

Creative

Director & Adaptor
– Emma Rice

Lighting Designer
– Malcolm Rippeth

Production Designer
– Mic Pool

Designer
– Neil Murray

Score & Sound
– Simon Baker

Choreographer
– Etta Murfitt

Cast

Dean Nolan, Mike Shepherd, Kirsty Woodward



Welcome

Welcome to the Steptoe and Son Educational Resource pack. This pack has been created to accompany the production of Steptoe and Son and to give a detailed and comprehensive insight into both the show and Kneehigh's style and method of working.

This resource is suitable for GCSE and A Level Drama/ Theatre studies students and gives an overview of the whole theatre making process, including a peek into the rehearsal room and a selection of interviews with key members of the cast and creative team.

We do hope you find it useful and informative and that it will enhance your students' understanding of Kneehigh's method and approach to working.

Contents

A long standing history – WYP and Kneehigh
.....

Steptoe and Son – The TV series
.....

The Rag and Bone Trade
.....

Emma Rice
.....

The Characters
.....

Interview with Dean Nolan
.....

Interview with Mike Shepherd
.....

Interview with Kirsty Woodward
.....

Simon Baker – sound designer
.....

Interview with Emma Rice – Director
.....

Interview with Steph Curtis – Company Stage Manager
.....

An insight into the rehearsal room with assistant director, Samuel Wood
.....

West Yorkshire Playhouse and Kneehigh — a long standing history

West Yorkshire Playhouse and Kneehigh have a longstanding history. A venue we regularly tour to when out on the road, we have also regularly enjoyed the West Yorkshire Playhouse team as exciting collaborators with *The Wooden Frock* in 2004 and *The Bacchae* in 2005. We enjoyed the opportunity to share resources, take collective risk and allow the shows to become greater than the sum of their parts.

Research and development for *Steptoe and Son* started life in the Kneehigh Barns. The Barns are a place of magic and security, and here, the company came together with the scripts, music and time to explore the story, themes and the world around them. We knew at this point it was the perfect opportunity to return to West Yorkshire Playhouse to create the show. We have a history with the venue and a loyalty and to and from their audience. The people in the building, West Yorkshire playhouse's artistic commitments and the facilities they have available to them, create a perfect environment to bring the story of *Steptoe* to emotional and physical life.

Working away from the barns, where most of our work is made, is always a big decision but we are delighted to be able to return to Leeds and work with one of the finest regional producing houses in the UK.

We hope that you enjoy the outcome of our latest collaboration.

Paul Crewes

Executive Producer and Chief Executive, Kneehigh

Paul has worked for Kneehigh since 2005 producing; *Tristan & Yseult* (UK, Sydney, New Zealand & US) *Cymbeline* (UK, Columbia & Brazil); *Rapunzel* (UK & US) *Don John* (UK & US), *Hansel & Gretel*, *Brief Encounter* (US tour), and the 2010 tour of *The Red Shoes* (UK, US & Australia). Highlights particularly include the launch of the *Asylum* (featuring The Red Shoes, Blast! & The King of Prussia), a touring 'home' for the company that opened in Cornwall in 2010. Other highlights include *Brief Encounter's* US tour and *Tristan & Yseult* in Sydney. Before working with Kneehigh, Paul was Producer at the West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds, where he set up over 40 productions as well as collaborations with Kneehigh (*The Wooden Frock & The Bacchae*), Improbable Theatre, Teatre Romea, National Theatre and with commercial & West End producers. Other work includes producing the UK tour of *Doorman* with his own company in 2005, Associate Producer for the Lowry, producing *King Cotton* in 2007, *Fireflies* and *Beyond the Frontline* in 2009 and working for Metal with Jude Kelly on several projects including the Olympic bid for 2012.

WY PLAY
HOUSE Kneehigh

Steptoe and son... the TV series

Steptoe and Son was born from a one-off comic episode, *The Offer*, written by Ray Galton and Alan Simpson, commissioned by the BBC in 1962 as part of *Comedy Playhouse*.

