

INTO THE WOODS

and happy ever after.

EDUCATION PACK

BRIDGE
THEATRE



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Photo: Johan Persson

TO THE EDUCATOR

Dear Teachers,

Thank you for choosing to bring your students along to the Bridge Theatre for this production of Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine's classic musical *Into The Woods*. We are delighted to host you and share this cautionary tale with a new generation of theatre go-ers.

Whether your students are experiencing the magic of Sondheim for the first time or are seasoned analysts of his iconic style, we hope to flame a passion for his complex and innovative music style, intricate and psychologically poignant lyrics and sophisticated thematic content.

This pack is designed to compliment your experience in the theatre by both providing context prior to seeing the show, behind the scenes content about how the show was developed and some activities and tasks for your classroom in the days following your visit.

Because of Sondheim's iconic style, *Into The Woods* has teachable moments far beyond the moral journey of the central characters, and we're delighted to support learning for students from a broad range of subjects and Key Stages.



Photo: Johan Persson

TO THE EDUCATOR

Drama Students will be able to:

- Recognise the epic theatre structure
- Explore the use of a narrator
- Analyse live theatre (Live Production Analysis) both in terms of design and performance
- Recognise the conventions of the musical theatre genre
- Be inspired for performance and devising tasks

Music Students will be able to:

- Analyse musical scores and recognise the use of motifs throughout
- Explore how music and storytelling can work hand in hand
- Study the Musical Theatre genre and its key components
- Be inspired for composition tasks

Literature Students will be able to:

- Analyse genre and recognise when a text works both within a genre's conventions, and when it challenges them.
- Highlight the presence of a narrator as a literary device – controlling the audience's interpretation of events
- Explore complex themes and figurative interpretations of the thematic content
- Be inspired for creative writing tasks



Sketch of Little Red Riding Hood's costume

Illustration: Tom Scutt

INTO THE WOODS WITHOUT DELAY...

Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine's iconic *Into The Woods* interweaves well-known fairy tales with original storylines to portray a twisted but familiar world of fantasy and chaos.

In Act One, each character pursues their personal quest, and meets challenges on their path, some of which they face head on and others which they try to avoid or outsmart.

Act One culminates with the successful fulfilment of everyone's wishes and their 'Happy Ever Afters.' However, Act Two sees the consequences of their actions come to light as they are faced with the shared responsibility of resolving the unfinished business of Act One – teaching them (and us) that a sense of community and shared responsibility is necessary to overcome life's challenges.

The play charts the transition from childhood innocence to the reality of adulthood as each character faces, overcomes and learns from their personal journey through the woods.

“ For me, it's a piece about community — the necessity of community. That's been our engine through the whole process. ”

JORDAN FEIN, DIRECTOR

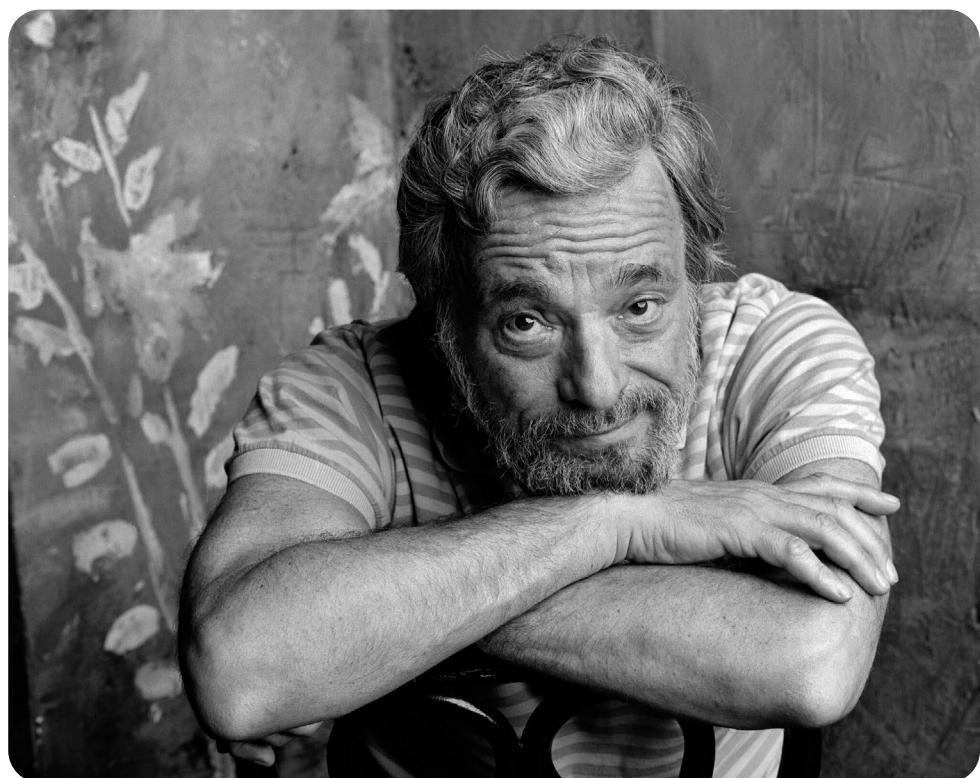


Photo: Craig Sugden

ARTISTIC INTENTIONS OF THIS PRODUCTION

Director Jordan Fein worked on this production for nine months before rehearsals began, studying the script and the score in precise detail and working with the designers and performers to bring his vision to life.

His first big task was to understand Sondheim's intentions for the play, and his iconic style which intertwines multi-layered plot lines, complex music and clever lyricism.



Stephen Sondheim

Photo: The New York Times

Stephen Sondheim is known for his unique writing style which samples from genres and forms to create its own identity. His work is wide-ranging and covers many themes, and has long populated both Broadway and the West End and won many awards.

- Sondheim breaks the 'rules' of the traditional musical – using unconventional musical structures for his songs
- Sondheim's work regularly blends the line between music and dialogue – integrating seamlessly between them. Songs can either advance the plot, explore character psychology, or comment on the action which was considered radical by his contemporaries
- Sondheim employs leitmotifs which are short, recurring musical phrases to represent specific characters, themes, or ideas. The iconic 'I wish' leitmotif from *Into The Woods* is very well known
- Sondheim is well known for using pastiche, which is an approach to theatre-making which references other theatrical styles (and/or parodies them)
- Sondheim's lyrics often feature complex, multi-syllabic, and internal rhyme schemes, especially the Witch's songs
- His lyrics often provide significant insight into the character's psychology and act as a 'stream of consciousness'
- Unlike a lot of popular musicals from the 'golden age' of musical theatre – Sondheim's work often has a darker, or more mature approach to his chosen themes
- Sondheim's protagonists tend to be unconventional. Rather than the classic 'hero' he champions the flawed, more realistic character who learns valuable lessons and faces challenges with bravery, rather than a character who is always perfect, reflecting a move towards psychological realism in musicals which remains popular now

LET'S MEET THE DIRECTOR



JORDAN FEIN
DIRECTOR

What was your first approach to directing such an iconic musical?

