbolic of the struggle between people to do what is 'right' and 'good' or to obey those parts of yourself that society thinks are 'immoral' or 'bad'. I thought that Simple's love for the music, his love for dancing and tapping his feet was represented as a negative quality, where as Joyce's very strict rules and evenings spent in her room reading were regarded as positive, or 'what young people should be doing'. These representations were very important during the Harlem Renaissance when normalcy was

both questioned and refuted to make way for a whole new genre of art, literature, music and inspiration.

I think another staple of this performance was the comparisons between Joyce, Zareta, and Miss Mamie and the 'ideal woman'. Each of these characters portray different issues and characteristics of what it means to be an African American woman. Miss Mamie seems to be stuck on the idea that black women should not 'give up eating baked beans' because the white man tells them they're bad for you. Joyce represents the holy part of women, portraying a goddess like, Mary, the mother of Christ, Abbey Mother type character who is chaste and very grounded in morality. Zareta's character seemed not to care about color as much as finding a man who would buy her nice things and be sweet on her, the way Simple was sweet on Joyce. These women all represent the different aspects of African America women leading up to and during the Harlem Renaissance; proud, strong and searching to fulfill a part of themselves.

African Americans were dealing with enormous scrutiny and heavy social pressures during the years leading up to the Harlem Renaissance. Blacks were notoriously looked down upon by America, dating back even to the earliest slave narratives. The ability to rise above, come out from oppression and make advancements in science, art, literature and music was a staple of the African American people. Simply Heavenly centers upon the notion that the people who were lucky enough to hear the music and understand that the sounds they were hearing were not simply about notes on a page, but about a race of people on a planet, living and dying like the rest of mankind.

## Romeo and Juliet

The tragic love story of Romeo and Juliet has become mainstream pop culture for many bubble-gum chewing girls and boys who dream of finding their beautiful Juliet or handsome Romeo. Although pop culture has a way of ruining literature by taking away some of the small details in the writing, I think that the immersion of this story into our society has been nothing but positive. Love surviving adversity, love in death, death in friendship, hate, vengeance and an overwhelming sense of fate secure this play as the best love story every written. These tragic elements of this play are forever etched in the hearts of those who have seen the screen version or any theater performance. I was shocked to find that the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of this play was refreshing, still yet another completely different approach to this production. Thematically, all the pieces were there; love, death, trust, fate, etc. But above those elements, there were special qualities that only the Royal Shakespeare Company of London, England could produce and perform.

The set was interesting, only because it was rarely changed. Like Journey's End and a few other performances we saw, this production was set in a simple staging piece, with one 2 story piece in the center, which acted as Juliet's balcony, the place where the Mayor looked down on the city and provided corners to peek around, walls to lean on in desperateness, shadows to lurk in and places to hide. Being set in the center of the stage, the action revolved around the stage piece, unlike Journey's End, where the action was above and outside of the audience view. The walls were painted a light blue in some places, while other parts looked to be falling down as buildings would have been during the time this play was written. I found this set piece interesting only because the action seemed to be above the set, as if the play could continue even if there was no set at all. At times, the actors and the dialogs were so powerful and large,

the stage disappeared and the enormity of what was actually happening to the characters took over.

I was seated in the first row of the balcony and was fortunate enough to have small glasses free of the usual 50p charge. Looking down onto the stage, I noticed a few different things that many who did not have the glasses may have missed entirely. First, the cod-pieces that the males were wearing had to be at least 4 sizes too big, as they seemed to be as big as the actors heads. I thought it was <sup>hmm</sup> funny little detail that the costumer must have pulled on the director at the last moment, so that they could not be changed. Either that or the male cast of this particular performance was extremely well hung. Another thing I noticed using the glasses was the reluctance of Juliet to show facial expressions during the performance, even during the most powerful scenes. Juliet wore an almost expressionless face, with just a hint of both sadness and joy almost the entire time. Although her body language was powerful, her arms outstretched towards Romeo under the balcony, her face rarely broke into a smile. There is a hint of womanhood in her innocence, and yet she is reluctant to embrace victory with Romeo, even the second before she drinks the potion. There is slight foreboding in her face but I didn't read it until the play was over. /

I was also pleased with the crypt being a trapdoor to another part of the stage, underneath the rest of the set. I think there is heavy symbolism within the placement of the crypt, as it holds the dead and the living, the spirits gone and only just resting. I was also struck by a sense of irony as Romeo carried Juliet to the surface, and sat with one leg in the stairwell to the crypt. He was literally one leg in the grave, and held Juliet just so that she really never left. I was pleased many times over, mainly because of the codpieces, but also slightly due to the brilliant performances by the cast of the Royal Shakespeare Company.