Comedy Playhouse was a long-running BBC series showing one-off episodes airing for 120 episodes from 1961 to 1975. *The Offer* paved the way for the beginning of one of the most popular TV series of the 20th Century, *Steptoe and Son*. Subsequently, *Steptoe and Son* aired in June 1962 and was an instant success. Other well known series that developed as a result of *Comedy Playhouse* were *Till death us do part*, *Are you Being Served* and *Last of the Summer Wine*.

Steptoe and Son ran from 1962 – 1974 and commanded audiences of near to 28 million. The series featured the life of a 60-something father, Albert Steptoe, who runs a rag and bone trade and lives at home with his long-suffering 30-something son, Harold. As rag and bone men, they buy up scrap metal and goods nobody wants and try to sell them at a profit. Harold is sent out on the rounds, collecting junk and whatever else he can, while his father, Albert, prefers to stay at home, supposedly to take charge of the more demanding day to day running of the business details but in reality, taking it easy.

The relationship between father and son is not an easy one and at times rather tempestuous, competitive and suffocating. Harold desperately seeks a life beyond the confines of his mundane existence and Albert does everything he can to distract him from the outside world and from any dreams he has of escape and pursuing a more exciting future.



The Actors

Steptoe and Son was the first comedy series that employed actors rather than comedians to play the leads. This choice gave the programme a sense of realism, a hard edge and a grittiness never seen before in a comedy. The actors brought a depth and range to the roles that comedians may not have been able to — all this added to the overall success of the show.



Harry H. Corbett (1925 –1982)
— played Harold Steptoe

Harry Corbett was born in Burma, India on 28 February 1925. As a child, following the death of his mother, he went to live with his aunt in Manchester. He served in the Royal Marines during World War II and then went on to train as an actor. It was common then for aspiring actors to 'learn the craft' through experience in repertory theatre and this is where Harry started too. His reputation as an actor grew over time and he was being offered more and more film roles. He was even described as the British Marlon Brando, not only because of his handsome, rugged looks but also because of his intense, method approach to performance. Little did he know the role of Harold was to be so successful that it would dominate the rest of his acting career. Harold was drawn to the unusual and dynamic combination of comedy and social realism that Steptoe and Son offered and believed it would challenge him as a performer.



Henry Wilfrid Brambell (1912 –1985)
— played Albert Steptoe

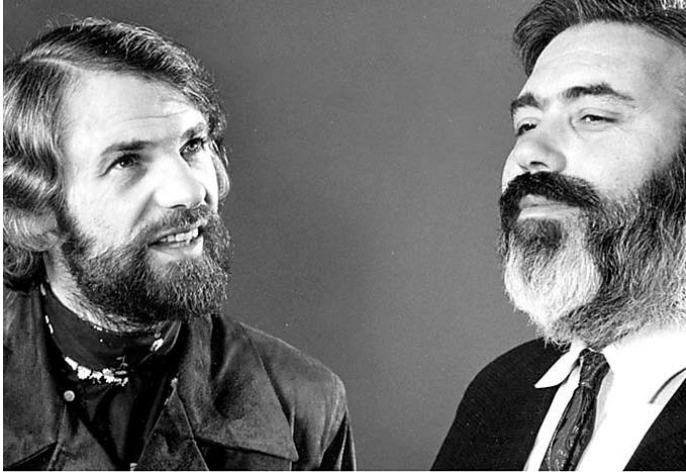
Wilfred Brambell was born in Dublin, 1912. Performance and acting was in his blood as his mother was an opera singer. His father worked at Guinness Brewery in Dublin. It was difficult to find regular work as an actor and performer in Ireland, especially at the beginning of the 20th century with so much civil unrest. However, Brambell did have quite a lot of success in his native country, securing many roles as an actor at the Abbey Theatre and the Gate Theatre in Dublin. He began to secure a very good reputation and then went on to work as a professional actor in repertory theatre in Swansea and Bristol. Brambell's success and popularity as an actor continued to flourish and he very rarely found himself short of work.

A New Take on Comedy

Steptoe and Son introduced a gritty reality to comedy that hadn't been seen before. It was new, exciting and utterly captivating. The characters were not just one dimensional but displayed a breadth of depth and human emotion. For probably the first time on such a large scale, the public could identify with television characters and wanted to stay with them on their journey. The relationship between Harold and Albert never failed to surprise and the fact that there was so much depth and complexity to the characters meant that audiences never tired of their antics. Harold and Albert already had a real sense of history when the series first began and this made their characters even more believable and at the same time intriguing.