I reread it. And I listen to it. And I rewatched it. And then I just started talking to my collaborators because I know the show really well, and it was important for me to understand other people's feelings and responses to it. This is all ultimately, very, very extremely collaborative.

What were your major considerations in directing this piece?

I think with any piece you start with, it's like a triangle of... I was about to say sadness. It is a triangle that you function in, which is: when it's set, when it was written, and now. And what all those things mean, because I think you have to think about what an audience is bringing in with them and not that that sort of might appear on stage, but that there's a real sense of: Why are we doing this right now? What is that about? And for me, it's a piece that's about community. It's about the necessity of community. And that's sort of been our engine through the whole process.

What preparatory work did you do before rehearsals began?

Oh my goodness. I think it's the most intense preparation I've ever had on a show, just because it's so big, and to come in and not have a really clear sense of where we're headed, I think, would be

virtually impossible. Tom Scutt [Set and Costume Designer], and I spent many, many, many hours together, turning over the design. Then Aideen Malone, our lighting designer became part of that conversation. Then Roland [Horvath, Video Designer], and we started doing tests of lights, and video, and smoke. Mark [Aspinall, Musical Supervisor and Musical Director] and I spent

hours together, going through the score, just sharing our own feelings, our own instincts.

Auditions. I think people don't know that auditions take hours and hours. More time than one can imagine. But it's so important that you are finding people that you want to work with, that inspire you that have something to say with the material.



Photo: Johan Persson

THE CREATIVE TEAM

JORDAN FEIN DIRECTOR *continued*

How far ahead of a show opening does this whole process begin?

Our first performance will be in early December. The show, I think, we greenlit just before Christmas. So, we essentially started before that. But, we fully started, I'd say like just before the New Year. So, what is that? I think nine months.

Appropriately for the show nine months before rehearsals began.

What were your main intentions for the show?

I love this show so much, and the music makes me feel so much. I think it's complicated, and nuanced, and speaks to ideas that are really hard to articulate in, in all of their nuance and complexity. And I want audiences to feel that. I think musicals can be so special because they hit us in parts of our body and our brain that are just so singular, and I just want to share

my appreciation and love for this piece with other people.

How do you want the audience to feel when seeing *Into The Woods*?

Kate Fleetwood [who plays the witch] and I were just talking about this. But it is so funny, it has that slapstick – we were watching Fawlty Towers last night – it has that sort of rigorous, expert comedy, and then it's able to transition into something that is so felt, and deep, and grounded. And I want the audience to go on that full journey and to get it all.



Photo: Craig Sugden

LET'S MEET THE DESIGNER



TOM SCUTT
DESIGNER

How did the unique interpretation of this iconic piece influence your designs?

First of all, the design is an intrinsic part of the interpretation, they are one and the same thing. Maybe with a different type of show, a different scale of show, one might have a clear idea or impetus that then leads to a design choice, but with this production, the design choices and the interpretation are simultaneous and come hand in hand. And often the interpretation of the piece is triggered by a design thought. So a design, like an image, or for example, shadows, shadow play, is a huge part of our version.

That is a visual idea, but it is an interpretation of Sondheim and Lapine's writing, which is that somehow every single one of us has our own giant, which is this dark shadow that we leave depending on the angle of the light that's on us. Depending on which way you view a person determines whether they are good, bad, or ugly. And that, for me, was the very primary design thought, which is, really simply, good, bad, light, dark, and the muddiness of the in-between, what happens in between those two polar opposites. Because I think the piece does that. I think the piece is saying: there is no good or bad, there's only the viewpoint from which you look at someone. So this binary idea is demolished by Sondheim.

We knew that much. We knew that we wanted to play with light and dark, with shadows. And we knew that the piece needed to have scope from a very rich, indulgent, evocative, romantic, fairy tale world. And on the other



Photo: Johan Persson

end of that, a kind of, almost like a Beckettian existential nightmare. We knew that it needed to have tonal scope. We knew that it had to have real playfulness, real joy, real silliness, but also real humanity, real insight into the psychology of people, to help root those indulgent visual ideas.

How did you balance the development of location and atmosphere in your designs for the set?

A lot of my thinking is about pacing, actually. My process is quite musical in as much as one needs to really think about the

THE CREATIVE TEAM

TOM SCUTT

DESIGNER *continued*

evening of watching this piece, because you're spending so much time zooming in on certain moments and working for a week, two weeks, on a certain three-minute scene. You always have to have both a microscopic sense of the tiny moments, but also a really good sense of the long form of it, the dynamic and the flow of it. A lot of my choices are dictated by the pacing.

And in light of that one might expect the prologue to be very heavily scenically adorned in a pantomime way. But we really wanted a key into the psychology of the people. And it's also the first 15 minutes of the show, so you can, I think, afford to pull back on visual information and save that visual information for a moment that is going into the woods really.

It's 15 minutes into the show and you're ready for a new image, a new location, a new upping the

ante throughout the piece. And so rhythmically, that felt very clear to me that we wanted to have something very simple for the prologue that then explodes into this extraordinary cinematic landscape.

We talked a lot about form, and about vaudeville, and pantomime, and cinema, and especially sort of 1980's fairy tale films, medieval films: *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, *Labyrinth*, *Legend*, *Ever After*. Just very romantic, exuberant movies. And we wanted to vacillate or toggle, I suppose, between different vocabularies, whether it's a shared space in the room with the people in front of you, in a kind of vaudeville playhouse feel, or whether it's a huge viewfinder into a completely other world, in a cinematic sense.

I think the thing that I'm always wary of is doing more than what is absolutely necessary in a certain moment. And I think that pulling back in certain moments allows you to push harder in other moments. And in doing so, you

are really affecting the dynamic of the evening.

Can you describe how you played with colour, texture, shape and scale in your costume designs?

A lot of it is very much about texture, actually. As I said, if you take the metaphor of shining a light on someone from a different angle and them appearing as something different, I wanted everything to really have very varied textures depending on who the characters are.