## Two Gentlemen of Verona

Although I was very pleased with the Royal Shakespeare Company's performances of Romeo and Juliet and Julius Caesar, I was slightly disappointed by this production of Two Gentlemen of Verona. There were many elements that contrasted perfectly with some of the other productions that we saw, and I want to emphasize those comparisons and contrasts, instead of the parts that didn't really suit me.

In this play, I really saw many moments of desire. The desire for the unknown, to want the wanted, really played a pivotal role in this play. Without naming characters by name, the story line of many of the plays we saw on the trip went as follows: two men separate, one man encounters a problem which draws the other back into their relationship, the relationship is tested, and the men resolve the issues and remain in the relationship. The climactic problem within this play was the fact that these two male friends, almost brothers, are able to become the worst of enemies and yet resolve their issues in the end.

What brings the men together this time, as in many other times before, is the love of a woman. It is not uncommon for the scent of a woman to come between the best of friends and tear even the best friendships to shreds. Valentine is representative of a heart and soul unbound by the world, a free man in love. Valentine leaves the curses of his old city to experience new things, big business, and the like. Proteus, on the other hand, really plays the part of the immature, inexperienced brat, undermining his best friends love plans because of selfish interest. There is a point in the performance where Proteus makes a small speech to the audience wondering aloud whether his actions were the right ones. At that moment, Silvia walks by, and he is able to justify to us and in his mind his gross errors.



The other aspect of this performance that I enjoyed was the back and forth banter between the characters, Valentine and Proteus in the beginning, the Duke and his subjects throughout the play, and especially Julia, when she must interact with Proteus dressed as a man. There are light hearted jokes exchanged between these characters which make the performance a comedy versus a tragedy. I also enjoyed Valentines person servant Speed, who kept eh show moving with his comic acting and silly behavior.

While watching this performance, Shakespeare didn't really register in my head as the author. This seemed more like an adaptation of one his plays, rather than the actual written script of Shakespeare himself. The characters, at times, seemed stilted, fake, almost going through the motions of the emotions that they were feeling. I thought Valentine's performance was a bit unbelievable, in that, his character was far too strong for the actor who portrayed him. Although Valentine and Proteus were the same age, Proteus seemed to act at least 5 years his younger, and look it too. Because of the ways that both Valentine and Proteus fell over her, the character of Silvia was supposed to be seen by the audience as beautiful, a goddess among common women. I thought quite the opposite, as this Silvia was tall, gaunt, painfully and almost eating disorderly thin. For me, the three characters that were supposed to carry the show really moved the show off track by their lack of ability to connect with their characters, and with the audience.

I suspect her skin ambiguity  
was part of the set design -  
the skin, scarves, etc. a kind of  
anorexia fit well with the Vogue  
designs of the 1990s with  
the 1990s style and  
the 1990s style of the  
1990s. What was the purpose of the  
production as it moved from Verona  
to Milan to the woods?

## Julius Caesar

BANG!!! Sitting next to Mrs. Peck waiting for the production to start, a loud noise punched our ears and startled her just enough so that she grabbed my arm. Unfortunately, I was seated on the end of the bench row, and almost fell out of my seat, which may have been the effect that cast was going for. This production was really amazing, from the character portrayal to the intense use of light and sound within the performance. I was astonished at how 21<sup>st</sup> and almost 22<sup>nd</sup> century this performance portrayed. The light and sound schematic was just as powerful as the curtain call at the end of Journey's End, and even a bit more so, as the light and sound did not flow in any particular pattern, erupting at different times.

Though the storyline is historical, this play speaks volumes about the casualties of politics and war, along with the darker sides of friendship and loyalty. The murder of Caesar is not the climax of this play, although many would argue differently. I felt that the climactic moment was most felt during Brutus' passionate speech to his fellow countrymen. Blood staining his hands, his voice never wavering, Brutus' passion for the truth, for honor and dignity, things that were being lost under Caesar, turns the tide and shifts the actors and the performance into a whole new sphere.

The killing of Caesar was bloody, violent and disturbing, everything one could expect from a mass murder of one man. I thought the images of the knife cuts, and the areas that were shown projected on screen heightened the severity of the crime to both the conspirators and to their opponents. These images, accompanied with the large stainless steel bucket filled with blood kept the raw emotion directly in front of the audience at all times.