Steptoe and Son showed life as it was – in black and white with no frills attached. Harold's dreams of a different kind of life and existence would have had resonance with the audience. Many of us dream of better lives, more money, a bigger home, to find the love of your life etc... but all too often we are brought back to earth with a crash.

The writers: Ray Galton and Alan Simpson



Galton and Simpson first met at Milford Sanatorium in 1948 when they were both undergoing treatment for T.B. Previously, Simpson had been working as a shipping clerk and Galton had been employed at the Transport and General Workers' Union.

At the hospital, the patients had access to an amateur radio room and both writers decided to write some comedy shows together.

After leaving the hospital, Simpson was asked by a church concert group if he could write them a show. He contacted Galton, and by 1951 they were writing professionally for the BBC. By 1952 the Galton and Simpson partnership was in full swing.

In the early stages of their career, they worked from an office over a greengrocer's in Shepherd's Bush, along with a crowd of up and coming writers and performers including Peter Sellers, Frankie Howerd, Spike Milligan and Eric Sykes. In 1954, they began to write *Hancock's Half Hour*, which ran on radio until 1959 and consisted of 101 episode before transferring to television in 1956.

From 1951 – 1961, they established themselves as one of Britain's most successful comedy writing partnerships ever, writing for nearly all the top comics of that era. At the end of 1961, they started off the BBC Comedy Playhouse, writing two series, 16 episodes in all, out of which emerged *Steptoe and Son*. Eight TV series of *Steptoe* ensued over the following 12 years.

Stage

Their stage credits include a successful revue *Way Out in Piccadilly* on which they collaborated with Eric Sykes, and which starred Frankie Howerd and Cilla Black. Their adaptation of Rene d'Obaldia's *The Wind in the Sassafras Trees* also starred Frankie Howerd and transferred from the U.K. to Broadway, U.S.A.

Film

They have written numerous films *The Rebel* (1960) starring Tony Hancock, *The Bargee* (1963) starring Harry H. Corbett, *The Wrong Arm of The Law* (1964) starring Peter Sellers and Lionel Jeffries, *The Spy With a Cold Nose* (1966) starring Laurence Harvey, *Loot* (1970) from the stage play by Joe Orton, starring Richard Attenborough and Lee Remick, and two screenplays of *Steptoe*.

Television

They also had the honour of having three TV series of their own, *Comedy Playhouse* (1962) for the BBC, *The Galton and Simpson Comedy* (1969) for London Weekend, *The Galton and Simpson Playhouse* (1976/7) for Yorkshire TV. This was their last series together for some time due to Simpson taking a "sabbatical". Apart from working on overseas productions they did not write anything new for the U.K. until 1995, when they got together to update 8 of their classic scripts for *Paul Merton in Galton & Simpson's....* for Carlton TV, one of which was the ITV entry for the Montreux TV Festival in April 1996. A second series was screened in 1997.

Radio

BBC Radio 4 celebrated the 50th Anniversary of this great partnership over Christmas/New Year in 98/99 by broadcasting four programmes in *The Galton and Simpson Radio Playhouse* series, for which they adapted four of their TV comedies.

2012 marks the 50th anniversary of the making of *Steptoe and Son*.

Rag and Bone Trade

“As nice a bit of Crown Derby as ever came into the yard”

Albert



A rag and bone man collects unwanted household items and sells them on to other merchants. In the nineteenth century, rag and bone men would travel on foot using an old bag to collect unwanted items. Wealthier rag and bone men would use a horse and cart to carry their goods. Originally rag and bone men would scavenge for materials which included rags, bones and other metals. London was the popular city to scavenge for unwanted materials given its size and population. It was a long working day for rag and bone men and they would spend up to ten hours at a time, starting before dawn, foraging for materials of any value.

Old rags were valuable – sold on to convert into fabric and paper. White rags could reach 2-3 pence per pound and had to be dried out before they could be sold on – it was a hard task to find rags that were in good enough condition to sell on. Bones found were sold on to be re-used in a number of ways: glue, knife handles and soap to name a few. In one day a rag and bone man might be lucky to earn on average six pence for his troubles.