I think there's also something in there about class that we really wanted to emphasise, about the quality of fabrics that the wealthy characters are allowed to wear, and the more homespun, crafty resourcefulness of the poorer characters. I often find if you're depicting "poorer" people on stage that it becomes quite obvious and quite, sometimes a bit, offensive. The angle that I like to take is that I find resourcefulness is a really good way through. So we used a lot of reclaimed fabrics for Jack and Jack's mum. Old 70's bath towels,

bed covers, like tea cosy type fabrics, tea towel fabrics, and bath mats, as if they had repurposed stuff that they owned.

And so those textures I think really shine out. And I wanted Jack to be like a simulation of their mum as well. Two peas in a pod in a way. A very sheltered life. And we made-up that Jack makes all their clothes. So there should be a through line between the two of them. They have the same haircuts. And I suppose the colours for them are quite childish, quite juvenile, quite young and a bit faded, but playful. And then, the opposite of that, is the step-sisters and the step-family: velvets, chiffons, two-tone fabrics that glisten and shimmer, and are draped. They are 1400s inspired, but it's kind of 1400s meets Halston, 1980's New York fabric and styles. And the colours are brighter, but it's quite clean and flat and graphic in comparison to Jack and Jack's mum's more quilted, shambolic kind of homespun feeling.

THE CREATIVE TEAM

TOM SCUTT DESIGNER *continued*

How important are wigs, hair and makeup in your design process and how do you collaborate with the relevant departments to ensure your designs are cohesive?

You hire Sam Cox. That's how you make sure everything is cohesive. Sam created *Cabaret* with me, and a few other shows we've worked on before. I think Sam and Sam's team have a real understanding of character, and, first and foremost are incredibly reassuring to work with. I think for actors especially, that's a very important part of that job, the interpersonal element. But also to really understand character, not only style and tone of the design, but actually the psychology of the character and the journey that that character makes through the piece.

Hair is huge in this design. It's fundamental to the story, to

the original Grimm's Brothers' stories of Rapunzel. But I wanted to really push this idea of the importance of hair as a signifier of one's personality and identity, how that is challenged as we age and as our hair falls out. And that's why the witch wants to preserve Rapunzel's youth and beauty.

That really requires a lot of prep work, a lot of pre-loading workshops prior to rehearsals, with the relevant actors, to make sure that they have enough time, enough familiarity, with those hair and makeup ideas so that when you get into rehearsals and you ultimately get into tech, they are stable, supported, and have a really strong sense of who their character is. Rapunzel's hair is braided and there is obviously huge, huge, huge amounts of it in the show. Three of them have been braiding for weeks to get that to happen.

I really like the idea that the witch is balding and longs for when she was younger, where she had a full head of long dark hair.

And so she ages backwards. And then on the flip side of that, Rapunzel, who has youth, beauty, and a full head of hair, slowly loses it through stress, anxiety, and abuse from the witch. Which means, in a way, they swap places as characters. And think that unlocks a real empathy in the piece and something very personal and very painful.

How integral was your relationship with other members of the creative team in developing your ideas and how closely did you work together in pre-production?

It's really essential that creative teams are able to share and develop ideas together, with as much preparation and lead time as possible. It's really simple, I think. It's like cooking. You can have fantastic ingredients, but if you're only cooking a bolognese for an hour and a half, the



ingredients don't get to actually be absorbed into each other, and it does take time and it takes a lot of two seemingly opposing things. One, leadership and artistic vision and confidence in that idea. And then the opposite of that, in a way, seems opposite, but maybe isn't opposite, which is the importance of really acknowledging that there

THE CREATIVE TEAM

TOM SCUTT DESIGNER *continued*

are other creative voices in the room that also have really strong, important, valid ideas to throw into the mix.

You want those two things to be in balance, always. Not too much of one and not enough of the other can capsize the ship, I think. So for me, it's a case of imbuing the team with real confidence and belief in the vision, but also not dictating what that is, once you've sort of launched the process. And to be limber, and to be flexible, and to be ready for unexpected changes. Some of them can be very nasty surprises. Some of them can be budgetary concerns, or unforeseen issues with something being delayed, all sorts of things can happen. So you need to be able to hold on to the vision, but also be really prepared to throw certain things away and to start afresh at any point. And that was very evident in this process. A lot of people

on this team I've worked with in different productions. Aideen [Malone, Lighting Designer], Jordan and I were together on *Fiddler on the Roof*. So the shorthand is always really helpful. But it's also really nice to bring in someone new who you haven't worked with before to inject some surprises and to question your expectations and your norms and to keep it feeling fresh and alive.

The show is one of the most visually demanding musicals there is. And in terms of the manufacturing of it, in terms of the financing of it, in terms of the scale of it, the difficulty of the music, it is just demanding on all fronts. And so inevitably, one has to deal with the fact that budget is going to not be our friend. It's a very, very, very difficult show to produce in 2025 in this financial climate. And so I guess the endeavour is to make everything feel as effortless as possible by putting in as much effort as possible.

Can you describe your creative process for this show?

Jordan has known this piece for all his life. So I was very lucky to have a director whose familiarity with the piece was microscopic. And it was an interesting dynamic because, obviously, I was coming from a less entrenched point of view, but also, I think, a European point of view in many ways. In terms of fairy tales, in terms of pantomime, in terms of the origins of these stories that feel un-American, actually. So really the great thing about the creative process was blending Jordan's great American musical and Sondheim knowledge with my experience and my expertise, to try and concoct something that really feels like a fusion of both those cultures.

Sketch of Jack's costume

Illustration: Tom Scutt



LET'S MEET THE LIGHTING DESIGNER



AIDEEN MALONE
LIGHTING DESIGNER

What were your intentions for the lighting design on *Into The Woods*?

My overall intention was to create a flexible palette that will visualise a unique mysterious world sculpted by light that transforms continuously.

- For the prologue I wanted to create a Victorian foot lit stage, providing focus and clarity of many locations.
- For Act One I wanted to evoke an ever-changing forest providing lots of different spaces and times of day.

- For Act Two I wanted to create an unsettled unpredictable forest of many locations, times of day and constant feeling of the unknown.

How did the director's creative vision create unique challenges or opportunities for your design?

The director's and designer's vision relies heavily on lights, effects and video. It is exciting to have a vision like this but it requires detailed collaboration and in-depth storyboarding. As our technical time is quite tight, it also requires pre-visualising what the stage picture might be all through the piece. Visualising this on a computer screen is not the same as reality but is a useful tool that involves imagination of what the result might be.

Most of the action takes place downstage of the proscenium, so it is important to keep the space upstage of the proscenium and down stage of the proscenium connected with light.

The forest consists of very dense foliage which is a really useful element for create interesting textures, but very careful selection of lights and angles must be chosen to make this

successful. Mystery and illusion of the forest and its spirits is a very important element that the lighting design can playfully convey.



