When We Have Sufficiently Tortured Each Other
12 Variations on Samuel Richardson’s Pamela

a new play by Martin Crimp

Rehearsal Diaries
Welcome to the National Theatre’s rehearsal diaries for *When We Have Sufficiently Tortured Each Other*

This background pack, written by Lily McLeish, the staff director of *When We Have Sufficiently Tortured Each Other*, introduce the process of rehearsing and staging the play.

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 or 020 7452 3388.

Jane Ball
Programme Manager, NT Learning
November 2018
The National’s Production

The Company

Woman  Cate Blanchett
Man    Stephen Dillane

Girl 2  Babirye Bukilwa
Mrs Jewkes  Jessica Gunning
Girl 1  Emma Hindle
Ross  Craig Miller

Director  Katie Mitchell
Set Designer  Vicki Mortimer
Costume Designer  Sussie Juhlin-Wallén
Lighting Designer  James Farncombe
Composer and Sound Designer  Melanie Wilson
Composer of Song (Scene IX)  Roald van Oosten
Fight Directors  Rachel Bown-Williams and Ruth Cooper-Brown of Rc-Annie Ltd
Staff Director  Lily McLeish

Project Producer  Rachel Quinney
Production Manager  Tom Lee
Casting  Alastair Coomer CDG
Stage Manager  Pippa Meyer
Deputy Stage Manager  Natalie Braid
Assistant Stage Manager  Louise Quartermain
Project Draughting  Emma Morris
Digital Art  Daniel Radley-Bennett
Costume Supervisor  Lydia Crimp
Wigs, Hair & Make-up Supervisor  Suzanne Scotcher
Props Supervisor  Kirsten Shiell
Prop Making Coordinator  Michelle McLucas
Prop Buyer  Rebecca Johnston
Lighting Supervisor  Michael Harpur
Lighting Programmer  Jane Dutton
Production Sound Engineer  Sarah Black
Sound Operator  Tom Cassidy
Stage Supervisor  Jody Robinson
Rigging Supervisor  Jim Harlow
Construction Supervisor  Dave Cotton
Scenic Art Supervisor  Daina Ennis
Design Assistant  Grace Venning
Production Assistant  Serena Basra
Production Photographer  Stephen Cummiskey

Opening

World premiere Dorfman Theatre
23 January 2019
Rehearsal diary: week one

Rehearsals for When We Have Sufficiently Tortured Each Other began on 19 November 2018.

It is the first day of rehearsals and cast and creative team arrive, excited to get started. After a round of introductions, Katie talks about her concept for the production and Martin talks about the play. We read a biography for the characters of the ‘Man’ and the ‘Woman’ which Katie has written and Martin has commented on. This includes information about role-play and the four other characters in the play.

We then proceed to read the play in the round, inviting everyone (including members of the cast, creative and stage management teams) to join in and take it in turns to read a line each. This takes the pressure off the actors to perform their roles, and it is a nice way of involving everyone in the process. We pause after every scene and write down any questions that had been prompted or raised by the scene. After the read through, our set designer Vicki Mortimer gives us a floor plan of the house the couple lives in, and we take a closer look at the model box, which depicts the couple’s garage. At the end of the day the actors are given a bit of time to reflect on their biographies in pairs and to do a bit of research. The first day ends with a welcome by Rufus and other members of staff at the National, all of whom came to introduce themselves at the ‘meet and greet’.

The next day, we discuss questions that have arisen overnight. The actors then share what they have found in their research and what they discussed in their groups at the end of the previous day. We start improvisation exercises based around moments from their biographies. Cate and Stephen work together as the couple, improvising the moment they gave their son a karaoke machine for Christmas, or the moment they had an argument on holiday in a hire car. Emma and Babirye work on their biographies, looking at the moment they decided to try out role-play for the first time when they were students at university. Jessica and Craig work individually, looking at important moments in their biographies.