Rag and Bone Trade 1960s

The Rag and Bone trade changed rapidly in the 1960s – especially when scrap metal became popular and more lucrative and people could begin to transport their goods in vehicles rather than on foot. Many of these men started up their own scrap metal businesses and began to make comfortable livings from it. However, others kept on to the original rag and bone trade by collecting unwanted household items, repairing them and selling them on if valuable. Many of the items collected were merely junk so it would have been difficult for Steptoe and Son to make a large amount of money from what they collected.

Emma Rice — Director of *Steptoe and Son* and Co Artistic Director of Kneehigh Theatre



7

If I was interested by *Steptoe and Son* before, I love and know them now. I have laughed and wept in equal measure as I made my way through the hours of tender, cruel and surprising scripts that make up the *Steptoe and Son* cannon. The work is deeper, darker and more intricate than I ever realised, the period rich, relevant and somehow tragic. This process has presented a reef of childhood memories and grown-up knowledge to examine.

The words, situations, characters and genius of this production are all the work and imagination of Ray Galton and Alan Simpson. What I have tried to bring is a fresh lens; new ways of looking at the characters and situations for the 21st Century. I have explored the presence, or lack of presence of femininity in Albert and Harold's lives, of the very thing they cannot find or hold on to; a woman. I have created a character, circling the action and the two men. She is on the outside, sometimes calling like a siren, sometimes knocking to come in. She brings colour, promise, sex, vitality and hope. Throughout the action she transforms as we see her change from girl to

mother, from lover to wife, from factory worker to free spirit and, eventually, into an independent person.

These two desperately lonely men miss her on every level, left behind by two World Wars, poverty and simple bad luck.

I have also delved into the men's inner lives: their experience of war, love, fantasy and the passage of time. *Steptoe and Son* ran between 1962 and 1974. I have traced its passing with music, fashion and film. The world changed whilst these two battled, worked and got old. England won the World Cup, leaders were shot, bras were burnt and man walked on the moon.

Four episodes form the basis for this production, a spine or map, if you like. These are *The Offer*, *The Bird*, *The Holiday* and *Two's Company*. I wanted to re-discover the characters that had generations glued to their TVs for over a decade. It has been the chance of a lifetime to work with such an iconic and important body of work. I am truly lucky. I feel, I myself am space walking through history – my parents, my grandparents and my own.

Emma Rice 2012

The Characters

Albert — played by Mike Shepherd

“You’re not too old for a clout round the ear you know”

Albert



Albert is rather content with his place the world and is proud of his ‘thriving’ rag and bone business, ‘Steptoe and Son’. On first impression, he lives a rather shambolic and disorderly existence but delve deeper and it’s clear to see that underneath the chaos of odd lampshades, Crown Derby plates, Red anchor Chelsea Chinese vases and other chintz, everything has a sense of order and has its place. This is Albert’s Kingdom and he is most happy there. As King of the Steptoe and Son yard, he remains in control of his long suffering son, Harold. Although Harold begins to put up a fight and resist his father’s demands, Albert always wins in the end. Albert is a most accomplished actor who knows exactly how to tap into his son’s softer side and gain sympathy when required. It is clear he does feel love for his son but this love does transcend into something controlling, manipulative and selfish. Following the death of his wife, Harold is all Albert has left in the world – Harold makes him feel safe. He is a contradictory character: stubborn, greedy, grimy, crude, lazy, frustrating and manipulative but somehow, fascinating, intriguing and charming at the same time.

The Characters

Harold — played by Dean Nolan

“I’ll never make a name for myself here. Here I’m just ‘and son’”

Harold



Having such a demanding and frustrating father to contend with on a daily basis, it is difficult not to empathise with Harold’s predicament. Harold has dreams and aspirations way beyond the strict and suffocating confines of the Steptoe and Son yard he is tied to. For Harold, the business is like a prison – a punishment, purgatory, a never ending groundhog day. He plans to try his escape many times but without success. He wants more out of life - his own home, his own family, his own business, to travel, to be free! It’s clear that time is running out for Harold if he is to achieve any of his dreams – at 37 years old he has not lived but rather only dreamt about other possibilities. We can’t help but ask ourselves ‘What keeps Harold there?’ He’s not like the old horse used to pull the cart – trapped there for eternity – he has a choice, he’s strong – he can run away anytime he wants. What keeps him tied to a place he so obviously detests? Is he too scared? Is he too much like his father – too afraid and too comfortable to really face the outside world?

