

Networking

Network Theatre Company's Newsletter

August 2012

Dear Networkers,

This month we are delighted to include the review of *Henry V*. We look forward to the forthcoming production of *The Cherry Orchard* by Anton Chekhov, coming to Network next month, read our interview with director, Jordana Berk to find out more.

If anyone has spent their summer writing a fantastic play (and not glued to the Olympics like me!) or feels inspired to direct something, then have a look at our submission process for Network Theatre on page 5.

We are looking for more volunteers for the bar and front of house for *The Cherry Orchard*. Please email foh@networktheatre.org to volunteer.

Dates for your diary:

Tickets are on sale for *The Cherry Orchard* 5th-8th September.

<http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/networktheatre>

Rosie de Vekey
Editor

In this issue:

Review of <i>Henry V</i> by Susan Hodgetts	p.2-3
Interview with Jordana Berk, director of <i>The Cherry Orchard</i>	p. 4
Submission process for Network Theatre	p.5
The Network Committee	p. 6

Networking

Network Theatre Company's Newsletter

Henry V - A Review

by Susan Hodgetts

It's no surprise that productions of Henry V, seen as one of Shakespeare's most patriotic plays, have been sweeping the nation in Olympic and Jubilee Year. Amidst a glut of rival stagings in London (at Shakespeare's Globe, no less, and a big budget BBC re-working) Network's Henry V, directed by Julian Farrance and produced by Sacha Walker, held its own stiff upper lip.

King Henry, having quelled rebellion in his own country, marches on France, hoping to defeat the French at the Battle of Agincourt. He then attempts to woo Queen Catherine, which proves to be a challenge of a different kind. The story is narrated by the character of Chorus, who fills in the gaps and helps to set the scene for the audience.



Stephen Lee

All photographs by Paul H. Lunnon

Farrance's updated setting of the Battle of Waterloo worked well, and his interest in military detail lent this production a convincing authenticity. Costumes were painstakingly hand-sewn and there was some impressive war kit, including a cannon and an enormous cart. It's great to see the boundaries of possibility in Network's theatre space being pushed and a demonstration of how well it can be used.



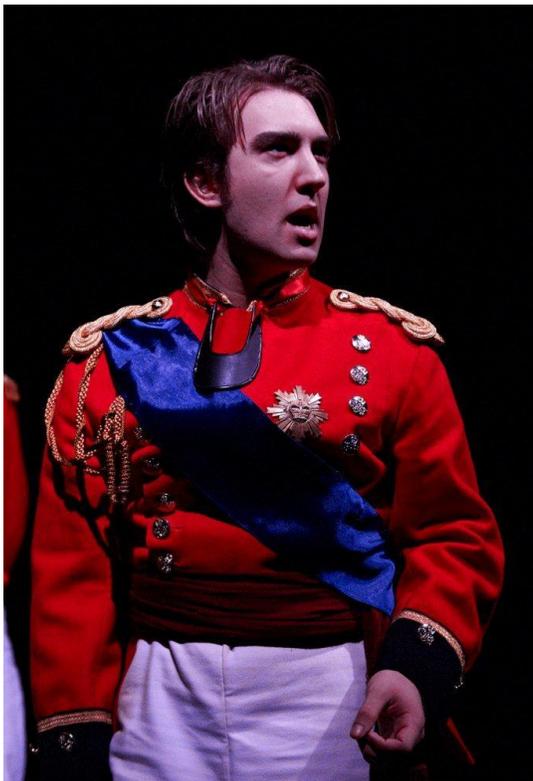
The production engaged from the very beginning, when Chorus, played with charisma and subtlety by James Killeen, laid the scene. The cast had a good grasp of Shakespeare's iambic pentameter dialogue, the battle scenes were dynamic, and the staging of some of the battle set pieces often showed director Farrance's eye for artistic detail. War-like tableau were skillfully created on several occasions, the most striking being the positioning of Henry's troops around the cart. My knowledge of war portraiture is non-existent, but even to a non-expert the beauty of the staging was clear.

The scene between Princess Catherine and her maid was also particularly charming and provided light relief from the energetic battle scenes.

Networking

Network Theatre Company's Newsletter

The cast were uniformly solid but special mention must go to Stephen Lee in the title role, who commanded the stage as surely as Henry V commanded his battalion. This bright young actor would not have looked out of place on an RSC stage.



All photographs by Paul H. Lunnon



Networking

Network Theatre Company's Newsletter

An Interview with Jordana Berk, Director of *The Cherry Orchard*

Why did you choose the Cherry Orchard?

For the longest time, I really didn't get Chekhov. I found it all a bit boring. When I was at university, I did a double major in Russian and Theatre and in one Russian class we had an entire part of the syllabus devoted to reading short stories by Chekhov. It was my worst nightmare! However, as I read more and more, I realised how funny his writing was. It inspired me to take a look at his plays again. I was hooked. I became more and more interested in the dual nature of his plays, especially *The Cherry Orchard*. I decided to direct *The Cherry Orchard* because I wanted a challenge for myself as well as an opportunity to explore his work on stage.

For those unfamiliar with the play, could you give us a brief synopsis?

