

**National  
Theatre  
Learning**

**Background pack**



**From Morning  
to Midnight**

**by Georg Kaiser, in a new  
version by Dennis Kelly**

# From Morning to Midnight

## Background pack

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*Welcome to the National Theatre's background pack for From Morning to Midnight.*

Through imaginative and innovative in-school, on-site and online activities, NT Learning opens up the National's repertoire, artistry, skills, and the building itself, enabling participants of all ages to discover new skills and experience the excitement of theatre-making. If you've enjoyed this background pack or would like to talk to us about getting involved in NT Learning activities, please contact us on [learning@nationaltheatre.org.uk](mailto:learning@nationaltheatre.org.uk) or **020 7452 3388**.

**Jane Ball**  
Programme Manager, NT Learning  
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Rehearsal photographs taken at the Jerwood Space.

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



Click on this arrow, when you see it, for more online resources.

# The National Theatre's production of *From Morning to Midnight*

This production opened in the Lyttelton Theatre  
on 26 November 2013

Clerk **Adam Godley**  
Steward/Harlequin/Penitent Cyclist **Esh Alladi**  
Italian Lady/Salvation Army Officer **Gina Bellman**  
Trapper/Cyclist/Adam **Christian From**  
Son/Cyclist/Guitarist **Robert Gilbert**  
Cyclist/Girl Soldier **Kezrena James**  
Mother/Eve **Éva Magyar**  
Salvation Army Girl **Katherine Manners**  
Bank Manager/Society Gent/  
Wedekind **Dan Milne**  
Cyclist/Mask/Young Soldier **Zackary Momoh**  
Daughter/Cyclist/Harlequin **Victoria Moseley**  
Assistant/Daughter/Cyclist/Mask **Emily Mytton**  
Porter/Society Gent **Jack Tarlton**  
Fat Man/Steward/Waiter **Jason Thorpe**  
Bosomy Bourgeois/Pierrette/  
Prostitute **Emily Wachter**  
Serving Girl/Wife/Cyclist **Kelly Williams**

## *Action devised with the Company*

### *Musicians*

**Robert Ames** (violin/viola)  
**Mark Bousie** (piano/accordion)  
**Rachel Elliott** (clarinets)  
**Richie Hart** (tuba/trumpet/double bass)  
**Louise Morgan** (percussion)

Director **Melly Still**  
Designer **Soutra Gilmour**  
Lighting Designer **Bruno Poet**  
Video & Projection Designer **Andrzej Goulding**  
Music **Dave Price**  
Movement Director **Al Nedjari**  
Fight Director **Kate Waters**  
Sound Designer **Christopher Shutt**  
Physical Comedy Consultant **Jason Thorpe**  
Company Voice Work **Jeannette Nelson**  
Staff Director **Rebecca Frecknall**



Clerk (Adam Godley)  
Production photo: Johan Persson

# Synopsis

## 1. The Machine

8am in Weimar and the bank is open for business. The locals come and go, making their transactions. All is normal until an exotic ITALIAN LADY arrives, jamming the bank's turnstile and disrupting the usual routine. She approaches the counter and hands a letter to the CLERK, requesting an immediate withdrawal of 3,000 marks. The letter is passed to the BANK MANAGER who, suspicious of the foreign visitor's motives, refuses the request on the grounds that no proof of the lady's identity has arrived at the bank.

The Manager and the FAT MAN, a local industrialist who has been waiting to deposit a small fortune, taunt the Italian Lady until she decides to leave. She says she will be back that afternoon in the hope that the authorisation from her bank in Florence will have arrived. The Bank Manager and Fat Man think she is a con artist. The Fat Man deposits 60,000 marks in a newly opened account and then leaves.

The Manager returns to his office. He believes 'we shall never see that woman step foot in this bank again.' Seconds later the Italian Lady returns and pleads with the Clerk to allow her to leave her jewellery with the bank as a secure deposit on the loan of 3,000 marks. As she takes off her bracelet to show him, a SERVING GIRL enters, dropping her basket and making the Italian Lady jump. She accidentally touches the Clerk's hand who takes this as a sign of a special connection between the two of them. Disturbed by the Clerk's attentions, the Lady leaves. The Clerk asks his ASSISTANT to fetch him some water from the vault outside. He asks the DOORMAN to do the same, ensuring that the bank is left empty. Now alone, the Clerk fills his pockets with the 60,000 marks deposited by the Fat Man and runs out of the bank.

The Bank Manager comes out of his office: 'the authorisation from Florence has come in!' He meets the Assistant and the Doorman who have returned with glasses of water for the Clerk only to find he has disappeared.

## 2. The Bourgeoisie

At the Elephant Inn in Weimar the Italian Lady drafts a telegram to her bank in Florence. Minutes later her SON, an art historian, enters with a large painting covered by a cloth. He has agreed to buy

it from the landlord who is waiting downstairs for his payment. He uncovers the artwork, a rare erotic depiction of Adam and Eve by Cranach. He tries to convince his mother of the painting's importance but she is doubtful. She tells him the bank wouldn't give her the 3,000 marks he needs to buy the picture.

The PORTER interrupts: 'a gentleman from the bank wishes to speak with madam'. The Son goes downstairs to make sure that the landlord doesn't change his mind about the sale. The Clerk is shown into the room and expects the Italian Lady to fall into his arms and run away with him. However, he soon discovers that the Lady is, in fact, the southerner from Tuscany she claimed to be and not the con artist his boss supposed. Realising his assumptions are wrong and the Lady and he are not destined to start a new life together, he begins to comprehend the awful truth of his actions: he has absconded with 60,000 marks and is now a criminal on the run.

## 3. Epiphany

In a snowy wilderness outside the town the Clerk attempts to examine the morning's events and his own actions. He realises he is not simply now a criminal but also a rich man with 60,000 marks to his name. He says he hasn't really lived and calls out to the universe for an experience worth the investment. He is 'willing to pay cash!' The Italian Lady appears in the snow and the Clerk cannot believe this turn of events as she kisses him. However, mid-embrace, she begins to strangle him. She has turned to a skeleton – DEATH in the guise of the Italian Lady. Understanding that Death has come to claim him, the Clerk asks for



Clerk (Adam Godley), Son (Robert Gilbert) and Italian Lady (Gina Bellman)  
Production photo: Johan Persson

# Synopsis (continued)

a reprieve until midnight, giving him a day to discover for himself 'what is and isn't pointless'.

## 4. The Family

At the Clerk's home it is business as usual for WIFE, MOTHER, and the two DAUGHTERS. One Daughter plays the piano (Wagner's *The Tannhäuser Overture*), the other sews, while their mother prepares lunch.



Daughter (Emily Mytton), Wife (Kelly Williams), Clerk (Adam Godley), Daughter (Victoria Moseley)  
Production photo: Johan Persson

They become concerned for the Clerk when they realise he is late for lunch. The Clerk arrives. His clothes are dirty, and hat and coat torn. His Wife asks him where he has been and is unsettled by his odd responses and behaviour ('A cemetery. I was inside a grave'). The Clerk attempts to understand why the family unit should be the thing to be upheld above all others. He realises the answers he is now seeking cannot be found at home.

The Clerk announces 'today I am not going to have my lunch'. His mother drops dead from shock. The Clerk realises he feels nothing, 'There is no pain. It's all in the eyes, you see. The eyes are dry.' He flees, leaving his wife with his wages 'earned honestly'.

The Bank Manager arrives with the news that the Clerk has absconded with 60,000 marks. Wife breaks down and screams at her daughters: 'Who are you? Monsters! Parasites! Monkey faces! What are you to me? My husband has left me...'

The Clerk boards a train to Berlin, leaving his old life behind in search of experience in the big city.

INTERVAL

## 5. Society

At a velodrome in Berlin a six-day cycle race is well underway. Two STEWARDS are making their final preparations for the impending royal visit from the Kaiser. The Clerk, now dressed in expensive top hat and tails, enters with two SOCIETY GENTS who are overseeing proceedings.