The Characters

Woman — played by **Kirsty Woodward**

“It’ll be nice to have a woman around the house again. It’ll be just like old times when your mother was alive”

Albert



10

For this production of Steptoe and Son, Emma Rice was very interested to explore a fresh lens – the lens of femininity. Having a female presence throughout the production, in different guises, explores ‘the presence, or lack of presence in Albert and Harold’s lives, the very thing they cannot hold on to – a woman’. During the course of the play, we see this woman transform from girl to mother, wife, factory worker, a free spirit advocating love and peace to finally, an independent and liberated woman. Harold and Albert are always aware of her presence – at times she appears as a character they speak to and at other times she represents a fantasy, a memory, a long-forgotten feeling or a desire. When she does appear she brings a combination of hope, comfort, vitality and colour to an otherwise overcast world.

Steptoe and Son

The Production

Emma Rice, the Director of Steptoe and Son, chose to base the production on the following four episodes from the popular TV series.



► Pilot (January 1962) The Offer

“You don’t want to go taking no offers, we’ve got a good business here”

Albert

Harold Steptoe is 37 years old and works alongside his father, Harold Steptoe, in their rag and bone business ‘Steptoe & Son’. ‘Four years in the Army and twenty –one on the cart’, frustrated with his existence and seeking to break free he tells his father he has been offered a job elsewhere. Albert, his widowed and selfish father can’t bear to see his son go and knows just how to keep him at home.



► Series 1, Episode 1 (June 1962) The Bird

“I must say you’ve gone to a lot of trouble... for a bird who hasn’t turned up...”

Albert

Harold is getting ready for a date when Albert tries to convince him to bring the lady back to the house. Harold is at first not impressed with the idea, embarrassed at his surroundings but Albert manages to persuade him. Albert, determined to put an end to the romance, puts the clocks forward so when the girl fails to turn up, Harold, spurred on by Albert, becomes convinced that she has deliberately stood him up.



► Series 1, Episode 5 (July 1962) The Holiday

“ But we always go to Bognor ”

Albert

Desperate for some sun, sea, sand and girls, and an opportunity to escape from his father's grip, Harold receives some exotic holiday brochures in the post. Albert is rather suspicious and not happy at all that his son would want to go away without him to some far flung destination rather than their usual Bognor trip every summer. To prevent his son from leaving he feigns illness, leaving the doctor to persuade Harold to put his holiday on hold and accompany his father to Bognor as planned.



► Series 6, Episode 3 (November 1970) Two's Company

“ It's not exactly like the one Richard Burton bought for Elizabeth Taylor, but well, I hope you like it ”

Albert

Eight years on and Albert is in love. Harold is not happy when his father announces his intention to marry his new love but promises to meet her anyway. Harold is shocked to discover that Albert's new love, Daphne, is actually an old flame of his and seeing her again stirs up many feelings and emotions. Harold tells Albert the truth and the engagement is called off.



Behind the Scenes — Steptoe and Son, the Tv Series

Interview — Dean Nolan

“Son? When was I ever a son to you? Cheap labour – that’s all I was ”

Harold



13

Do you have any memories of the TV series, Steptoe and Son?

Yes my parents are from London, so I grew up with Steptoe and have seen a lot of repeats of the series but when I knew about the job I did not watch an episode. However, I will look forward to watching them after we finish our tour.

How does it feel to play such an iconic character as Harold?

The best, it’s the toughest and most enjoyable role I have ever played. Harold has so many levels, and I hope we have discovered them all.

I was slightly worried as everyone remembers Harry H Corbett and his delivery of certain catch phrases such as, “You Dirty Old Man”, so I was over the moon when director Emma Rice said we were doing our own version and set in Cornwall. This gave us an opportunity to make new decisions and create our own piece.

If you could describe Harold in five words, what would they be?

Dreamer, Friend, Selfish, Emotional and Scared

What preparation did you do before starting rehearsals?

Not too much. I like to always approach rehearsals as open minded as possible and I kept away from the TV series, and had a couple of reads of the script.