On Day 3, we continue the improvisation exercises, getting deeper into the fabric of the play and under the skin of the characters. We then start analysing the text around the table. This time, the actors read the characters they are playing, and we stop to mark a change in the text. We call these changes ‘events’, and each ‘event’ is given a title. This analysis is the psychological map the actors will later use to navigate their performances on stage. As we analyse the play for events, a lot more questions start to surface. I keep a list of all the questions asked by the actors and by Katie, which will be answered later on in the rehearsal process.

We continue the very detailed process of ‘eventing’ the play. In the afternoon session of Day 5, our fight directors, Rachel and Ruth, join us for a fun hour of rehearsals. Stephen and Craig start plotting and practicing initial moves for a fight, and Cate has a play with looking at how she can hit her head against objects. It’s always fun when the fantastic RC Annie team arrive in rehearsals.
This week, we continue the process of analysing the script around the table, searching for events. It is a slow process because it is very detailed and it throws up a lot of questions about the characters' biographies, as well as the 'immediate circumstances' – meaning the 24 hours prior to the play's events – and the 'present action' – meaning anything to do with what happens in the action of the play itself. This process also allows for the company to ask Martin specific questions about meaning and the ideas that underpin the play.

Once we finish this process, we separate the questions into several groups, differentiating between biography questions, questions to do with immediate circumstances and questions that relate directly to the present action in the play. We answer the questions relating to the immediate circumstances together as a group. The answers are very detailed, and prompt us to consider context and the lead-up to the play, events such as the woman picking up the costumes for the game from the costume hire store, the man driving past the Seven Eleven store on his way home and buying some cherries, or having to buy adaptor plugs for the industrial heaters they have hired. We also talk about the long-term biography questions and the answers are added to the biography that Katie and Martin handed out on our first day of rehearsals. The present action questions are kept on a separate list – these will be referred to when we put the scenes on their feet for the first time.

The cast are tasked with improvising the few hours before the action of the play. The four participants sketch in their journey to the Man and Woman's house. The Man and Woman sketch in how they prepared the garage and got everything ready for the game. Cate and Stephen sketch in how they prepared the garage and got everything ready for the game. As the Man and Woman they imagine what they would actually have in their garage, who booked the the participants, who organised the costumes and props and cleaned the car and garage. They then improvise the arrival of the participants.

The arrival improvisation leads into the first scene rehearsal. The actors try different sketches of the first scene, practicing the events and becoming more familiar with the physical location of the garage. We discuss and add in the intentions the actors are playing and note these in the script.

RC Annie join us at the end of Tuesday and work with Stephen and Craig on a first sketch of one of the fights in the garage. The four cast members (playing the people the couple have employed to join in their game) write their online profiles and share with the group.

Top: Cate Blanchett and Craig Miller | Bottom: Jessica Gunning
Rehearsal photograph: Stephen Cummiskey
This week, we continue with scene rehearsals. Starting back at the top of the play. We read each scene around the table first and then get it on its feet for the first time. Our Deputy Stage Manager, Natalie Braid, writes down all the blocking, while I stay on script and help the actors with their lines when needed. After the first physical draft of the scene, we step through the scene one more time to stabilise the blocking before moving on to the next scene.

Composer Roald van Oosten joins us on Monday afternoon and has a music call with Jessica Gunning (playing Mrs Jewkes), for the song she will be singing in scene 11. Babirye Bukila (playing Girl 2), Emma Hindle (playing Girl 1) and Craig Miller (playing Ross) join in as backing vocalists. The idea is that in the garage there is a karaoke machine – a colourfully blinking object – that will be used for a song that Jessica’s character will improvise in the action of the play.

Lighting and sound are already being used in the space as we rehearse. The sound design by Melanie Wilson is beautiful. It adds texture and atmosphere and is designed around the events, marking the psychological shifts the actors are playing. The overhead lights in the rehearsal space are dimmed and the ‘practicals’ – a few different lighting objects that might be found in a garage – are used instead. An LED strip is installed in the car so we can see the actors when they are in the car.

Sussie Juhlin-Wallén, our costume designer, has individual chats with the actors about their costumes. Stand-in costumes and wigs are already being added in the scene rehearsals, so the actors can get a feel for them. Different ideas are being explored through costumes and wigs to do with the idea of role play, and to help clarify who is playing who at any given moment.