Photo: Johan Persson

THE CREATIVE TEAM

AIDEEN MALONE

LIGHTING DESIGNER *continued*

How is lighting used in your design to create both location and atmosphere?

The prologue is located in a Victorian forestage. This section will appear to be lit mainly by footlights creating uplight and shadows. Most of the piece is set in the woods. Apart from a few set pieces brought in, the set design is one location. The lighting design transforms this space to create many different locations in the woods.

Light also shows the time of day and passing of time using careful colour and angles. E.g. Act One Scene Two is in the afternoon and First Midnight is moonlit. Granny's house and the sinister world of the wolf are presented in a horror world. We have used strong colour, shadow, and haze /fog to evoke this world. We have used haze, low fog, and smoke to create the mysterious and unsettled nature of the woods.



Sketch of the Stepsisters' costumes

Illustration: Tom Scutt

Can you talk about how you have used colour, texture, shape and scale in the lighting design?

The first angle I will use to create a visual picture is back or side light so shape will always be there with bodies, trees, and foliage being sculpted in space. Colour is used to create warm day time or cool moonlit wood locations. Little Red Ridinghood is used in the horror of the wolf eating Red and Granny. The lighting design contrasts the small scale of the human to huge scale of the woods and the giant. Light creates texture and movement through the wood foliage to connect the forestage, where most of the action happens, to the rest of the space.

What's the best part of your role?

Collaborating with a playful team. Storytelling with light and guiding the audience through the story and the world. Interacting with the audience on an emotional level and evoking reactions that sometimes they cannot explain or even realise are happening.

LET'S MEET MUSICAL SUPERVISOR & MUSICAL DIRECTOR



MARK ASPINALL
MUSICAL SUPERVISOR &
MUSICAL DIRECTOR

What was it like to take on such an iconic and recognisable score and how did you work with the other creatives to reimagine the classic score?

Into The Woods is a show I've known for quite a long time. I first conducted the show when I was back in uni, last year of Nottingham Uni, and since then I've worked on it on a smaller scale in some of the London colleges, so I've got the published score at home.

So, I'd played the music quite a

lot, which is quite a nice place to start from. And then additionally, of course, there exists quite a number of really excellent recordings of the various casts that have performed it in the past, from the original Broadway, the new Broadway, the West End, there is the Regent's Park production. There's loads out there to absorb and to see how other people have interpreted the piece, and to learn about it and to form your own opinions about the piece and to find out how you respond to it personally.

It's a great thing to take all of that then to my first meeting with Jordan, where we actually met for three sessions, each comprising several hours, where we just worked through the score from start to finish, and I played it on the piano and he listened, and we sort

of took turns to sing bits, with a constant question of: how do we want this to feel? What are the aspects of these songs, of this score, that we want to highlight, that we want to bring out?

And then of course, the next step is the casting, and to find the people that are going to tell these stories well, and are going to tell these stories in an exciting way, in a new, in an original way, in an authentic way. So, casting took a very long time to find this extraordinary group of

performers. And it was a really important part because the music and the lyrics really come alive when they're in the hands of skilled performers.

That's one of the things that makes it such a joy to work on. It's such a wonderful showcase for inventive musical actor-singers.

What's the most joyful part of your role?

This music is very difficult in lots of ways. Sometimes the melodies go in unexpected directions.

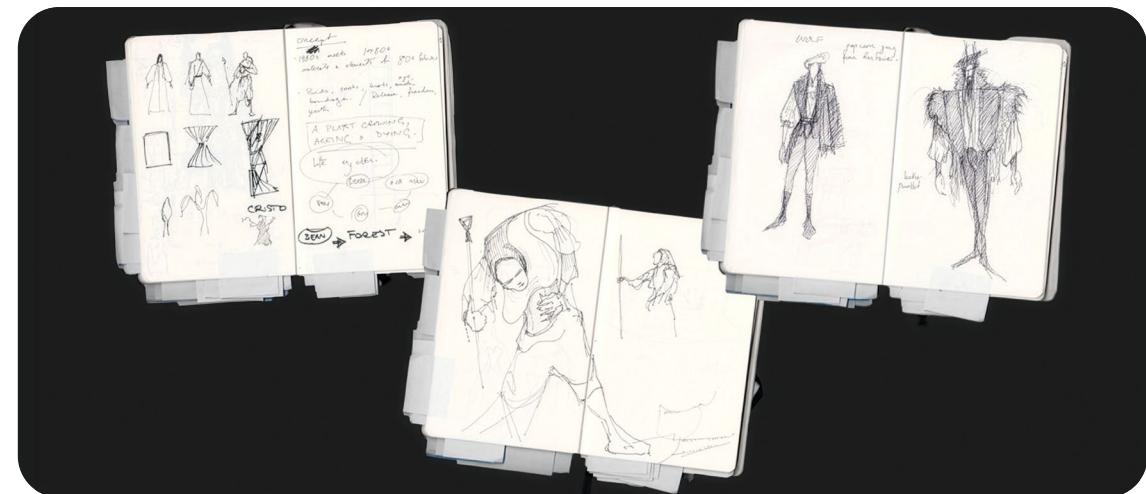


Illustration: Tom Scutt

THE CREATIVE TEAM

MARK ASPINALL

MUSICAL SUPERVISOR &
MUSICAL DIRECTOR *continued*

Sometimes the harmonic accompaniments are less conventional or more unusual. Sometimes the lyrics are hard to get your tongue and mouth around.



Photo: Craig Sugden

So one of the most joyful things for me has been seeing the results of the actors really working on this material, seeing them, every week in some cases, to go over the material and watch it and hear it slowly come together. And the moment where they sort of go, “aha, yes, I see how this all fits together.”

And it's a wonderful thing because the music is all just there to be unlocked. It's such good quality music that you don't need to add anything special over the top of it. It's so excellent in and of itself that the real work is just going into the music and asking yourself, “okay, how can I bring the truth of the music out most cleanly, with the least resistance?”

Because when I do that, then the songs sing themselves, the story just tells itself.

What is the main challenge of doing your job?

The main challenge is probably the day-to-day of actually conducting the show. I conduct from the keyboard and the show is nearly three hours long, and I have very few breaks, very few rests between numbers.

There's a lot of sung material and there's a lot of playing for me to do, a lot of conducting of quite complicated music. For example, when the witch casts a spell, I have to get the music to time perfectly with when she prods her cane.

I always have to keep an eye on the stage and try and have that ticking along for me.