How does your character develop/change through the course of the play?

These two characters change status and power throughout the piece, but the show begins with Harold a 37 year old wanting to leave and make it on his own. He cannot get away and his Dad will try anything to stop him leaving. We then see in the second half, another attempt for a holiday, but once again, after the doctor’s advice, Harold cannot leave Albert on his own. However, by the end we see a change, when his Dad becomes the one living the young life again, going on a date. So, the tables suddenly change where it is Harold nagging his Dad like the father figure asking where has he been... Essentially, it is a tug of war throughout the piece but by the end not much has really changed, we just see their full story and how they are trapped in their own little world.

In the rehearsal room, how did you and Mike Shepherd explore the relationship between Albert and Harold?

We get on well and have a lot of banter. This was a real help in finding out how we could explore the

relationship. We also played a badminton game called Cock Square to keep up some competitive spirit within us all.

Has playing Harold and being part of this production, presented new challenges to you as an actor at all?

Every role has its different challenges and this is a gem of a role to play. For me, it's not often you find a part that goes through several different emotions within a short space of time and has such a variety of colour and shades. Also, the fact that there are only 3 of us in the cast means we have to keep our energy up and work on our stamina as we do throw a few moves in the show too!!

What lessons, if any, do you think we learn from the production as an audience?

What brilliant writing this is and how it still stands up now 50 years on and that it's about a relationship between a father and son that a lot of us can relate to. It could be set anywhere, and that you can combine and play with lots of ideas of how to tell a story, such as memories, music or through the female character eyes this gives it colour and uses your imagination which Kneehigh always try and seem to succeed in doing so. Hope you enjoy the show.



Dean Nolan

Dean was born in Truro, Cornwall and his first training was at the Hub Theatre School in St Austell. Growing up, his ambition was always to work with Kneehigh, though he never thought Mike Shepherd would end up playing his Dad. In Cornwall he was involved in all kinds of shows, from panto to musicals whether in the chorus or playing the Dame. This is Dean's first show with Kneehigh, although he was involved in Hanging Around, a National Youth Theatre project, at Kneehigh's rehearsal barns. He spent five years at the National Youth Theatre, shows included Nicholas Nickleby and The Master and Margarita. Since then theatre highlights have been playing The Fat Controller in Thomas the Tank Engine's Live Show, The Jungle Book at Warwick Arts Centre, A Taste of Honey and Romeo and Juliet Unzipped at Salisbury Playhouse, Riot Rebellion and Bloody Insurrection, Sex & Docks & Rock 'n' Roll and Big Society with Chumbawamba, Red Ladder Theatre Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat and Miracle Theatre's Tin. Dean is also Co-Artistic Director of Cornish based theatre company BishBashBosh Productions, now in their sixth year. Productions include Sur. ng Tommies, A Mere Interlude and Oogly Es Sin. TV and Film includes Ashes to Ashes, BBC, Weekend Retreat o-region, Cornish Language. Im short "Tamara" and several commercials.

Interview — Mike Shepherd

“I don't think I'm going to get over this one...I'm on my way out ”

Albert

Do you have any memories of the TV series, Steptoe and Son?

Yes, I used to watch Steptoe with my Dad, I remember quite clearly feeling fascinated and troubled, he chuckled and I couldn't see what was funny amongst the cruelty, my Mum knitted. I'm of a generation for whom the 2nd world war was very present in our childhoods. My parents had survived the London Blitz and my Dad survived repeated bombing raids over Germany, they then moved to Cornwall. Safety and security were priorities as was a desire to “get on” in the world and to “better” oneself. The class system was very prevalent in England (as it still is today) and my parents aspired to be middle class which is similar to Harold's snobbery and desire to get above himself. This was a time before John Lennon wrote the song Working Class Hero.

How does it feel to play a character that is so well known by many people?