Through a loud-hailer, the Gents announce that a prize of 1,000 marks has been donated by an 'anonymous gentleman who wishes to remain anonymous' for the next sprint. The competitors all line up to start. Throughout the race the Clerk is struck by how the crowd has come to life with the

excitement of the competition. He begins to realise the effect that money has on them. The spectators go wild: he witnesses people falling from the balconies and being crushed underfoot as the crowd abandon the normal rules of behaviour. He believes he may have found 'the commodity worth the investment' and offers a much larger prize – 50,000 marks.

A SALVATION ARMY GIRL attempts to sell the Clerk a copy of *War Cry* for ten pfennigs. The Clerk only has gold on him and he rejects the girl's pleas. The Gents announce the new prize donated by the Clerk, but, just as the prize is announced and the atmosphere in the stadium reaches fever-pitch, the tension is broken by the arrival of the Kaiser and the spectators all leave the race track.

Disillusioned by the spectators' reaction, the Clerk packs away his money and leaves the velodrome. He says he won't pay 50,000 'for the glory of some grovelling old hunchback'.

## 6. Sex

The Clerk enters a Berlin cabaret bar in search of women. He asks the WAITER to arrange a private room for him and a guest. The first act to perform is a HARLEQUIN. The Clerk brings the dancer back to his room and asks her to dazzle him with her wit. To his disappointment the Harlequin is only interested in the champagne he's ordered and drinks her fill before falling asleep on the floor. Humiliated by this encounter the Clerk throws a glass of champagne in her face and demands that she 'get out' of the room. The next act is an interpretive dance performed by masked dancers. The Clerk brings two of the

## Synopsis (continued)

MASKS back to his room and begs them not to speak – talking has cost him one girl already tonight. Seduced by the idea of the beauty hiding behind the performers' masks, the Clerk tells them he will award a prize to the most beautiful and lays down two piles of money in front of them – 'perhaps it is only beauty that really matters in this world'. They remove their masks and the Clerk sees that beauty is an illusion. He packs up his money once more and chases the masks back to the bar.

In the bar all the customers are now dancing and the Clerk weaves around them, unable to join in their revelry. He sees a girl dressed as a PIERRETTE standing still in the middle of the dance floor. He takes her to his private room and asks her to dance, imagining that 'it must be the movement of bodies that brings people to this place'. She refuses his pleas. She says she cannot dance, but he finds her refusals all the more intriguing.

The Salvation Army Girl comes into the cabaret and once again tries to sell the Clerk *War Cry*. He dismisses her and returns to asking the Pierrette to dance, showing her all the money he has as an incentive. She still says she cannot dance and shows him why: she has a wooden leg. Disgusted by her

deformity, the Clerk throws the water from the champagne ice bucket over her – 'plants must be watered'.

With the clock ticking closer to midnight, the Clerk leaves the cabaret.

### 7. Salvation

The Clerk follows the Salvation Army Girl to a Salvation Army meeting. The SALVATION ARMY OFFICER appeals to those at the meeting to step up to the microphone and confess their sins. The Clerk watches as different people testify. With each person's story, the Clerk finds parallels to his own. Those confessing include a PENITENT CYCLIST who has been taking part in the six-day cycle race, a GIRL SOLDIER who panicked when a lover revealed he had wooden legs, a man who hates his family life and a man who absconded with a large sum of money. The Salvation Army Girl begs the Clerk to join them. She says she will always be beside him.

The Clerk now believes 'there is not a single thing of worth on this earth that can be purchased with money' and owns up to his crime. He throws the stolen money to the congregation, expecting them to reject it as he has. However, the hall erupts as the mass of people fight for the cash, they tear at the money and each other as they gather as much as they can.

Thinking he has been left completely alone the Clerk breaks down at the sight of the Salvation Army Girl who, true to her word, has stayed with him. He embraces her, believing she is now the only true thing in the world. A POLICEMAN enters the hall and the girl runs to him triumphantly crying 'that's him! I found him! I want the reward, it's mine! It's mine!'

The Policeman sees the Clerk reaching towards his pocket and calls for the lights to be lowered in case he is dangerous. Death once more comes to the Clerk, this time disguised at the Salvation Army Girl.

Seeing it is now two minutes to midnight, the Clerk runs to the clock and attempts to turn back the hands. He is pursued by the policeman and, knowing now that there is no escape, he throws himself into the electric wires that hang from the ceiling and electrocutes himself.



Clerk (Adam Godley) and Pierrette (Emily Wachter)  
Production photo: Johan Persson

# Rehearsal diary

Staff Director Rebecca Frecknall documented the six-week rehearsal process; in these extracts, she reveals how the production emerged.

## Week One

After the initial formalities of the first meeting at the Jerwood Space rehearsal room, we gather round the model box to hear Soutra [Gilmour, designer] and Melly's [Still, director] ideas for the show and get our first glimpse of the world we will be creating in the Lyttelton Theatre. Melly decides to conduct the first read-through of the script at the same time as the design presentation and so the actors sit round the model and read the play, pausing between scenes for Melly and Soutra to talk through each design transition as they imagine it. The vision for the production is impressive and the cast all seem excited by the different aesthetic and visual ideas embedded within the design.

The rest of the day is dedicated to **RESEARCH**. Melly feels it's of vital importance that we become as familiar with the context of the play as possible, especially as we are setting the production in 1912, the year it was written. The company divides into pairs and each pair is allocated one of the following research topics:

1. German Expressionist Theatre
2. Nietzsche and Morality
3. Wedekind and Strindberg
4. Political and Historical Context
5. Cultural Context (Dance, Literature, Art)
6. Wagner and Schoenberg
7. The Stations of the Cross
8. Georg Kaiser

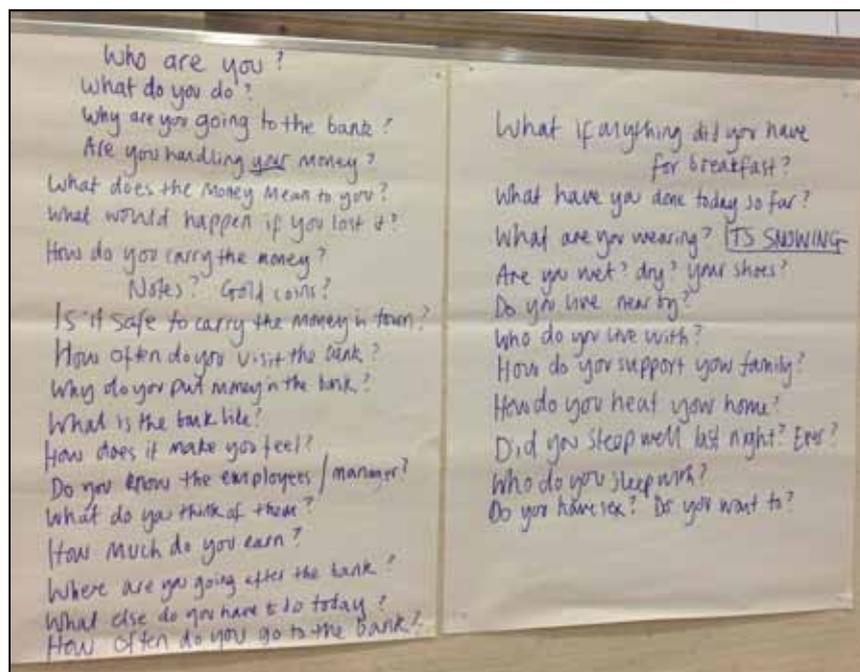
The company come together the following day to share their discoveries, and each pair does a short presentation. Everyone has worked hard and found some really useful information. Some people do practical showings of the dance or cabaret acts that were around at the time, and we listen to music, share pictures and information.