And I think as well, just responding to the needs of the show night on night. We've done a lot of work in the rehearsal room to plan things and to work out the journeys of the songs, and of the music, and of the characters, for ourselves. But on a night-by-night basis, actors find slightly different rhythms in the text, in the dialogue, start feeling different things. So, it's just being responsive to that and helping them to tell the story in the cleanest, most satisfying way possible.

LET'S MEET THE ACTOR



OLIVER SAVILLE
CINDERELLA'S PRINCE /
THE WOLF

How did you prepare for your role in *Into The Woods*?

Like any revival or anything that's been done before, I try to stay away from the original, not to influence the way that I go about things.

So, with this one, preparation before rehearsal started, as with most shows that I have to do, I have to read the words a lot to get them in. And the words and the language are so important in this show. Well, with Sondheim anyway, but certainly with this

show. So, yeah, reading the lines again, and again, and again, and making sure those words are well within my body.

Can you describe the rehearsal process for the show?

This rehearsal process is like no other I've ever done before. First off, we've quite a lot longer than I'm used to rehearsing, which is obviously incredible. I remember having six or seven weeks, very early on in my career for shows like *Les Mis*, and stuff like that, but it doesn't really happen anymore.

So you normally get three or four weeks, a week of tech, and then you open. Whereas we've got a good six, seven weeks in the rehearsal room. The rehearsal process is amazing.

It's quite a busy show. There's no ensemble, so there's lots going on all the time, but we're all getting to be in the room the majority of the time and see everybody's process. I'm just really, really excited to share this with you all.

Photo: Johan Persson



What's one of the challenges and one of the perks for working with such iconic material?

As I said in one of my earlier questions, the words, the language, is so important in this show. So that is one of the challenges, trying to remember which 'into the woods' we're singing at what point. That is

definitely one of them. And one of the perks of this job, and other jobs as well, but certainly with Sondheim, and certainly with *Into The Woods*, all of the information is in the text, is on the page. It's like a blueprint for how maybe he wanted to do it.

I suppose that's a perk because if you get stuck on an idea, and you're trying to do something,

PERFORMING INTO THE WOODS

OLIVER SAVILLE CINDERELLA'S PRINCE / THE WOLF *continued*

you can actually just go right back to the punctuation, or what's been said, or what's been said before, and it really, really helps. And obviously, I can't believe I didn't say this first, the music is incredible and just drives these incredible stories along. I can't wait to hear it with the orchestra.



How do you work to perfect and balance your skills as a singer, dancer, and actor between jobs?

This is a really good question, and I get asked this a lot, as we all get asked this a lot. I heard this recently, and I've sort of said it in a similar vein, but in between jobs, that's where the work happens.

Getting the job, getting the gig

is the holiday. That's the easy part. Trying to earn money to pay your rent, live in the capital city, it's hard. It's mentally hard. It's physically hard. It's draining. I definitely keep those skills up. I enjoy going to the gym a lot, which is good. So that keeps my strength and my flexibility up. I have a warm-up, which I have from a singing teacher, which I do. If I'm in between, I try and do every day, if not every other day. And I just try to sing for enjoyment. That keeps me going. And I need to remind myself of that as well. So this is a good question for me to remind myself.

And then acting, again, we get lots of self-tapes and stuff like that. So I should maybe go to more acting classes. But trying to tell stories when we get a self-tape through for an advert or, film and TV, or another musical, you just got to keep it fresh and enjoy those auditions. Enjoy the auditions 'cause it is 80-90% of what we do.

What was your personal highlight of the process?

Well, we're midway through the process now. And I've got a feeling I know what my highlight might be, which will be the *sitzprobe*, when we get to hear the band and the orchestra for the first time with everybody. That's going to be a really special moment.

But highlight so far is the company. We've got a great company. And I don't just mean castmates. I mean company. We have a great family. And you'll probably hear lots of people saying this about all the shows they do. And the show is actually about community. But there is a real sense of community within the room. And it's so lovely to have all the different departments there with you the whole way through. So the personal highlight of the process is the people.

LIVE PRODUCTION ANALYSIS

When writing about a Live Production you've seen for your GCSE or A Level, it's important to take detailed notes at the interval and immediately after the performance in order to recall specific examples for your essays.

Use the templates below to add your own notes when you see the show, and take a look at the writing proformas and terminology banks to structure your ideas.

PRE-SHOW

Make sure you've done your research. Fill in the chart below to ensure you know what to expect and what to be looking for:

Name of play:	<i>Into The Woods</i>
Playwright:	Stephen Sondheim & James Lapine
Director:	Jordan Fein
Designers:	Tom Scutt, Aideen Malone, Mark Aspinall, Adam Fisher, Roland Horvath, Jenny Ogilvie, Sam Cox
Venue:	Bridge Theatre
Date you attended:	
Actors' names & roles:	
Key themes:	
How did the show make you feel:	

LIVE PRODUCTION ANALYSIS

TERMINOLOGY BANK

Narrative, Tension, Humour, Relationship, Communication, Characterisation, Convey, Portray, Contrast, Compare, Align, Polarise, Dramatic, Irony



DURING INTERVAL / IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

Use the terminology bank to record your observations in the grid below immediately after watching the show

Key Moment	What happened?	Mood/Atmosphere?	Acting highlights:	Design highlights:
One				
Two				
Three				
Four				
Five				

LIVE PRODUCTION ANALYSIS

TERMINOLOGY BANK

Pitch, Pace, Tone, Volume, Accent, Emphasise, Projection, Diction, Articulation, Breath control, Accent, Posture, Eye contact, Mime, Carriage, Facial expression, Levels, Gesture, Body language, Proxemics, Stillness



ACTING

Use the terminology bank to record your observations in the grid below immediately after watching the show

Vocal skills	Physical skills	Characterisation

LIVE PRODUCTION ANALYSIS

TERMINOLOGY BANK

Colour, Texture, Shape, Scale, Intensity,
Distribution, Distortion, Direction



LIGHTING

Use the terminology bank to record your observations in the grid below immediately after watching the show

LIVE PRODUCTION ANALYSIS

TERMINOLOGY BANK

Colour, Texture, Shape, Scale, Materials, Levels, Elevated, Downstage, Upstage, Stage Right, Stage Left, Centre Stage, Projections, Cyclorama, Flats, Automations, Revolves



SET DESIGN

Use the terminology bank to record your observations in the grid below immediately after watching the show

LIVE PRODUCTION ANALYSIS

TERMINOLOGY BANK

Texture, Shape, Scale, Variation, Intensity, Distribution, Distortion, Direction, Panning, Hass, Effect



SOUND DESIGN

Use the terminology bank to record your observations in the grid below immediately after watching the show

LIVE PRODUCTION ANALYSIS

TERMINOLOGY BANK

Texture, Shape, Scale, Colour, Variation, Fabric,
Fit, Shade, Tone, Tint, Wear



COSTUME DESIGN

Use the terminology bank to record your observations in the grid below immediately after watching the show

LIVE PRODUCTION ANALYSIS WRITING

When writing about Live Production Analysis in your assessments, your teachers and the examiners are looking to see that you understood both **what** you saw on stage, and also the **impact** it had. In order to ensure you communicate both these priorities, you need to make sure that your descriptions, explanations, analysis and evaluations have a balance of both AO3 and AO4 terminology.