Emma was very clear that she didn't want to replicate the TV series, why would you? Theatre is a heightened form, Steptoe was a half hour sitcom. I really didn't want to do an impression of Wilfred Brambell. There are shows which aim to accurately reproduce film or TV but it feels uninteresting to encourage audiences and press to assess the success of the performance on how close you might have got to the original. We decided to make Harold and Albert Cornish, the robustness of the dialect really suited the robustness and energy of Galton and Simpson's brilliant script and in many forgotten corners of Cornwall's post industrial landscapes, families continue to scabble an existence from scrap and salvage. My inspiration for Albert came from the energy and busyness of my Mother, from silent movies, from the “grotesques” of Dickens and Hogarth and from my fascination with the clown Grimaldi. Albert starts our show as a grotesque



with a sense of generations past and, as the decades pass, ends up in a sports jacket, in love and with a set of false teeth.

If you could describe Albert in five words, what would they be?

Albert in 5 words? Damaged (post traumatic wartime disorder ?) Sprightly, Sharp Survivor, Wicked and teeming with life

What preparation did you do before starting rehearsals?

Preparation for me is always to do with familiarising myself with the world of the play, to gently become consumed and open to possibilities. This openness is vital to making new work. Preparation should not be about predetermined ideas, it should be more about finding a state(as an actor) where you can make

offers for a director to either accept or reject and a willingness to try absolutely anything with generosity and good spirit.

Steptoe was an unusual process for Kneehigh as we never normally start off with a script but, more usually, arrive at the script as the performance evolves. We would more often explore characters through improvisation with music, action and design feeding their development.

In this instance there was a script to learn and my preparation was mainly to do with familiarising myself with the complications of line learning, it was hard with no easy solutions!

How does your character develop/change during the course of the play?

The character develops as the show evolves, it's important to keep crafting nuance and precision whilst remaining true. It's vitally important to truly understand what the piece needs and what your director sees and wants rather than become obsessed with your own performance.

There is a place for marvellous method acting i.e Robert de Niro and film acting generally but theatre performance does not allow you the luxury of "becoming" the character. It would be a dangerous state to be in!

At any given time in a Kneehigh show an actor is doing at least three things at once - engaged with your own inner narrative (remembering your lines, dance steps etc..) engaged with your fellow actors, engaged with the audience, moving set and props, costume changes and helping other actors with costume and props. If you allowed yourself the self indulgence of method acting, everything would grind to a halt.

In the rehearsal room, how did you and Dean Nolan explore the relationship between Albert and Harold?

Harold and Albert's relationship is obviously vital and Dean and I quietly but consciously work hard to make sure we have a delight in each other on and off the stage. We are touring until next April, we are not part of a large ensemble it's vital that Dean, myself and Kirsty keep a sense of glee and an electricity in the work.

Has playing Albert and being part of this production, presented new challenges to you as an actor at all?

Yes, playing Albert is a challenge and how marvellous it is to have a challenge. I've never been that interested in the comfort zone.

What lessons, if any, do you think we learn from the production as an audience?

Theatre shouldn't preach so we not looking to teach any lessons. Theatre should entertain, provoke and resonate. Steptoe delves into a dark world of post war loss, family and entrapment, of what might have been and a world spinning by. For me it's about two men trapped on an island of junk, it feels bleak it feels like a Beckett play, it feels like a consequence of war. The lessons are there to be learnt but it seems that mankind has an inability to learn them.



Mike Shepherd

With a Cornish childhood spent climbing trees, lighting bonfires and jumping off cliffs, Mike remains intent on re-creating the theatrical equivalent of these activities. He is an actor, director, teacher and Joint Artistic Director for Kneehigh, the company he founded. Since the beginning Mike has been in almost every Kneehigh show, most recently he performed in *Midnight's Pumpkin*, *The Red Shoes* and *Don John*. In 2010 he directed the UK tour of *Hansel & Gretel*.

Mike's other work includes a recent foray into film, where he was run over by a train in *Anna Karenina* (to be released later in 2012) and directing a puppet show, *The Very Old Man with Enormous Wings*, for the *Little Angel*, Islington (touring in 2013).

Interview — Kirsty Woodward



Do you have any memories of the TV series, *Stephoe and Son*?

I remember my Dad used to watch it, when I was little, I would creep in and sit next to him on the sofa and watch bits. I remember my Dad laughed and my mum didn't.

What preparation did you do before starting rehearsals?