I was also impressed with the use of the other actors in the company's way of both identifying themselves as individuals and becoming a universal mob. The company really moved

S...d

the play by bringing set pieces on and off the stage, using the walls in the background as climbing devices, stringing up the screen for the projections, and all the while making the audience believe that they were actually members of this community who were enraged and impassioned over Caesar's murder.

community  
the testimony  
of the murder  
a modern event

I think the main theme of this play is freedom and the rights of men within the society where they live. The people are free, free to love, hate, laugh and conspire, and it is this freedom that Brutus and Cassius see being taken from the people as Caesar's popularity soars. The amount of emotion that goes into this performance is astounding, and getting the audience to buy it is even more amazing. I certainly bought into the characters, and was invested in the plot even to the point of hoping that the conspirators could live, when I knew they had to die in the end. Brutus' lack of political want for himself made him an unlikely hero, a man doing what any man should do if he felt his freedoms taken from him. Cassius on the other hand, felt more political, more in the rebellion for himself, which made him seem like the eventual 'bad guy'.

But comment  
on their case  
of people's  
opinion - etc.  
as much as Rome  
Antony - also a man  
of political power  
Many in opinion  
for themselves

The Company was absolutely marvelous and really put on a great show. Most of the time, I have to pay such close attention to the words and the language of Shakespeare, I miss large portions of the extra detail. This performance really let me sit back and be a spectator, someone who was actually watching the murder of Caesar and the rebellion that followed.

## The Producers

I really don't know where to begin on this performance. Brilliant. Unparalleled. Astonishing. Amazing. Breath-taking. I could go on and on. This performance was absolutely, bar-none, the best musical I have ever seen. The perfection of the staging, the aptly likeable characters and the completely taboo nature of the ENTIRE performance put me in hysterics and into a state of awe. I can only barely skim the surface of this play by mentioning a few of the different elements and themes. Love, trust, friendship and brotherhood all were important pieces of the plot. Racism, sexualizing of old women, and the stereotypical pot-shots at the gay community were also major parts to this performance. The equality and balance that the play had to make you angry and then make you cry laughing was astonishing.

First, the relationship between Max and Leo was really the same as many of the other relationships that we've seen in other performances. Two people coming from different angles meet and then form a friendship or bond just as Will met Lyra in His Dark Material, or like Beauty met her prince in Sleeping Beauty. There is a twinge of destiny or fate between Max and Leo, but not such much that one couldn't say that if Leo hadn't reconsidered, Max would have been destitute. The constant hilarity that stemmed from the interaction between street savvy Max and the clueless Leo really formed a great bond between the two men.

The issues that The Producers tackle are extreme and some, though they may be few, would argue that they're too extreme. The play revolves around another play, 'Springtime for Hitler' which is a mind baby of one extremely devoted Nazi. The play continues with Max's visit to Granny-land to have sex with and woo older women out of their money, which, is not a very pleasant thought, and yet is mildly amusing. The homosexual jabs that playwright Mel Brooks takes within this script is amazing, and yet confusing. The director that they find to put on

'Springtime for Hitler' is an overly done, outlandish queen of a man, waited hand and foot upon his little bitch of a partner. They speak with feigned lisps and flaunt around like women who are playing me who are playing women. I wasn't sure if I should be offended or find it all humorous, as undoubtedly, many members of this cast were in fact homosexual.

The other main theme I thought stemmed from this performance was the idea of fate, destiny, and a calling. Many other times in past performances we saw the idea of fate come being two people together and create a change in the worlds they lived, His Dark Materials, Festen, Grand Hotel and more. Here, fate intertwine two men from a sure-fire success (failure) to eventual loss of everything, except each other. Fate brings these men together and even though the audience knows that the musical will end happily, the characters portray a strong sense of delusion.

I can't stop praising this musical as being the best I've ever seen. From the lights, to the dance numbers to the hysterics of Lee Evans, I just can't get over the tremendous efforts put forth by everyone who was involved in the production. Even though Nathan Lane would have been a treat, the understudy was fantastic, absolutely brilliant. I love every minute of this play and can understand why the U.S. run of this production has been sold out for 4 years, and why the show can gross upwards of a million pounds per week. Absolutely astonishing, the perfect end to a marvelous trip.

**THANKS PROFESSOR PECK**

**AND MRS. PECK TOO**

**THIS TRIP WAS AMAZING**

**AND SO ARE YOU!!!**

*Sarah*

# A Guide to Making the Most of Theatre in London

## Necessities

Pack light.