This means:

AO3: Knowledge and understanding of how theatre and performance is made and developed.

Draft your paragraph here:

AO4: Analysis and evaluation of the ideas of others (in this case, Live Production)

To ensure each of your Live Production references adequately balances these two outcomes, the model below can be used to structure your notes:

1. Describe what you saw/heard on stage
2. Explain how that moment was created using in-depth AO3 terminology
3. Analyse how this moment impacted the audience
4. Evaluate how this impact was achieved and what the outcome was

A04 TERMINOLOGY BANK

- Humour, Empathy, Fear, Affection, Pride, Tension, Shock, Disapproval, Nostalgia, Familiarity
- Effective, Impressive, Engaging, Precise, Amusing
- Contextually appropriate, Narrative links
- Effectiveness of intent
- Playwright's intentions
- Director's intentions
- To indicate the original context
- To make relevant to a contemporary audience
- To recontextualise
- To highlight a specific theme
- To reinterpret historic facts
- To reframe an assumption



ACTIVITY FOR KS3 STUDENTS

Into The Woods weaves together well known stories and familiar characters to tell a new story about how we rise from adversity and challenge.

Tom Scutt, the designer has incorporated elements of the familiar characters we recognise, with some elements which reflect the darker atmosphere in *Into The Woods*, and add a layer of mystery or sophistication to the story. This is called **recontextualisation**, taking familiar visual elements and presenting them within a different contextual frame.

You can see Tom's beautiful design for Cinderella below:



Sketch of Cinderella's costume

Illustration: Tom Scutt



Photography: Johan Persson

Working as a designer with your group, you can have a go at designing your own costume ideas for characters from familiar nursery rhymes, borrowing from existing narratives and characters but repositioning the audience's point of view.

ACTIVITY FOR KS3 STUDENTS

WARM UP: NURSERY RHYMES

In your group – choose a nursery rhyme that everyone remembers. You might like to select one from the list below, or you can choose your own:

- Humpty Dumpty
- Jack & Jill
- Hey Diddle Diddle
- Incy Wincy Spider
- Hickory Dickory Dock
- Twinkle Twinkle Little Star
- Mary Had A Little Lamb
- Little Miss Muffet

1. With your group, recite the rhyme to ensure everyone remembers the details
2. Assign characters to your group, including the characters and objects within the storyline, and also a narrator
3. Prepare a performance of the rhyme, lasting a maximum of 2 minutes
4. Now prepare a fast forward performance – lasting no more than 30 seconds. Ensure you maintain the details necessary to communicate the key plot points and use physicality and vocal skills to punctuate the ‘rushed’ performance.
5. Perform your 30 second piece for the class
6. Discuss, after watching the other group’s performances, which details helped identify, even in a fast-forward performance, the key, recognisable details of each character’s piece.



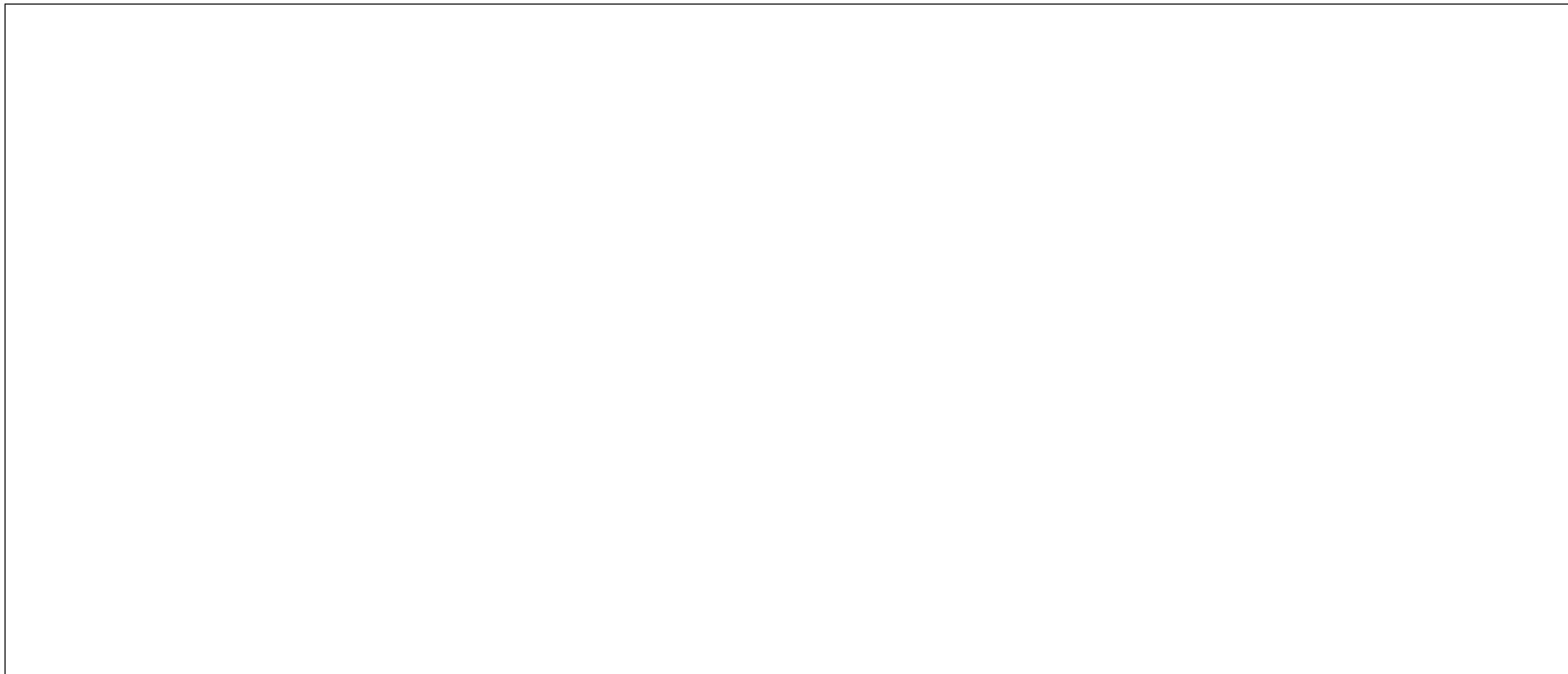
Photo: Johan Persson

ACTIVITY FOR KS3 STUDENTS

TASK: DESIGNING YOUR CHARACTER

1. To begin your design task – assign each member of your group one of the characters from the nursery rhymes that your class performed earlier
2. Begin by creating a mood board of existing designs for your character. Collate all of the images you can find for your character in a collage, including both cartoon interpretations as well as live action or theatrical interpretations