The further the week progresses, the deeper we venture into the play and the more we start to develop an understanding of its physical language and possibilities. The actors get more familiar with the garage space and the objects within it, and are more confident and flexible within the space. We try out different sketches of scenes, using different areas of the garage and the various props onstage.

RC Annie join us again at the end of the week for another session of fight choreography. There are now more characters involved in the fight and more moments of violence to be looked at in different sections of the play.
Rehearsal diary: week four

Time is flying by and, incredibly, we have already reached the end of week four. This week has very much been about solidifying and embedding everything we know about the characters and the play, practicing what we have made so far, as well as inventing and exploring new things, clarifying moments and becoming more precise with the action of the play.

Early in the week, we reach the end of the play with our first scene rehearsals, which means we go back to the top for round two, reminding the performers of the first draft of the blocking and checking whether the blocking still feels accurate. We run the lines, then go through the scene – first mechanically, for blocking, and finally run the scene, making adjustments and trying out new ideas as they come up.

Having gone through the play once entirely on its feet, the performers have a much stronger sense of the garage space, the characters’ journeys within the piece and the rules of the world of the play. Returning to the earlier scenes for a second time, we now have a clearer sense of what feels accurate and what needs adjusting or changing.

The costumes and wigs are becoming much more integrated in the process and help everyone understand who is playing who at any given moment. This is especially helpful with the Man and Woman when they reverse roles in the game.

The objects in the space are being used with a lot more precision, and we are exploring them in more detail. In this production, the play unfolds in one continuous action, which means there will be no scene changes as such. Instead, we will simply see the characters on stage resetting or getting ready for a new game, so everything has to be sorted out in the action of the play in real time. Who turns on and off light switches, who has the keys and which doors are locked when, all of these things need to be set, and we work on this as we go through the action of the play this second time around. There is much fun being had with the karaoke machine, the objects in the fridge/freezer, the tools on the workbench and, of course, with the car from the campaign imagery, which is in the middle of the rehearsal room.

The fights are getting more polished and all the actors involved in moments of violence have now had a chance to look at them with Rc-Annie. A mockup of the garage roof has been installed, so that the performers get a sense of the height of their space on the stage. And Martin brings in a few small rewrites to help support the character of Ross, who, up until this point, was a non-speaking part – he now has two brief lines.
On Monday, we finish going through the scenes for the second time around. We then prepare to do a first tentative run of the whole show. Without the pressure of having to get through the whole play without stopping, it is more of a stagger-through with stops and starts, giving the performers the first chance to feel a rough through-line. At any point, the actors can call a stop and check something, ask to go back a few lines, check their blocking or check what happens next. There is no expectations and no pressure – it is treated pretty much as any other scene rehearsal.

Before the stagger through, the actors are given a bit of time to prepare, go over their notes, rehearse their lines and step through their actions for themselves on the set. We call this ‘quiet time’. It gives the actors a chance to quietly visualise all their actions and helps to strengthen their memory muscle of the show.

After the run, we gather around the table. Katie asks the actors in turn if any issues came up for them during the run and if there is anything they would like to look at or work on before the next run. We then collate a master list of all outstanding questions and notes from the performers. Katie gives notes to the performers, stage management team and sound, costume and props. Some of her notes are simply given to the team in question, and some of her notes also go on the master list to be looked at in more detail later on.

Over the following two days, we proceed to work through the master list of notes. Katie and I create a schedule to make sure we get through everyone’s notes before the next run. Some notes take only a few minutes, while others take over an hour to solve. Some notes are to do with blocking, others are about drilling the lines of certain sections, others are psychological questions, and some are to do with timing issues and clarifying which action goes in which order.

On Friday, we run the play for a second time. Again, the actors are given time to get into costume and prepare before we start the run. After the run, we have a bit of time to debrief around the table again and take down the actors’ notes. These notes will be addressed in the following week.
Rehearsal diary: week six

In the first two days of the week, we work through the notes we had from the previous run. Many of the notes now are about detail and becoming more precise with the psychology of the characters and their relationships, as well as the layers of the role play.