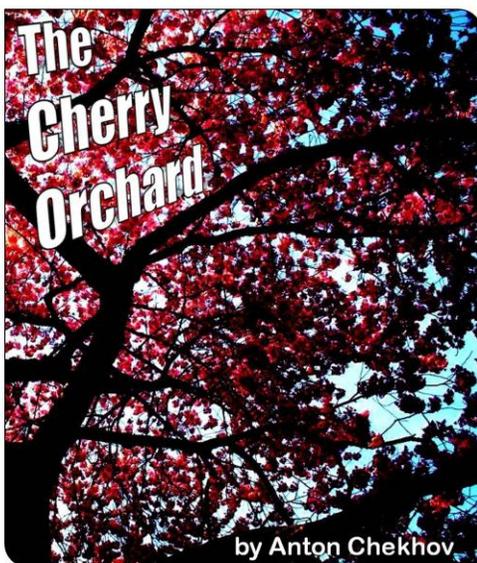
After ten years abroad, Madame Ranevskaya returns penniless to her family's estate to discover that it is at risk of being sold. Despite being presented with several options to save their home, Ranevskaya and her brother seem incapable of action. Their inaction puts their future at risk and seals the fate of their beloved cherry orchard. Set at the turn of the twentieth century, *The Cherry Orchard* captures a significant moment in Russia's history as the aristocracy slowly fades away and the country is propelled towards modernity. It is about the futility of the upper-classes and the effect social change has on individuals.

What can we expect from this production?

I think, more than anything, you can expect some really natural and funny performances. The cast works really well together and has a nice sense of ensemble.

How will you recreate turn of the century Russia at Network?

The play is set in 1903, and this is when our production takes place. However, we've taken a fairly minimalistic approach. We are also playing in traverse, which I think allows for more organic performances. The designers have created a really nice and fluid environment for us to work in and their designs help us recreate the world of turn of the century Russia.



What are the challenges of this production?

Chekhov was adamant that *The Cherry Orchard* was a comedy and hated Stanislavski's original production, which he described as 'weepy'. The challenge in this production is playing up the comic elements without destroying the integrity of the piece. There is a dark humour to this play, but the characters' psychological struggles also make for really poignant moments.

5 to 8 September 2012

Doors open at 7pm - Performance at 7.30pm

Network Theatre, 246A Lower Road, London, SE1 8SF

Tickets £12 available from

www.networktheatre.org



Networking

Network Theatre Company's Newsletter

Submission Process for Productions at Network Theatre

You'll have probably seen from our Newsflashes and Facebook page that we regularly look for new work and exciting plays to put on at Network. The latest call was for short plays on the theme of Love & Deceit which were read in June and will be announced soon as part of a set of vignettes scheduled for next summer 2013. We hope you enjoyed the evening and thank you for your feedback on the plays.

Here's more on our submission process:

Who can submit plays for Network Theatre's programme and how?

Any member can submit a play (both new writing and published plays) at any time for consideration in Network's programme. Just email us the play, the cast list, the running time and the genre to programme@networktheatre.org along with an explanation as to whether you are the writer/ proposed director/ actor etc.

What happens after I have submitted an idea for a play?

We have a reading panel (sub-committee) in place who read all submissions and provide feedback as part of our programming process. Plays are read on a first come, first served basis so forgive us if we have a small backlog before we get to yours. You will get email confirmation that we have received your submission and where possible, an indication as to how long it will take to get read. The reading panel provide feedback based on the play's suitability for Network (staging, members and audience appeal) which is collated and fed back to the committee and person submitting the play.

There will normally be a few different outcomes:

- i) The play could be accepted with no caveats by the committee based on the recommendation of the reading panel and confirmed as part of the programme.
- ii) It may be suggested that the play requires further development (particularly for new writing) and would benefit workshopping, writing revisions etc. As Network Theatre is a supporter of new writing, where possible (and as our schedule permits), we will look to support any further readings/ workshops.
- iii) The play could be deemed unsuitable. If this is the case, a clear explanation will be provided.

What happens once the play is accepted?

Once formally accepted by the committee with a committed director on board, we will schedule the play which will be given one reading night, two audition nights and a string of rehearsal and performance slots. The play has then officially joined the programme and will be marketed as part of the programme.

What happens if Network put on a reading and I want to provide feedback but don't want to do it in front of everyone at the reading?

We are always interested in your feedback, good or bad and you can write in with any feedback at any time, again to programme@networktheatre.org.

If you find a play toe-curlingly dreadful or painstakingly dull, we want to know. Likewise, if you think that something is brilliant and deserves a mention, please write into us. Otherwise, we don't know what floats your boat!

Networking

Network Theatre Company's Newsletter

The Network Committee

Our club and our theatre require a lot of "behind the scenes" work to manage and maintain them. This falls to the committee to carry out, or to coordinate other volunteers to help. The committee is elected at the AGM and, like others who volunteer, give their time willingly to keep Network running.

The current committee is:

Kay Murray - Chair
Judith Denwood - Secretary
Dan Young - Premises Manager
Keith Wait - Diary Manager
Moirá Cane - Membership Secretary
Sean McMullan - Treasurer
Kirsty Eyre - Programming
Sue Walker - FOH Manager
Cathy Neeson - Marketing

The committee always welcomes ideas and proposals for Network activities, and volunteers to help Network with the various tasks. E-mail us at info@networktheatre.org or corner one of us at an event!

All submissions are welcome. Please send to the editor at news@networktheatre.org.

Network Theatre, 246a Lower Road, Waterloo, London SE1 8SJ

For all the latest information go to www.networktheatre.org

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