Each day starts with a **YOGA** session to open up the actors' bodies and prepare them for the physical demands of the show. It's quite a unifying force and everybody joins in, bringing focus to the start of the day. The play is to begin with a physical prologue sequence involving all of the ensemble as we introduce the characters of the town and set up the life within the bank. Before developing this section, Al Nedjari (movement director) leads some exercises to draw out the status of the different characters. First, everyone works with differing degrees of eye contact to explore how much being able to look in the eyes of others affects their status within the group. Then, Al gives each actor a playing card with a number from 1 to 10. This number informs the performer's status, with 10 being the highest possible and 1 the lowest. Everyone moves around the space, shaking hands and introducing themselves to anyone they meet in an attempt to deduce where they fit in the hierarchy. It becomes immediately apparent that status is not only something you can have yourself, but is also something that others endow you with. Al and the actors discuss how the performers can impact on each other, physically, and he asks them to remember these things when working on the prologue sequence.

Melly presents the company with a long list of questions to establish their different characters and their **INTENTIONS** in the opening of the production. For example:

- What is your job?
- What are you wearing (it's snowing)?
- What, if anything, did you have for breakfast?
- Do you live near the bank?
- Do you visit the bank often?
- Why are you in the bank?
- Did you sleep last night?

Wall of rehearsal room at the Jerwood Space  
Photo: Rebecca Frecknall



# Rehearsal diary (continued)

After answering these questions for themselves, everyone moves to the smaller rehearsal room to pick out bits of costume that are provided for rehearsals so they can begin working in period clothing.

Melly asks everyone to come up with a sequence which involves leaving their seats at the edge of the room, taking a journey around the space to get to the bank, entering the bank and completing some kind of transaction, before leaving and returning to their seats. These sequences are repeated until we form a continuous loop of action with people moving, keeping the bank constantly alive. We then begin to experiment with how this sequence could be abstracted by moving at double or triple time, or extending naturalistic gestures into a more dance-based language. This is a section we keep building upon until Melly and Al feel they've achieved what they imagined. The way of working is very open and collaborative and it has been amazing to begin working practically so early on in the process.

We alternate between developing the physical and transitional language of the piece and working on the scenes. This week the focus is the opening scene in the bank and it's really interesting to see the actors begin to create a **PSYCHOLOGY** for their characters. Melly is keen to ground them in some sort of reality in order to avoid the more 'commedia' or 'grotesque' elements of many of the characters dominating the acting style.

## Week Two

The production team have come over to fit a rehearsal revolve in our room at the Jerwood Space so the Company decamp to the National Theatre to continue working. Fight Director Kate [Waters] looks at the **FANTASY FIGHT** moment that Melly incorporates into scene two in the hotel. It's quite a complex sequence in which Melly wants to involve a bed sheet, an

image which will also run through the transition to the 'wilderness scene' [titled Epiphany]. Kate has never devised a fight using this kind of object and so it's interesting to watch her work with the actors to find the right language for this moment.

Different rehearsals happen in each of our three spaces, with people spilling into the production office to run lines or do research. It's a really committed company and the actors work together to devise sequences and solve problems. We work steadily through the script, creating a 'first sketch' of each scene as we go. Melly seems to want to go through the whole piece before returning to focus on individual scenes and sequences in detail. The rhythm of the piece is important, as are the structure and movement between scenes, physical transitions and animated sequences, and it's hard to make some decisions without working through the entire thing first.

We spend a lot of time looking at scenes two and three – when the play moves out of the hotel and into the snow-covered wilderness. Melly and Al work to establish the image of the white bed sheets of the hotel rooms throughout the scene in order to preempt the appearance of the gigantic white sheet which spills out of the bedroom door during the transition to become snow covering the landscape. The sheets are already set as part of the fight Kate is creating with the actors and Al choreographs a dance with the girls playing the hotel chambermaids which segues into the snow sheet sequence. The timing of each element of the transition is very specific as the physical sequence has to incorporate a flown piece of scenery and a revolve cue as well as the different choreographed sections. The cast are amazing, working tirelessly and with such patience to achieve the best image for this moment. They're problem-solvers, which is essential for this kind of work.

Adam Godley [playing Clerk] arrives early to run lines and solidify the work he's been doing with Melly. It's amazing to watch him develop the character and make new discoveries as he revisits scenes from last week. He has such a big job to do and is always thinking and working.

By the end of the week we just about make our way through the entire first half of the show including an initial sketch of all of the physical transitions between scenes and the opening movement sequence. We take our first look at the **FAMILY SCENE**, the last scene before the interval when the Clerk decides to leave his wife, mother and daughters behind in his search for fulfilment. Melly focuses the warm-up and initial exercises on the situation of the scene. She begins by asking the actors playing family members



Adam Godley (Clerk) in rehearsal.  
Photo: Johan Persson

## Rehearsal diary (continued)

to stand face-to-face with a partner and hold eye contact for three minutes. Each actor then moves to another partner and continues the pattern until they have spent time with each of the members of their family. This exercise progresses to the actors mirroring one another's actions, still maintaining eye contact and building up from being stationary to travelling around the space together. Melly tells the group that Adam is now the leader of the movement and they each have to try and get the most attention from him. The character dynamics shift throughout this improvisation with the daughters bending the rules of the game in order to gain their father's focus.



Left to right: Christian From, Emily Mytton, Melly Still and Zackary Momoh in rehearsal  
Photo: Johan Persson

After these more abstract exercises Melly asks the actors to use the furniture in the rehearsal room to create the layout of their home. She then sets two **IMPROVISATIONS**:

1. a new piano arrives for the Second Daughter and the family discuss where to put it in the parlour
2. explore the normal day-to-day lunchtime routine when the Clerk arrives home from work. The relationships between different family members are immediately apparent, with quite a significant bitter rivalry between the sisters. Kelly [Williams], who plays the Wife, is completely overshadowed by the other characters as she tries to take care of her husband and keep the peace. It is also fascinating to see how Adam as the Clerk functions in a domestic environment surrounded by women: until this point, he has only really been seen in his place of work. When we then work on the scene, the actors' performances seem truthful and rich. Through undertaking this exploratory work, our first rehearsal on this section is more advanced and fruitful than it might otherwise have been.

Our video artist Andrzej [Goulding, video & projection designer] and the creative team sit round his laptop to make decisions about the projections Melly wants to use as chapter headings for each scene. Andrzej is creating short animated sequences which reflect the style of the **ANIMATIONS** of the play's period. The piece is very rhythmic and so it's important for everyone to agree how the animation will fit into the transitions between scenes. Melly thinks each animated title could clearly mark the beginning of each new situation and so we look at how this could work – we may even have a few images to start playing with in rehearsals. Melly also wants to work with the live-feed video camera will be mounted on

Adam's glasses during the first and last scenes, so our production team have rigged up a temporary live-feed system using a hand-held camera to give us an idea of the effects we can create.

### Week Three

We move into the second half of the show which opens with a scene in a **VELODROME**. It's a complex scene and we search to come up with the right theatrical language to represent the various elements of this chapter. A six-day cycle race continues throughout the action and different cycle sprint races intersperse it, which we need to find a way of portraying on stage. The dialogue is also quite demanding and Adam has two very descriptive speeches which Melly would like to enhance through use of the ensemble without being illustrative of the text. Needless to say, rehearsals this week are particularly physical!

A dance technique called **CONTACT IMPROVISATION** forms part of the company's warm-ups and this way of moving feeds the ensemble moments of the scene. Melly and Al envisage some kind of choreographed celebration/rebellion/riot at the end of the cycle race, showing how the structures of society have been broken apart by the effect of the Clerk's money on the spectators. Contact improvisation is all about ensemble work and the giving and taking of weight with your movement partner. Melly hopes that by training the company in this style the actors will be able to develop it in this physical sequence.

# Rehearsal diary (continued)

Christian From, one of the trained dancers in the company, gives us an introduction to contact work. Everyone works together each morning to build up their repertoire and confidence as Christian guides the group through different exercises.

Continuous physical training leads to a shared language between the actors and their devising becomes more advanced than it might have otherwise been. They experiment with lifts and build quite complex images or ideas within a relatively short time. The exploratory and collaborative approach means the actors already have a real sense of **OWNERSHIP** of the work.