On Wednesday, we do our third stagger through. After the run, we regroup for notes and note down any major issues the performers would like to address before the fourth run. On Thursday, we have two hours to rehearse any changes before we do our fourth run through. We focus on the two areas the performers have requested additional time on, and clarify a few technical cues to do with light switches and transitions.

Friday is our last day in the rehearsal space. It is unbelievable how quickly time has flown by. We spend the day focusing on the end of the play and rehearsing mechanical details, such as the Woman getting dressed in the wedding dress with the help of Mrs Jewkes. At the end of the day we pack up the costumes, wigs and props ready for our move to the stage.

On Saturday, we have our first tech session. Although we have been rehearsing with most of the costumes and props, it is still great to see it all come together on the actual set with lighting. There is an air of excitement now that we are in the theatre. The production desks are set up in the auditorium and everyone works, quietly and focused, in the dark, talking on headsets.

Sound have half an hour to do sound checks with the performers, checking the microphones of the karaoke machine and checking the sound levels of the radio mics in and outside of the car. The performers are given a bit of time to walk around the set and make sure everything is where they need it to be. We then start at the top of the show and work our way slowly through the prelude, integrating the curtain, the garage door, and the lights in the car. We stop off at lighting cues and clarify action in the transitions. Tweaks are still being made to costumes and wigs. On Monday, in our second tech session, we will be integrating the water from the hosepipe and the blood.
On Monday, we start the tech session from the top of the show, working our way through in chronological order from the beginning to the end of the play. We look at all the complex technical moments, such as the cut on Cate’s forehead, and how she cheats the wound on her head and pops the blood bag. We look at when Stephen sprays Cate with water from a hosepipe and check the floor, making sure it is not slippery. We look at the moment Cate sprays the word ‘child’ on the windscreens, experimenting once with whipped cream and then with shaving cream, and decide on the latter. We also check the windscreen wipers. Once we have looked at each scene and transition, we return to a few outstanding issues from the last note sessions. We then run the show on Tuesday evening.

On Wednesday, we have a few hours to make some changes to the prelude before our dress rehearsal. The dress rehearsal goes well, with very few issues, and the excitement grows as the first preview approaches. For the actors’ security, I arrange to sit in the front row to be on book, in case one of the actors needs a line during the preview. The audience file in, and the show begins. It’s always interesting when the show is performed in front of an audience for the first time. After six weeks of rehearsing on our own it is very rewarding to witness the audience’s response to funny or surprising moments – the women next to me gasp at the fight and there is a lot of animated conversation at the end of the show.

Over the next few days, we get into a rhythm of meeting in a rehearsal space in the morning and discussing issues that came up in the preview the night before. Things that need looking at go on our list, and other things can be discussed and sorted in conversation. Katie types up her notes for the actors, and I print these out for the cast to read during the day. The notes are mainly about detail and bedding-in layers of the characters’ biographies, sharpening their relationship to certain topics in the piece as well as reminding them of the immediate circumstances. We then have three hours on-stage to look at the things on our list, addressing technical aspects of the performance with lighting and sound, and restaging and re-rehearsing any scenes or sections in the play.

Each preview brings up different things to clarify. We make a few cuts to some of the scenes, we restage the prelude to make the handing over of the money and the arrival of the Man with the four game participants clearer, we spend time on the wound on the Woman’s head, we look at the end of the show and practice the timing of dressing the Woman in the wedding dress. We change the music in scene seven and add in a few moments when the cast turn the lights on and off, to clarify when they are in and out of the games. Each day the show gets clearer and as the week comes to an end, everyone starts to look forward to the show’s opening.
Theatre Glossary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Staff director
The National Theatre uses staff directors rather than assistant directors. Staff directors have a variety of jobs, depending on the production and the director they are working with. They can help with background research for rehearsals, lead improvisations and act as a liaison on behalf of the director. Once a production has had its press night, the director steps away from the production and the staff director takes over. The staff director rehearses the company at ‘bring back calls’ and also rehearses the understudies.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Fit up**
The set is assembled on the stage.

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

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

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

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

**Press night**
The night the critics see the production before reviewing it.