Take the Heathrow Express from Heathrow to Paddington. It'll save you time and will be immensely more comfortable after your 8 hour flight. Trust me, it's worth it.

Your 7 day Underground pass is worth the money.  
Madame Tussads is not.

Mrs. Peck will tell you to bring an umbrella, and you'll think, "Hey, it can't be that bad, I'll be just fine."

You're wrong.  
Bring an umbrella.

I purchased every program, some at less than a pound and some over 4 pounds. The pictures are pretty and it's just lovely to know the cast lists--but in most cases, unless you want to keep them as souvenirs, don't bother. They waste money and suitcase space on the return flight.

DO NOT tip a cab driver over 4 pounds. Not even if he's really nice. Not even if he helps you with your bags. Maybe if he buys you dinner and beer, but otherwise, just round up a pound or two.

When Professor Peck tells you that the walls are thin, believe him.

Go to The Goose. Do not go to the Tandoori restaurant. Trust me.

Take your time during in the Olivier Theatre in the National Theatre complex. Get there early and cherish the production you'll see. When they say its one of a kind, its one of a kind. You'll never, ever, ever, ever see anything like it again in your life.

Do not eat buffet food because it's cheaper. You will find that there is a huge lack of sanitation in most buffets. If there is nothing stopping you from sneezing all over the food then there's nothing stopping anyone else. Think about it and avoid them at all cost.

The Harlingford Hotel's fried eggs and bacon breakfast is delicious.

Always ask if a glass of water is free. Most times it won't be.

The Pizza Pasta on the corner of Marchmont is a pretty poor place to eat. The dinner rolls are a pound a piece, not to mention the 50p for the butter. I was curious and it cost me 18 pounds. Skip it.

Don't splurge the 20 pounds for a ride on the London Eye. Grab a friend and walk the river. Its better on your legs and your wallet will thank you.

Don't go out, get wasted, doze through class and sleep through the plays. It's a waste of more than money and you'll look like an ass. Wait, no. You'll just be one.

*I should have warned people about this one.*

## Food

So basically you're stuck in one of the most expensive cities in the world on a tight budget and you're hungry. What do you do??? Let me illuminate you!

### Early Risers

- For the early morning crowd, the only option is eating the fantastic breakfast at the hotel between 7 and 9am. The food is delicious and the staff is kind. Its all you can eat and its free. Its worth the early rise.
- There is a small grocery store across from the Russell Square tube stop where you can buy breakfast cereal and milk, tea and coffee. But remember that the hotel rooms do NOT have refrigerators. If you want to pick up some snacks, its best to grab a bit in the morning after class because the store will be completely empty by the time you return in the evening after the evening performance. There is also a Boots Pharmacy across from The Goose, and an assortment of newsstands on the walk down Marchmont to our hotel.

### Mid-Afternoon Snack

- You'll start to hear your stomach after a while and its best to grab a quick bite before the matinee performance. Depending on where you go, there are always small places to eat, some more expensive than others. I'll list a few here:
  - The Goose is a great place to eat for cheap. It opens after 12pm and fills up fast at all hours of the day. I recommend the Chicken Tiki Marsala. I still miss it.
  - Wagamama's is a bit pricey but the food is spine tinglingly wonderful. The wait staff will help you decide what to order, as the menu is small, but extensive. The noodle bowls are to die for. Any of them will do.
  - Pizza Hut is actually a viable option over there. The lunch buffet is decently priced and is all you can eat. Dig in.
  - There are dozens of different coffee houses all over London: Starbucks, Nero's, Pret's and more. If you want just a quick bite, head over to the nearest coffee shop and get a sandwich and a cup of tea. You'll fit right in.

### Evening Meal

- Depending on what you ate all day, you'll probably be hungry between the matinee and the evening show, or after the evening show all together. Again, depending on where you are, there are a dozen of different places to eat for cheap, good food.
- I recommend the a la carte items at the National Theatre Complex. They've got bangers and mash and a wide assortment of meat pies.
- If you're over by Leister Square, take a walk through the square and take a left or right. There are many small and quiet little restaurants located just off the main roads that are both delicious and decently priced.
- If you're over by Covet Gardens, I'd head to the Plaza and sit down downstairs. They've got interesting sandwiches and pastas for cheap.