Now that we're further through the play, the company work on some of their scenes on the Lyttelton stage to get an idea of the amount of energy and clarity that will be needed in performance. Jeannette [Nelson, Company Voice Work] adds vocal layers to Al's physical warm-ups, and she works with Melly on one particular section of the velodrome scene. This abstract section with more expressionist intentions involves the ensemble sitting with their backs to the audience, removing their tops to reveal their backs and breathing deeply throughout Adam's speech. The gesture represents the essence of the crowd's return to 'pure humanity'. As we can't illustrate the descriptions in Adam's lines literally, we delve into more abstract or **EXPRESSIONIST** images instead. Jeannette, therefore, works to develop breathing techniques.

It is a luxury for the actors to work on the stage during the rehearsal process and it will be beneficial as we move into technical rehearsals, because it means that adapting to the acoustics of the Lyttelton can start gradually rather than at the same time as the actors are also trying to adjust to set, costume, lighting, and the anticipation of the first preview.

## Week Four

This week we focus on two of the biggest scenes in the production: the velodrome and the cabaret from Act Two. These two sections have a lot of challenges in common. They are both full ensemble moments, involve complicated choreographed sections and are interspersed with shorter, more intimate scenes with dialogue. As many traits as they share, these two chapters sit next to each other in the structure of the play and require the establishment of two very different **ATMOSPHERES**.

The cabaret scene shifts between short episodes in a private room rented by the Clerk, and the main performance room in the club, where there is always a different act performing. Melly and Al spend a lot of time making this structure work, finding the right theatrical language to create clarity between the two different spaces that the Clerk inhabits. As the ensemble remain on stage throughout, there needs to be a convention whereby the life of the club continues underneath each of the scenes in the private room, but in a way that contributes to these scenes rather than distracting from them. Different ways of making the ensemble action recede are discussed: The action could freeze each time the Clerk leaves the club room, it could move into slow-motion, or perhaps lighting could focus on the private room while lights go down on the club. The sequences of the scene are worked on chronologically, and we decide that a mixture of all three possibilities would best serve the action.

There are three different scenes in the Clerk's room, where he takes three different cabaret acts with him. For the first two, the Harlequin and the Masks, the ensemble audience are positioned on chairs, chatting and watching the show: at these points it



Photo: Johan Persson

## Rehearsal diary (continued)

feels most fitting to just let the scene recede through use of sound and lighting in order to focus on the dialogue between the Clerk and his girls. However, during his last encounter with the Pierrette, the customers dance an apache waltz. At this point Melly and Al want to work with slow motion to allow this bigger, more present physical language to continue to exist whilst allowing the audience to follow the duologue. The company have so much experience of ensemble and physical work that they're able to move through many different physical languages, from specific choreography to structured improvisations and more tableaux-based pieces.

This week we reach the final scene of the play. The **SALVATION ARMY** chapter of the Clerk's journey is something we haven't worked on at all and so it feels like a real achievement to have got to this point. Melly feels it is important to spend some time with only the actors who play the Salvation Army soldiers and those who repent. She wants to establish the characters, begin to develop a shared understanding of the Salvation Army movement and discuss the creation of back stories for the characters, to keep the scene really specific. The atmosphere of the rehearsal room feels very different as we move from focusing on the very visual and physical moments of the piece to a more intimate scene. We sit around on the floor and discuss the scene, the characters, the history of the Salvation Army, and read the scene together. There's been an idea all along that the different people that inhabit the meeting are all characters we've seen before, fragments of encounters the Clerk has had along his journey. All the actors, therefore, try to make their Salvation Army characters the same as someone they've already played who has been on some sort of journey to arrive at the church.

When the rest of the company join us we have a better sense of the atmosphere of the scene, but before working on it Melly gives everyone the opportunity to share any thoughts or ask any questions they have about the journey through the play so far, specifically the formation of the Clerk's different experiences. It feels good to have a moment of reflection at this point in rehearsals, a time when



Wall of rehearsal room at the Jerwood Space.  
Photo: Rebecca Frecknall

everyone can once more join together and think about the play and our journey. It is also helpful to connect all the work we've done as we haven't begun to run sections together yet.

Melly then asks everyone to get into pairs to discuss their characters and come up with a logical **BACK STORY** for how they had all arrived at the SA meeting. This is to ensure that everyone's contribution to the scene is really detailed. As they all know they are playing 'down-and-out' versions of one of their previous characters, they now have to come up with a logical journey from their situation the last time we saw them, to this point. For example, Rob [Gilbert] who plays the Doorman at the Bank in the first scene decides that he has been fired from his job for leaving the door and the Clerk unattended (which resulted in him absconding with the 60,000 marks). Since he has been dismissed, he no longer has an income and is unable to find work so has fallen on hard times and attends the SA meetings to guarantee a few hot meals. These kinds of details are vital in the formation of a character, especially as most of the characters in this scene hardly speak. The specificity of these back stories and journeys through the play should keep the scene rooted and help to develop a richness within the ensemble work. Without this kind of foundation, group scenes can easily become generalised and unfocused, and the work can get thin throughout performance as the actors don't have enough information to keep feeding their work.

After these discussions Melly splits the group, asking the 'down-and-outs' to go to a separate room and costume themselves in what they feel their characters

# Rehearsal diary (continued)

would be wearing. The Salvation Army soldiers remain and set up the meeting room with furniture already used within the production. Melly asks the actors to begin a **STRUCTURED IMPROVISATION** whereby the soldiers convince each of the other characters to come to the meeting. They gradually coax more people into the main rehearsal room, sit them down and provide them with blankets and hot soup (using plastic cups of water we always have in the rehearsal room). Once they have managed to get everyone assembled, the actors playing the soldiers hand out everyone's scripts (as if they were hymn sheets) and Gina [Bellman], who plays the Salvation Army Officer, begins the scene. Many of the lines that Dennis [Kelly, adaptor] has written here are interjections from the group and it's not specified who says what. We use this improvisation as an opportunity to see what people feel their characters might say. Melly gives the instruction that anyone can say any of the ensemble lines, which gives an interestingly real feel to the gathering as no one knows who might speak next.

This first practical look at the scene is rich with everyone embodying their characters with specificity and sensitivity. The rhythm of the scene as Dennis has written is clear and the actors all have a very strong sense of the atmospheric shifts. For a first attempt the scene feels honest and well-formed and everyone seems positive about the work. We are also able to use the **DISCOVERIES** of the improvisations to inform decisions about the delegation of lines. This feels like a much more specific and fruitful way of dividing up ensemble lines than by allocating them cold, as people are able to have an opinion of what they would and wouldn't say within the situation.

Everyone works particularly hard this week using all possible time and space to develop the work. A glorious moment comes when Melly takes a rehearsal in the main space, while Soutra conducts costume fittings in the smaller room, and actors review scenes we haven't visited for a while in the production office, whilst others rehearse songs in the corridors, and I run lines with Adam outside the toilets. This is an incredibly committed company!

## Week Five

We've begun to introduce **FOLEY WORK** to some of the scenes. Live sound effects will be used by the actors on stage to represent money each time it is referenced – but we haven't had a chance to find out how this will work until now. Sound designer Christopher Shutt organises a session to record some of the money sounds for the moments where the entire ensemble is on stage (and therefore the effects need to be pre-recorded), and to teach those who will be doubling as foley artists. It's only now, in our fifth week of rehearsals, that we are able to see whether this theoretical idea, which evolved during the early rehearsal stages, is going to work. These moments are always exciting to witness as there's every possibility that what we have all imagined won't work in reality and so there's always a bit of nervous energy surrounding these first practical explorations. The foley money sounds actually work brilliantly. It feels completely valid within the theatrical world we've created and also helps to declare our convention of never using or seeing real money in the production.