MOOD BOARD



ACTIVITY FOR KS3 STUDENTS

TASK: DESIGNING YOUR CHARACTER

3. Complete the table below as you analyse the existing interpretations of your character

What colours are common in the designs?	Trace the outline of the costumes below and make note of whether the commonly recurring shapes are angular or curved?
What do the colours and textures of the designs represent?	What do you think the audience is meant to think and feel about this character?

ACTIVITY FOR KS3 STUDENTS

TASK: DESIGNING YOUR CHARACTER

4. Populate the table below with some adjectives to describe your character, both the original interpretation of them, and how you'd like them to be represented in your recontextualised form

Original interpretation	My recontextualised interpretation
e.g.: innocent, naive	e.g.: wise, cunning

ACTIVITY FOR KS3 STUDENTS

TASK: DESIGNING YOUR CHARACTER

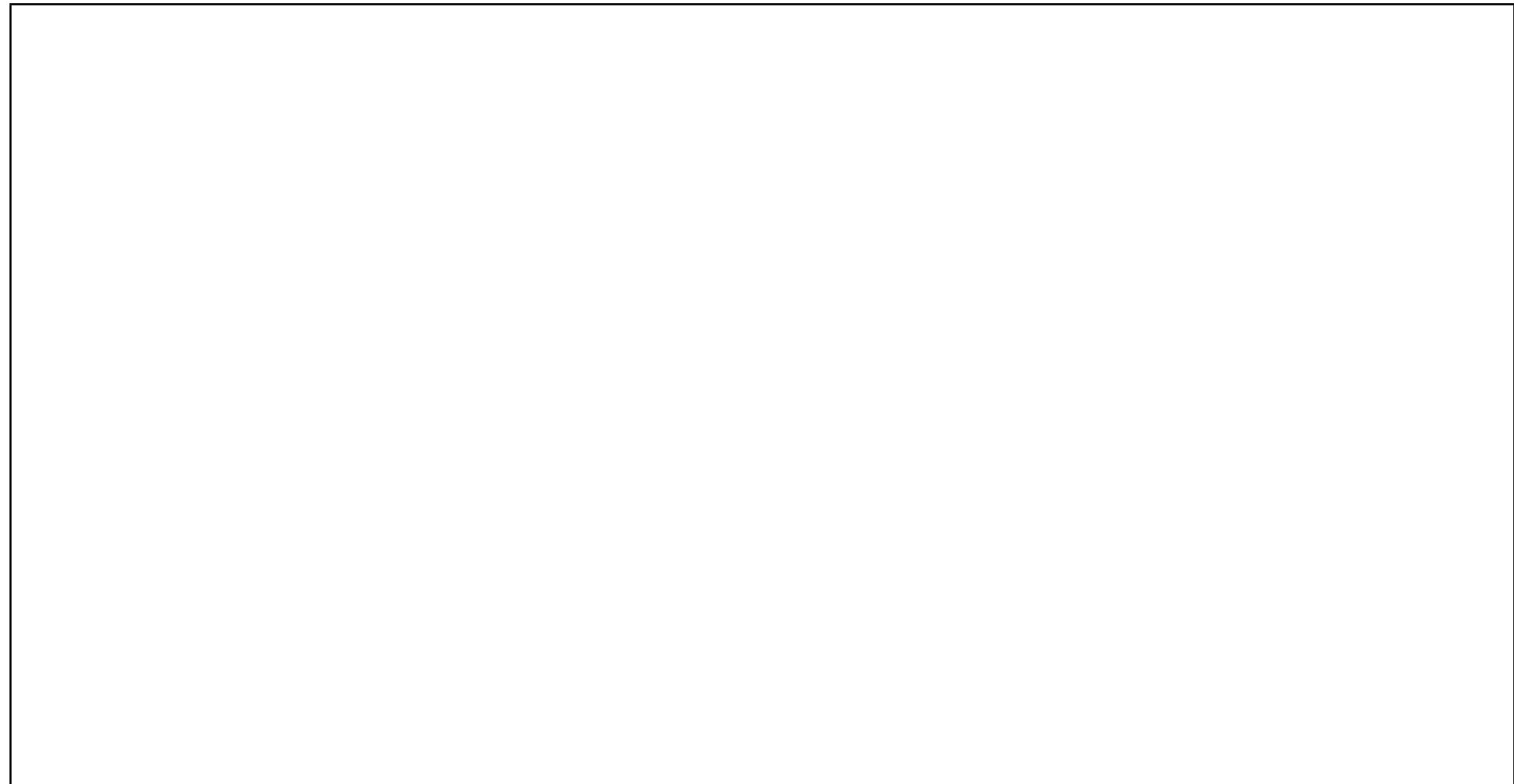
5. Considering the new interpretation, make a plan for how you might use the elements of design to communicate this recontextualised character to the audience through your design

Colours	Textures
<p><i>e.g. : What colours will you use? Will you make use of darker tones than the original mood board images?</i></p>	<p><i>e.g. : What type of fabrics will you use in your designs? Soft & flowy fabrics, or more rigid snakeskin leather or rich velvet?</i></p>
Shape	Scale
<p><i>e.g. : Will your design feature sharp angles or curved edges, or both? Long lines or short cropped shapes? Sketch some ideas below</i></p>	<p><i>e.g. : Will your design make the character seem bigger, more powerful? Or will it employ optical illusions to make them seem smaller and more friendly?</i></p>

ACTIVITY FOR KS3 STUDENTS

TASK: DESIGNING YOUR CHARACTER

6. Sketch and colour your design below



IDEAS FOR YOUR DISCUSSIONS

A LEVEL LITERATURE STUDENTS

- *Into The Woods* directly engages with the western literary tradition of the Grimm Brothers' fairy tales. Analyse how Lapine and Sondheim subvert the traditional narrative arc of "Happy Ever After."
- The central characters function as archetypes. Explore how the writers give them modern, flawed, and complex psychology, transforming them from simple moral symbols into relatable individuals grappling with adult problems and how this positions the audience to align with them throughout the development of the plot.
- The structural division into Act One (the quest for the wish) and Act Two (the consequence) is a unique structural device. Analyse how this form reinforces the central theme: wishes come true, not free.
- The woods itself is a powerful metaphor – a traditional motif in literature. Discuss how this symbolism develops throughout the play.
- Analyse the narrator's function in controlling the story's pace and tone, and how his demise in Act Two signifies the characters' forced transition from being passive recipients of a story to active agents responsible for their own narrative.
- The text challenges the simplistic "good vs. evil" morality of its source material, the original fairytales. Characters commit immoral acts for seemingly "good" reasons which forces the audience to question the moral integrity of their own decisions. Discuss how the musical prompts the analysis of moral relativism and the complex ethics of the modern world.