**REGARDLESS OF WHERE YOU GO, STAY AWAY FROM BUFFETS**

## Tourism

### Shopping

- You are in luck! I am the shopping queen of London! There are a ton of little known places to pop in a pick up a wonderful little item for loved ones back home.
  - Covent Garden, Oxford Street, and Bond Street are all fabulous places to pick up an expensive gift for less during the after holiday sales. More or less, just apparel.
  - Carnaby Circus is a fantastic little area just off Oxford Street that has more of an alternative fashion to the stores. Skateboarders and rockers can find their clothes here and I would recommend finding a pair of shoes here, as it's a fantastic area to buy some trainers for cheap.
  - High Street, Kensington and Notting Hill are draws for the smaller, less well-known stores. Bookshops, smaller stores featuring one product or two can be found here, but you'll pay big.
  - Harrods can be found at the Knightsbridge tube, but unless you've got serious spending cash, don't bother. Let me give you an example: The dog collars on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor cost just a bit over 80 pounds. (*just so you know, that's about 150 dollars*)

### Museums

- London is overflowing with art, history, music and more. In your short time, there are a ton of museums that you can walk through, and if you're brave, try them all! But if you're just a mellow museum go-er, here are a few you shouldn't miss:
  - Tate Modern
  - National Gallery
  - National Portrait Gallery
  - The British Museum
  - The British Library

### Go Here!

- If you have any spare time left over, these are a few place I would suggest going, if you don't mind paying a small fee to get in.
  - London Dungeons
  - Jack the Ripper: Whitechapel Walk
  - Westminster Abbey
  - Tower of London
  - Spitalfields Market
  - Diesel Style Lab in Covent Garden
  - G-A-Y sometime after 11pm on a weekday
  - Somewhere alone. Don't get me wrong, I love doing the group thing. But London is an experience more than a city. Go somewhere by yourself. Get lost alone. Find a place you never knew existed. Sit in Hyde Park and read. If you take only one afternoon to yourself, you'll never forget it.



## New Years Eve

- This is an the most important event of the entire year for most Londoner's. The streets will be packed. The crowds will be thick. Think Van's Warp Tour '96 when Rancid was playing their last tour. These people are happy and they want to be loud and obnoxious and are all more drunk than they have been all year. There are a few options for you on this holiday's eve:
  - Big Ben: Where the party is. The crowd is amazingly intense. You will get fondled, robbed, touched, kissed, pushed and groped. If that's your scene, I say go for it. It's a once in a lifetime opportunity.
  - The River: Where the party is. I suppose you won't find many places where the party isn't, but still, the river crowd will be packing in to find places to sit and watch the fireworks. Be careful where you sit. There is a 50% chance of sitting in spit, vomit, soda, or some other unidentified substance.
  - The Squares: Where the party is. Another place where the crowds are almost deadly. Trafalgar Square, Piccadilly Circus, Leister Square and many more are gathering places for crowds to dance up and down when the clock strikes midnight.
  - The Bars: Where the expensive party is. The bars will be absolutely packed and more likely, the ones that are open have a huge fee at the door. Everything else will be closed.
  - The Hotel: Where the party is not. One of the places where you can watch the clock strike midnight for free and without the hassle of having grown men or women rubbing up against you all night.
- My suggestion: Buy a bottle of wine the day before, grab a few friends and camp out in a room. You'll make great friends and have a blast without all the mayhem of 10 million Londoner's.

## The Rest

This program is a fantastic opportunity for anyone who enjoys getting out of the familiar and into a different scene. The theatre in London is unlike any I have ever seen and probably will ever see again. Open yourself up to new ideas, new ways of presentation and production. Professor Peck teaches an excellent lesson plan and will invite you to try to see a different way's of viewing the things performances that you will be seeing. The last little bits of advice I have are these:

- Take good notes, they'll come in handy when writing your journals
- Always say please and thank you, American's need all the help we can get to better our reputation overseas.
- Don't allow yourself to become annoyed with other members of the group. When you toss 20 people into the same hotel for 2 weeks, things will get rough. Just let it go.
- Finally, give change to the poor. London has a huge amount of homeless and you'll never be able to spend those 10p or 2p coins. Give them away.
- Enjoy yourself.

*Excellent presentation, any do I need you to help sponsor up the website. If it's okay, I'll use some of your pictures - no legal or ceremony. Your camera stay on the plane - 41 photos outstanding, especially at the airport - scribbles on the plane, the day of cards, etc. You might want to more into the Rembrandt, but generally your focus on issues is excellent.*