We're coming to the end of our rehearsal period and with only one more week to go before we transfer to the theatre for technical rehearsals the working schedule is busier than ever. As there are so many different characters in the play the **COSTUME** department have their work cut out: whole mornings of rehearsal time have to be designed around costume fittings. Melly and AI work on little sections depending on who's available and multiple calls take place simultaneously in any available spaces to make sure we're still using the time as effectively as possible. However, during the days when we are not disturbed, the company start running whole sections of the play chronologically. The mood of the rehearsal room has noticeably shifted – the actors' spirits lift now they can see the fruits of their labours coming together. Everyone's been working so hard and we've been exploring so much of the play out of sequence that the actors' tiredness has often overcome them, but now it seems we've found a second wind as a company and the production is coming together.



The actors don't use money on stage, but prop money is used in rehearsal to help choreograph how their hands should move.  
Photo: Johan Persson

## Rehearsal diary (continued)

It's been interesting to see how the actors' performances have developed now that we revisit the early scenes of the play. Adam's work and his thinking about the character of the Clerk have begun to shape the scenes, and his long monologue in the wilderness seems to have taken on new depths and clarity of thought. Striking the right balance between the visual elements of the show and the rigour of the script work, the actors are enjoying spending more time on the text now that the production has a complete physical shape. Gina and Rob, who play the Italian Lady and her Son, explore different possibilities for the **CHARACTERS' ACCENTS** with Melly. We began the rehearsal process with the Italian characters speaking with the actors' own accents, in the same way as the German characters. Gina then began to explore working with an Italian accent as a way of developing the character, and this stuck for a few weeks. We're now at a stage where we hear the characters' Italian accents when they're in the presence of the Germans, but in the scenes on their own they speak with English accents. It's a tricky convention to make clear but it seems to be offering up something interesting within the tapestry of the piece.

Kerry [McDevitt], our stage manager, arranges for us to have some time on the bare Lyttelton stage so that we can workshop the sheet work in the wilderness scene in a more realistic environment. This is to make sure that the company are able to recreate on stage the images they've developed in the rehearsal room before we hit technical rehearsals. Taking these elements into the larger performance space proves tricky and the cast adapt to their new surroundings in order to find the most effective way of working with the fabric. Al and Melly are on hand to offer new solutions to the difficulties the actors encounter, and by the end of our session we have found the most effective way of manipulating the **SNOW SHEET** to meet Melly's vision.

Dave Price (composer) is in rehearsals quite a lot this week and takes timings of all the sections of the piece that require music. Different musical elements have been introduced to the work at different stages of the process: Dave is still writing many of the pieces and also has limited time to rehearse the musicians. He works

with the cast members who will be singing in the production, in particular with those playing the Salvation Army soldiers. They work together to learn four-part harmonies for the hymn that supports the transition into the final scene. The addition of live singing adds a new texture to the transition and the music creates the necessary shifts in atmosphere throughout the production. Next week we'll integrate all of the live music into the work that the actors have been doing throughout rehearsals. **MUSIC AND SOUND** are huge aspects of this production and Melly wants to start work with these elements in order to achieve the right feel in each chapter of the piece before we move into the theatre and have all of the visual and technical elements to integrate.



Adam Godley rehearses the 'wilderness scene'  
Photos: Rebecca Frecknall

# Rehearsal diary (continued)

## Week Six

Nicholas Hytner [Director of the National] and Ben Power [NT Associate], watch a run of the first half, and Sebastian Born [Literary Associate] watches the second. It is interesting to see how the performers respond to the energy of these new spectators, especially as this is the first time they have put the scenes and transitions together. It is perhaps quite liberating to have Nick see the piece at the moment, as it means the actors' attentions are so taken up with the work ahead of them that having the Director of the theatre in the room doesn't seem to faze them. It is also helpful to have new 'OUTSIDE EYES' on the work, and they seem really excited by what they see. Melly is pleased that most of their notes are the same as hers and it seems everyone is working towards the same goal, aware of the steps still needed to get us there.

The company are plagued by illness this week, as 'flu virus takes some people out of action quite rapidly. We need to carry on working without them as we're rapidly approaching our technical rehearsals. The actors seem in good spirits though: they can see the production come together as we begin to run the acts. Adam benefits from being able to map the Clerk's journey through the piece, and is able to clarify the different beats of each scene in relation to the others. It's exciting to see everyone adding new layers of detail to their performances, mapping the logic of their progression through the production in order to achieve real specificity.

Dave works on overdrive to write the underscore as well as all of the transitional and cabaret music. He

and Melly layer the score over the action, section by section. It's amazing how much the music influences the on-stage action and helps to clarify the fantasy moments in the 'hotel scene' [titled *The Bourgeoisie*]. Chris Shutt is also present in rehearsals as he and Dave work on the moments where the sound and music come together to augment the atmosphere. The velodrome in part two, for example, includes a whole physical sequence scored partly by live music from the musicians, and partly by recorded sound designed by Chris. The company work hard to marry their physical action and choreography with this **COMBINED DESIGN**, and sections are repeated again and again until all of the different elements successfully merge. It's invaluable to have time set aside to focus on the music as it's such an integral layer of the production and the on-stage world and one that could easily take up a huge amount of our tech time. Even though we stagger through the whole piece only once with music, this first drafting provides the actors and Melly with a clearer understanding of the aural elements of the production before we transfer to the stage.

The week culminates in our **FIRST FULL RUN-THROUGH** of the play in the rehearsal room, to which the dressers and many members of the technical and production teams are invited. It is fantastic to see all of the work that's been done over the past six weeks come together for the first time, and many of the actors seem to make new discoveries about their characters, or their physical journey through the production. It's a mammoth piece for Adam, and watching him take his performance all the way through the play for the first time is very moving. The production demands a central performance of real detail and integrity and Adam delivers a wonderfully rich and well-crafted performance.

The Salvation Army scene is a point of focus again this week as it's a complex scene which requires balance between the intricacies of the individual characters and the ensemble's **RHYTHMIC** shifts that provide the atmospheric journey of the scene. Melly tries to ensure each actor maps their character's journey through the scene so this final chapter of the production is rooted in a reality – the level of detail means the company avoid becoming a generic rabble. However, the scene does require the ensemble to work together to hit particular changes as a group and provide a sense of the physical journey to what otherwise would be an incredibly static scene. We make good progress, after spending some time focusing on it, and it's interesting to feel the company's attitude shifting towards this section of the play. Each scene has gone through a journey



Dave Price in rehearsal  
Photo: Johan Persson

# Rehearsal diary (continued)

in which the actors had a period of uncertainty, when they disliked the direction it's going and felt they couldn't make it work, only to overcome this feeling and find a way to solve the challenges set by the text. Some such scenes are now their favourites and it's gratifying to feel the whole team continually unite throughout the course of the rehearsal period.

Our last day in our temporary home at the Jerwood Space and no-one is under any illusion that our tech period is going to be easy. There's a shared sense that we're heading into an extremely tough and demanding period of work but we're at a stage where the work has outgrown the rehearsal room and we need to transfer our energies to the theatre.