A LEVEL DRAMA STUDENTS

- Discuss how the show utilises epic theatre structure. Can you make connections between *Into The Woods* and the work of Bertolt Brecht? The two-act structure of the show challenges the audience's emotional involvement and encourages them to think critically about the fairy tales and moral lessons. How does this align with Brecht's values and intentions for his work? What implications does the mirroring have for a modern audience seeing *Into The Woods*?
- The presence and ultimate fate of the narrator is a key device of Epic Theatre. Through the breaking of the fourth wall, the narrator is able to control the audience's perspective. How can a director make use of this convention to communicate the themes explicitly to the audience?
- Explore how parody and pastiche are used to both celebrate and critique the traditional Musical Theatre and Fairytale genres in *Into The Woods*.
- How do the actors portray both typical archetypes of the fairytale characters whilst also subverting the expectations of the audience to communicate darker or more complex psychological ideas? Which actors make use of specific vocal and physical skills to highlight this subversion?
- How does the designer Tom Scutt sample from the familiar world of fairytales whilst at the same time presenting a new context for the characters we know so well from childhood? How does this familiarity or nostalgia position the audience to feel a certain way about the characters?

IDEAS FOR YOUR DISCUSSIONS

A LEVEL MUSIC STUDENTS

- Analyse the use of complex chromaticism, extended tonality, and dissonances that reflect the characters' psychological states and the darkness of the woods. Identify how the use of a relatively diatonic Act One versus the more chaotic, modulatory Act Two reflects the dramatic shift.
- Discuss Sondheim's use of the "I Wish" motif as the kernel from which the entire prologue and much of the show is built, demonstrating how a small musical idea can be developed and manipulated throughout a score for differing effects.
- Identify how a score so rich with syncopation, fluctuating time signatures, and complex rhythmic interplay challenges traditional show-tune rhythm and positions the audience to seek meaning in other ways.
- Analyse how music is used in the underscoring to build tension and foreshadow events.
- The musical motifs for specific characters dramatically contrast one another to present separate identities. Discuss how the use of patter (the Witch) versus more operatic songs (the princes) builds specific character identities within the score. Further to this, consider how the soliloquy structure of Little Red or the Baker's Wife's songs contrast elements of femininity from the Witch's rapping.

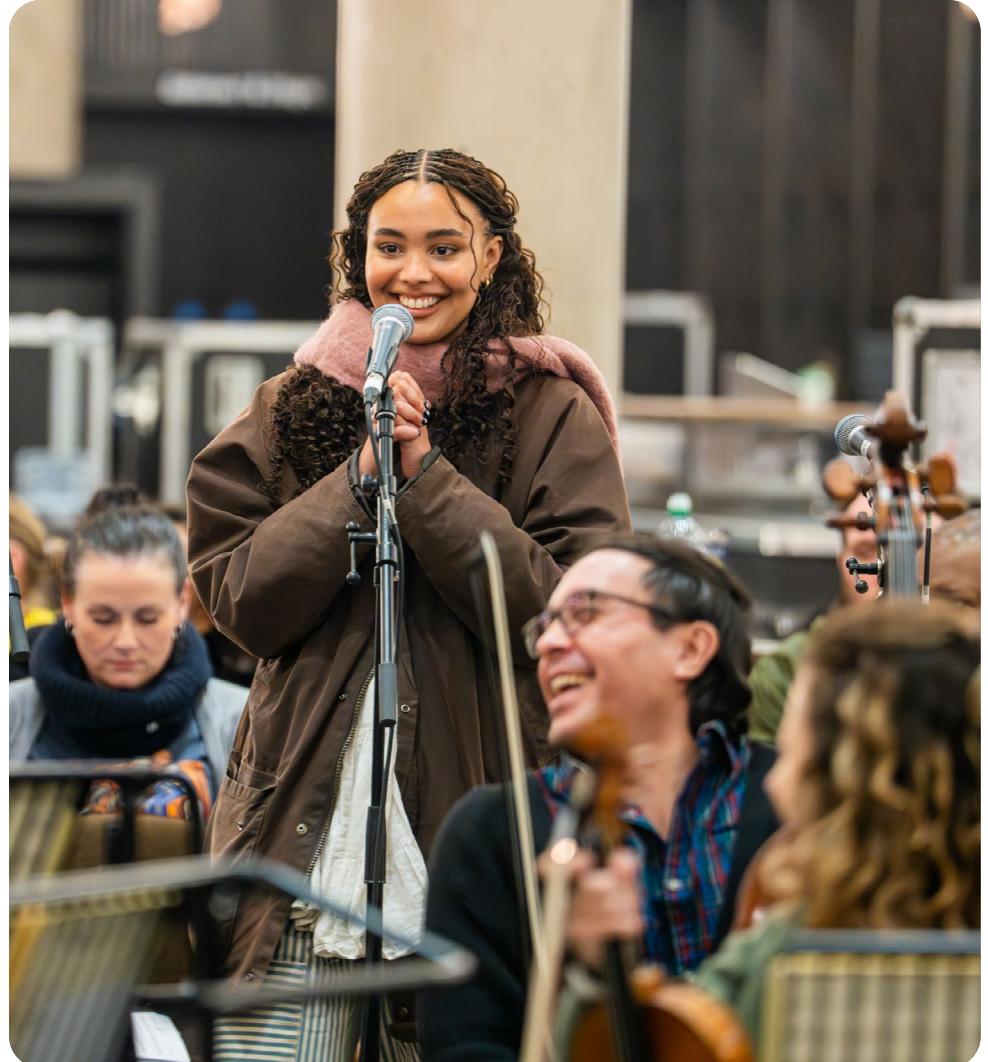


Photo: Craig Sugden



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