Rebecca Frecknall, Staff Director

From Morning Till Midnight		
Production Schedule - Draft 6		
Sat Nov 23	10:00	Technical work as required
	12:00 - 13:00	Company notes session (not on stage)
	12:30	Set up for rehearsals
	13:00	Technicians meal break
	13:30	Company rehearsals on stage - no technical support
	13:30	Company to break
	14:00	Rehearsals on stage - technical support
	17:00	Reset for preview
	18:00	Meal break
	18:55	Half hour call
19:30	Preview 4	
Sun Nov 24		no work
Mon Nov 25	9:00	Focus plotting
	12:00 - 13:00	Company notes session (not on stage)
	12:30	Set up for rehearsals
	13:00	Technicians meal break
	13:30	Company rehearsals on stage - no technical support
	14:00	Rehearsals on stage - technical support
	17:00	Reset for preview
	18:00	Meal break
	18:55	Half hour call
	19:30	Preview 5
Tue Nov 26	9:00	Focus plotting
	12:00 - 13:00	Company notes session (not on stage)
	12:30	Set up for rehearsals
	13:00	Technicians meal break
	13:30	Company rehearsals on stage - no technical support
	14:00	Rehearsals on stage - technical support
	16:30	Reset for preview
	17:30	Meal break
	18:25	Half hour call
	19:00	Preview 6
Wed Nov 27	9:00	Focus plotting
	11:45	Reset for matinee
	12:45	Meal break
	13:40	Half hour call
	14:15	Matinee pre-press performance
	acd	Reset
	18:00	Meal break
	18:55	Half hour call
	19:30	Pre-press performance
	acd	Set up for rehearsals
Thur Nov 28	09:00	Focus plot
	13:00	Meal break
	14:00	Company to work on stage, no tech support
	16:30 tbc	Reset, set/light platform
	18:00	Meal break
	18:00 - 18:45	Platform performance (Melly Still) tbc
	18:55	Half hour call
	19:30	Pre-press performance
acd	Strike to bare stage	
Tue Dec 3	9:00	Change over into From Morning To Midnight
	13:00	Meal break
	14:00	Continue above
	16:00	Rehearsals on stage
	17:30	Reset
	18:55	Half hour call
	19:30	Pre-press performance
Wed Dec 4	11:45	Reset for matinee
	12:45	Meal break
	13:40	Half hour call
	14:15	Matinee pre-press performance
	acd	Reset
	18:00	Meal break
	18:55	Half hour call
19:30	Pre-press performance	
Thur Dec 5	13:00	Set up for rehearsals
	13:30	Rehearsals on stage, technical support
		press photocall?? tbc
	16:30	Reset, set/light platform
	18:00	Meal break
	18:00 - 18:45	Platform performance (Derek Jacobi)
	18:55	Half hour call
19:30	Pre-press performance	
Fri Dec 6	13:30	Set up for rehearsals
	14:00	Rehearsals on stage, technical support
	17:00	Reset
	18:00	Meal break
	18:55	Half hour call
	19:30	Press performance

Production schedule for *From Morning to Midnight*

# Interview with Melly Still

*From Morning to Midnight* Director, Melly Still, on her approach to directing the German Expressionist masterpiece.

How did you first discover this play and why did you want to direct it?

I was introduced to Kaiser when I was student in the '80s. I read *From Morning to Midnight* then but it was Bash [Sebastian Born], the National's literary manager (and more) who asked me if I knew it and if I would be interested in directing it. I was provoked and fascinated by it when I re-read it a few years ago – sufficiently intrigued to pursue further work on it.

What were your initial ideas for the production? Which themes did you want to explore within the piece?

Well it's about yearning to find meaning in life and about taking a wrong turn when the search for meaning begins: money being the omniscient presence in one's life, that points us in the wrong direction or clouds our judgement. It's also a response to Nietzsche's proclamation a few years earlier (the play was written in 1912): *God Is Dead*, man must rethink his (probably exclusively him at the time) values. In the play the protagonist works out that money has no real value and, on confronting 'Death' at the end of the play, he laments that he didn't live his life with the knowledge he now has. To Death he says: you could have told me, saved me all this trouble. I've loved exploring this theme and our lifelong, horrendous entanglement with money. Why do we put ourselves through it? We've got ONE life, we know this, and yet we pretty much blow it. Brilliant. It's also about the underlying reality behind or beneath a given appearance, and the protagonist has to peel away the layers of illusion to discover what is truly what.

This is a German Expressionist play; how did you work with the idea of Expressionism to stage it for a modern audience?

I researched first of all to understand the evolution of German Expressionism and to locate its place in history, politics and culture. I think *From Morning to Midnight* is an extraordinary expression of an explosive time, politically and culturally. Very exciting. We're now familiar with Expressionism: it was at the front-edge of Modernism and it continues to infiltrate every art form. For instance, we're familiar with a location in theatre being a construct of a character's mind, we're familiar with non-realistic presentation, or of imagery replacing language. These stem from Expressionism. The stage, Expressionists felt, was a place of struggle. Kaiser declared it is no moral institution, it is a battleground. So I tried to understand Expressionism – in part so I could avoid creating a pastiche of it – but I didn't really adopt Expressionism in the making of the production. The piece itself demanded different responses depending on scene and circumstance. It was like working on seven plays.



Melly Still in rehearsal  
Photo: Johan Persson

Adam Godley who plays the Clerk undertook a huge challenge in taking on this role. How did you work with him to create the character?

Well he did all the work. I simply tried to understand the character and imagine his struggle so that I could map out his physical journey. I provided the scaffolding, as it were, for Adam to create the character.

Dennis Kelly has written a new version of the original play for this production. Did you work with him during the development of the script? And how did the text evolve in the rehearsal room?

A literal translation was commissioned by the NT first of all, then Bash and I discussed appropriate writers. We didn't have to think too hard. It had to be Dennis. Dennis, Bash and I chatted but Dennis came up with the drafts. I think there were six or seven in all. What you see on stage could well be draft seven. There are always tinkering to be made and, yes, there were workshops, but these were as much an exploration of how to stage it as about excavating the text. Dennis was present probably for half the workshop time and always made changes in response. We would often meet in a local café (we live near each other) to unravel the play's intentions. It was brain scrambling at times. He wasn't around during rehearsals but once we were on stage and previewing he was on it full-time. Many changes were made during this preview period.

# Interview with Melly Still (continued)

The design of the production is so integrated with the performance style and the direction of the piece; how did you and the designer Soutra Gilmour, decide upon the visual world?

I surround myself with relevant imagery and music when I work on a show but when both Soutra and the composer Dave Price attended early workshops they brought with them far more than I could have imagined. We watched, listened, talked and allowed thoughts to trickle and distill. My initial idea was to create with the simplest of means a representation of a bank that could be dismantled and reconstructed to form all the other locations. This would reflect the Clerk's limited experience and ineluctable return to all things monetary. Soutra had just been working at the Armoury in New York – a vast indoor former military holding built for Lincoln's troops – and she was inspired by its industrial scale and aesthetic. We allowed this to feed into our own arena. Cogs and wheels are essential ingredients of the play, and we responded to this when choosing to use a revolve, a clock and bicycle wheels. Kaiser, I think, likes to invert symbols – we often think of a circle (revolve, clock, wheel) as being a symbol of continuity and harmony but in the play it soon becomes a vehicle for monotony, approaching death and destruction.

This is a true ensemble production and a very physical piece. How did you work with the movement director to develop the physical sequences?

Al [Nedjar] is an actor and director and all-round theatre-maker. In the capacity of actor he attended a workshop. He's always an inspirational collaborator. He tries out ideas he doesn't like with indefatigable passion, just in case he can make it work! I love that. When I was thinking about working with a choreographer, Mary Carter who heads the contracts department – and knows everyone – suggested Al. He'd never worked as a choreographer before but this show needed a group of theatre-makers to work as collaborators more than it needed artists with strictly defined roles. Mary recognised this before I did and encouraged me to invite Al on board. I wanted to work with someone who would be as much stimulated by the cultural and intellectual context of the play as the more obvious physical elements so that the fruits of our investigation would be as authentic as possible. Again, I think I was trying, if possible, to avoid pastiche. Al and I would often find ourselves co-directing and co-choreographing early on in rehearsals, until it became clear who needed to get on with what. It was a perfect collaboration from my perspective – who knows what he felt! The actors are all very inventive and physical and so much of the work you see is devised by them. In that sense, Al and I might introduce the environment and structure for an idea but it is the actors who then create.

What do you hope people will take away from the production?

I imagine they will be provoked. After all, Kaiser's plays were described as 'Denkspielen' – thought plays. He denied emotional engagement at the cost of intellectual engagement. He felt both were crucial. This is something Brecht borrowed and finessed: the idea that we might be provoked into action if we retain a detached critical awareness. My understanding is that Kaiser wanted people to emerge from their seats discussing, if not arguing. To that end it might be considered didactic. I've been aware of this in the making of *From Morning to Midnight* and have tried to steer it away from didacticism. My hope is that people will take away an appreciation of commonality: we all die, but there is comfort in that inescapable commonality. That we might in the end not be so fearful. I would like, but don't expect, our audience to recognise themselves affectionately in the awkward Clerk and if nothing else, I hope they are entertained or stirred by the delicate layers of the piece with its inherent oddness that interrupts expectation.

# Interview with Adam Godley

Adam Godley, who plays the Clerk in *From Morning to Midnight*, was interviewed by Rebecca Frecknall after the production had opened.

**What was your first introduction to the play?**

I first read it back in March 2013 when it was sent to me as a very early draft. Dennis [Kelly, adaptor] had already done some work on it but it was quite different to the version we ended up working on. That was the first I'd heard of it – I was coming in completely cold.

**Was that the first you'd heard of Melly Still [director] as well? Or did you know her work?**

I knew of Melly because I had been working at the NT when *Coram Boy* was on. I'd never seen her work but I knew of her and I had a sense of what Melly did differently to everybody else.

**What sense was that?**

Well the nature of her work told me a lot. It's clearly very imaginative, using a lot of physicality, a lot of imagination, very multi-media, very technical. So when I read the draft of this sort of unperformable play and knew that Melly was going to be directing it, it made sense to put those two things together. Melly Still and this crazy play – with Dennis Kelly in the mix.

**And presumably you wanted to do it?**

I immediately wanted to do it because a lot of what the central character, the Clerk, is raging about I connected with. The thing I most remember from the first reading is

his big speech in the velodrome and what he says about society and people. I remember this phrase: 'The first tier they are just standing there, restrained, watching as fitter people just chase cash around and around.' That's almost word for word something I'd felt about theatre. I remember years ago seeing a production in the Minerva at Chichester, and the people were all sitting round so... I mean, I don't want to cast aspersions about the people of Chichester but it was a very polite, sedate, very upper-middle-class audience, in their blazers, and they'd all been to the Pimms tent, and they were having a lovely evening. This play – I can't even remember what it was – was a Russian play. It was visceral and sexual, this person's life was just falling apart – and I got the strongest sense that these people were paying money to watch other people behaving in a way that they themselves couldn't. When I read that in this play [*From Morning...*] I just went, 'Yes! I get it, and I want to do it.' I loved it; I found the first half intoxicating and the second half more difficult.

**You mean the first time you read it?**

When I very first read it. And I think that as time has gone on and we've worked on it, I understand more about Georg Kaiser and why his work is so difficult. It's not supposed to be comfortable and easy, it's part of who he was and what he wanted to do. As time went on, I got it more and more and that became less of a problem.

**Kaiser writes these archetypes, they are all labelled as their role rather than as having a psychology. Dennis has done a good job of giving them that psychology in a way that Kaiser didn't – but do you find that through looking into Kaiser as an individual there were any links between him and that central character? Or is that character an objective idea of his?**

In a very superficial sense the minute I found a picture of Kaiser, I thought – there's the Clerk, and I've certainly based my look partly on that. It is fascinating then to read about him and realise he is not what he looks like. He looks like the most mild-mannered, trodden-down, grey man and clearly Kaiser was anything but. I didn't know that until we started research in rehearsal, I didn't know anything about his life but I think subliminally, and certainly as part of the process and having those six weeks of rehearsal working together with Melly, you draw upon everybody. Everything that was brought into those research projects plays upon your subconscious. I've definitely felt the freedom to draw on all of that. There's nothing linear about the character. We talked about whether this character is the same at the end of the play. Yes, because there are about 18 different aspects to him, and the wonderful thing is when you just embrace that: the more different things you are the better – that's what makes interesting human beings. There's a wonderful sense of being able to embrace the contradictions not only in the character, but in his journey, and out of that comes something really interesting.



Adam Godley as the Clerk in *From Morning to Midnight*  
Production photo: Johan Persson

# Adam Godley interview (continued)

The Clerk, the character you play, is the only character who has a complete journey from the beginning to the end of the play. I keep trying to describe how that central character works, and I say it is almost like a one-man show, but with loads of other characters. He meets different people in every scene, but they don't go with him on his journey – although, in some ways they do. How has it been to work with an ensemble in this way? Everyone is present in every scene, but they don't have the through-line of character that you have.

It's been tremendously interesting because I can't do any of it without them and the character doesn't work without the ensemble. It absolutely wouldn't work as a one-man show and I realised that really early on. Everything everybody is doing – and Melly encouraged us to go in that direction – reflects him and he reflects them, their versions of him. In a sense we are all that character together and the set is part of his head and the audience get taken inside his head. It feels like a true ensemble; we are all creating this character that is the journey through this play. I feel really connected to them all when I am out there doing it every night because we are so in tune with each other, physically and emotionally. It absolutely doesn't feel like I am out there alone. Even in the scene we call the 'wilderness', the epiphany, where he is alone in the middle of nowhere, I am in fact the opposite of that: I am surrounded and held up and shrouded by 15 fantastic actors and we are all doing that scene together. It is incredibly satisfying and rewarding to work in that intensely intimate ensemble way with everybody and that's why I have such huge respect for them. They have demonstrated such generosity. It could feel like I am at the centre of it all, and they are creating a picture that makes the Clerk look amazing, but the way Melly has created this show nothing is hidden. I think the audience is well aware that every picture we create, even if the Clerk is at the centre of it, is created by the entire cast.

Was it difficult trying to find the character using the text as well as giving the time to the visual elements?

It was hard because we were mainly focused on the mechanics and the visual and discovering ways of making them work. I love Dennis' [Kelly] language and he's infused a lot of this guy's character into the words that he speaks. So I had all these great clues just in Dennis' choice of language and the way he put words together. I definitely had moments where I felt I was jumping over voids and I had yet to find the bridges and links between who the character is at the beginning, middle and end – the family scene, for instance, is very particular and self-contained and it's as though it's from another play. And then the velodrome is completely different – who is he in those two scenes? But there is something about trusting it. I think we all felt that, once we started putting it together and playing it – and the first run-through was incredibly instructive and revealing.



Adam Godley as the Clerk in *From Morning to Midnight*  
Production photo: Johan Persson

I just go through those scenes and that is who the Clerk is. He is *this* one minute, he's *that* the next, he has *this* experience, *this* reaction. Even now, midway through the run, I'm still discovering who he is and making adjustments. I think we could definitely have rehearsed it for six months and we could play it for six years and we would still be discovering things. It's one of those plays. It's kaleidoscopic, phantasmagorical, rich and crazy, a never-ending voyage of discovery – but definitely difficult. Towards the end of rehearsal, I wondered if the character I was now playing made sense. There is something about the whole enterprise that just requires you to climb to the top diving board, close your eyes and just go. I think we were definitely all up for that. You jump and hope you land on your feet at the other end.

How was that moment of translating what you had done in rehearsals into the Lyttelton?

It was OK. We'd sensibly spent a little bit of time in the Lyttelton in the weeks leading up to 'tech' so it wasn't a total shock, which is important because it is such a different space. Curiously, because of the way the acting space in the Lyttelton is configured, the auditorium kind of shrinks so we feel we are bigger than them [the audience] and we have no need to be frightened of them. Melly said she felt it was a bit of a shock for the creative team, because suddenly they were at a distance, having been butted up against us in rehearsal. We're all so into what we're doing that we are not even really aware. It is so all-consuming, being in a play, so it felt strangely freeing, to be in this vast space. If you look at the cyclists in the velodrome, they cycle at full speed across the back because there is the space to do it. I feel I could just run for five minutes in one direction without hitting a wall, so it is very liberating. There were enormous technical and physical hurdles to overcome, but it felt quite a positive experience.

## Adam Godley interview (continued)

What do you hope will be an audience's experience of the play and the journey of the character?

Everything in the play is an extension of what's in the Clerk's head, so I hope people are open to the experience and don't try too hard to answer questions that are thrown up by it, and just allow it to be. It seems the people who enjoy it most are those who just open themselves up to it, sit down and allow the experience to wash over them. They'll be left with all sorts of questions, feelings and experiences, which they will mull over for days. Just come on the journey with us. We barely know where we are going, and the audience certainly don't, so just come along for the ride.



Katherine Manners as Salvation Army Girl/Death and Adam Godley as The Clerk in *From Morning to Midnight*  
Production photo: Johan Persson

# Interview with Al Nedjari

The Movement Director of *From Morning to Midnight* talks to Rebecca Frecknall about the challenges of creating movement in a devised piece of theatre.

How did you first come to the project?

I'd worked with Melly three or four times as an actor in her shows and in workshops – in fact, I'd been involved in the Research & Development (R&D) for *From Morning to Midnight*. I'd already done two R&Ds with her and imagined that I'd become an actor in the show, but Melly asked me to become the Movement Director. I think because of the way in which she works she requires someone who understands her devising process. She had worked with a choreographer but – and I think this is common with all choreographers who have a dance background – there is a fence around what is their responsibility, and what lies within Melly's domain, which just doesn't work in a devising setting as the process needs to be more organic and collaborative. She needed somebody who had worked with her a number of times doing devising as an actor but, as I also have experience of movement directing with my own company, Gecko, she asked me to do that.

Melly's credited the show as being 'the action devised with the company'. What does that mean when you are working on a text? There is a traditional idea of a script, a director and a playwright but then there's this whole physical landscape of the play which has to be approached collaboratively.

For a director it requires you to be a facilitator rather than a director. If you imagine that leading a group can only be a directive thing where you give instruction, and you have a prescribed idea of how something is going to transpire in your head, as opposed to a supportive presence, who guides the actors and their own creativity to get to somewhere that you don't know, that's far more the complexion of the directing that Melly is used to.

Melly or I would have an idea about a physical sequence which would be related to the text in some way. Sometimes that would be a very vague idea that filled a dramaturgical need; sometimes it would be a very clear physical idea – not the detail of the movement itself, but some idea of the physical language of the sequence. That would be presented to the actors as a stimulus and from that point the actors would bring their own skills to it. From there it was a process of facilitating what they came up with. I can count on my hand the number of times that I, for example, said 'And you need to do this movement followed by that movement, and then this one', in that kind of prescriptive way. Most of it was to do with them moving and me being a kind of editorial and developmental presence.

I asked Adam why he wanted to do the play and he said that when he first read the script he thought it was unperformable, that's why he wanted to do it. There are definitely huge sequences where you have to create something on stage which is impossible to represent naturalistically, such as the cycle races in the velodrome, moving from city to city and the succession of quite big set pieces. How did you and Melly approach how the cycle races were going to work?

I suppose that, in a nutshell, is the domain of devisers. That doesn't seem anything out of the ordinary, particularly coming from a small-scale theatre company where your resources mean that realistically you can't really do anything naturalistically, there is always going to be a dimension to what you do which has to be innovative in some way and involve you finding a creative solution to bring something to life. The challenge of creating scenes that are huge is merely another version of that. I'm always somebody who rubs their hands together and thinks, What a fantastic opportunity to put something on, to sell the idea of a velodrome. I can't really dismantle how those things happen: it is an idea that springs from somewhere that's based on a whole criterion of what is and isn't possible. We have 16 actors, we've got a stage of a certain size, there's an auditorium that's going to have that many people in it – and this is the world that we are trying to create. Melly and I would trade ideas until something felt as though it had a ring of fulfilling that moment.



Adam Godley and Al Nedjari in rehearsal  
Photo: Johan Persson

# Al Nedjari interview (continued)

This is a German Expressionist play and although we didn't attempt to create an historical piece that explores this idea as a genre, there are Expressionistic elements to the world that's been created. Was that ever something that you felt was part of your remit or did it emerge out of the demands of the text?

I think both. It comes through the text and the stage directions of the play itself but we did an awful lot of research into what exactly Expressionism is before we started the rehearsal process. It acts like a filter in your mind, so the ideas you are hatching have some form of reference to the research you've done. The thing that captured me in the play, was how every moment can be an expression of his psychological state in some form or another.

– The Clerk's?

Yes. That was a tenet of Expressionism, that whatever you put on stage in its totality is an expression of the essential theme that you are trying to communicate. It's a real gift to have that in mind because it colours everything you do and it's a great stimulus.

Melly talked us through the model box and design a couple of months before rehearsals. The visual design is relatively set, but so many elements in the music and physical world have much more flexibility. How did Soutra's design and the kind of decisions that have to be made so far in advance fit with the idea of working organically with the actors' in rehearsals?

There's always a question with devising – and I say this a lot when I do devising workshops with theatre companies – that one of the dangers is opening a box of possibilities, which is bewildering because there aren't any limits around it and you don't know where to go because you face so many choices. I found that having the design in place provided a bit of structure, which is necessary if you are then going to be free in those other areas. In a very physical way, it tells you this is where it is all going to happen, so you've got that framework from which you can build.

You've worked with Melly before as an actor, did you find that experience helped you, or is it a different mind-set to adjust to?

Because I've had experience of doing both things [performing and movement direction] I'm armed with an understanding of the process from both points of view anyway. But having an intimate understanding of what an actor goes through in a rehearsal process run by Melly is really valuable. Devising processes can be very unnerving for actors, even actors who are fairly experienced at doing it. I know that feeling intimately because I've been an actor in many processes of Melly's where that's been a feature. You don't always know where you are going, there are always a million things to do, it always feels as though things are slightly half-baked, because, time being what it is, you instinctively need to go somewhere else with the text and there isn't always the time to polish something before you move on to the next thing and you have to come back to it later. All those sorts of things can make actors feel unsettled. As somebody on the outside of the process I've got half a mind on what's going on for the actors and that influences the way in which I will communicate with the group and creates a lens through which I can interpret what we're doing.

How was the transition from the rehearsal room into the theatre, and now into performance where you have a bit of distance from it and it has its own identity?

I have to say, that was a bit of an eye-opener for me because I am not used to it. In the last two weeks of the rehearsal process, I got incredibly frustrated that we were sat so close to where the action was happening and couldn't get the sort of perspective we eventually got when we were in the theatre.

When it first arrived in the theatre it was like seeing a new show, seeing something that was made from a standpoint that was entirely different. A lot of changes, therefore, needed to happen. Bits of choreography that we thought looked great in the rehearsal room seen



## Al Nedjari interview (continued)

from the back of the stalls and in relation to the rest of the space were quite different. A lot of tweaking needed to happen as a result of that difference. The other thing that needed to happen, that's not to do with physically moving from the rehearsal space to the theatre, is the thing of becoming wrapped up in the show, wrapped up in making it. You lose objectivity. Your understanding of the piece deepens but it deepens in a forward and back direction at the expense of the wide-angle. It was really fascinating, coming in to see the show having had a break from it after it had opened and having a wide-angle version of it. It gave me almost an audience's appreciation of how a moment lands or otherwise. It was really, really interesting.



Adam Godley as the Clerk and Gina Bellman as the Italian Lady/Death in *From Morning to Midnight*  
Production photo: Johan Persson

# Additional resources

## From the National's Bookshop:



The text of Dennis Kelly's version of *From Morning to Midnight*, published by Oberon Books at £9.99, as well as other work by Kaiser and Kelly, plus background reading – all part of a wide range of theatre-related books, recordings and gifts.

Programme for *From Morning to Midnight*:  
On sale at £3 from the Bookshop. **Ruth Hemus**, in 'What Else Isn't True?', looks at Kaiser's life and work; and **Julian Preece**, in 'Art and the Abyss', examines Expressionism in all the arts in Germany on the eve of the First World War. With brilliant illustrations showing some of **Mely Still**'s inspirations, and photographs by **Johan Persson** of the company in rehearsal, the programme is an invaluable companion to the production.

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**Prices correct at the time of publication, winter 2014.**

## Publications:

*German Expressionist Theatre – The Actor and the Stage* by David F Kuhns (Cambridge University Press, 2006)  
ISBN: 9780521035224

*Modern Drama in Theory and Practice: Volumes 3, Expressionism and Epic Theatre* by J L Styan (Cambridge University Press, 1983)  
ISBN: 9780521296304