I watched some episodes of *Stephoe*, to get a sense of the world and to see some of the women that come into it. I read the script again and again. I think the very first time you read a script is really precious because that initial impression of the story and the characters can completely change once you put it on its feet. The writing is so brilliant but I think that's always half the magic and the rest has to happen on your feet, in the room, on the stage. You can get a sense of the world from the words and the story but once you

start playing and searching in rehearsals that's when you really flesh it out and get to know it inside out, upside down, heart and soul. You can find things and hear things that you didn't just from reading it. That's what separates a book from a play! When I did plays at school and we read them like books I always felt completely lost and really frustrated because they aren't made for that, they are made for you to breathe life into them. The academic approach has its place and is necessary but it has to be married with a practical, playful approach.

What does having an omnipresent female character bring to the production?

I think the female character represents some of the things that are missing in Harold and Albert's lives. She exists outside the junk yard, outside their world and when she tries to come into their world they won't let her. She is the road not taken, the opportunity of change, escape, love, sex, family and freedom that the men don't choose.

What is your favourite character to play in the production and why?

It changes every night but I enjoy them all, it's such a treat and a challenge to get to play so many different roles all in one play. Every night the show will be different anyway, the audience will be different, we will all be a day older, the weather will be different, the atmosphere, your quick change, your dinner...one of the things I always love about watching knee-high shows is how LIVE their work it feels as an audience member, how fresh and in the moment.

In the rehearsal room, how did you, Dean Nolan and Mike Shepherd explore the relationship between Albert, Harold and the different female characters?

We did it differently for each character but Emma and Neil (our designer) always dressed me up before we met each character for the first time, which was really useful, just seeing yourself in the mirror dressed as

your character can help so much, it gives you a little polaroid in your head of what your character looks like, or shoes that make you walk differently, or a wig that makes you feel older, or a suit that makes you feel like a man. Then you are armed before you actually start to play with Harold and Albert and the text. For one of the exercises we did Emma asked us to make an installation for our characters, I chose Roxanne and created a messy bedroom filled with clothes and make up and music and a bottle of gin, then Albert created his space, a dingy, dark corner filled with junk and rags and Harold his, filled with junk and music alcohol, then Emma got Albert and Harold to interact then she got me to walk into their spaces, have moments with them both then out again, which in some ways was our play in miniature and without words!

What lessons, if any, do you think we learn from the production as an audience?

Like any type of art, everyone will take something different from it. I wouldn't use the word 'lesson' though. It's more about what responses or emotions it might evoke. We are all completely different people with different life experiences which will effect how we look at anything. Unlike maths there isn't a definitive answer to a sum, with art you can take what you want from what you see, what you experience and have a totally unique and personal response to it. Of course there are moments when you may laugh or cry or gasp in time with an entire audience but ultimately it's a personal and individual response. I find the relationship between Harold and Albert at moments hilarious and at moments utterly heart breaking. I watch it desperate for Harold to break free but at the same time not wanting Albert to be left alone, an old man with no one by his side. I see in the play situations and people from my own family.



Kirsty Woodward

Kirsty first joined Kneehigh as an apprentice in 2006 playing Pisanio in the Kneehigh/RSC Coproduction of Cymbeline which, after Stratford, toured the UK, Columbia and Brazil. Since then Kirsty has toured some of the world's largest stages and Cornwall's smallest village halls with Blast!, Rapunzel and A Matter of Life and Death. Kirsty's other work includes American Trade, The Winter's Tale, Hamlet, Julius Ceasar, Romeo and Juliet and The Grainstore (all with the RSC), Beauty and the Beast (Told By an Idiot) and The Way of the World (Sheffield Crucible).

The Music of Steptoe

by Simon Baker, Sound Designer



In theatre, there are broadly two ways of using music. There is music composed specially for the show or, the use of pre-existing music.

This production of Steptoe blurs that line using pre-existing music woven together to give the production a recognisable soundtrack, but also its own voice. Inspired by TV shows such as *The Singing Detective*, *Our Friends in the North* and *Life on Mars* we started to explore what our Steptoe soundtrack could, and should be.

Finding music for shows is one of my favourite things. Music appeals to our most primitive instincts; we have an incredible capacity for remembering it. It is our memories of music that interest me. Sound can trigger memories in a way that it is hard to do visually; we all know the punch in the stomach that a love song from our teenage years can deliver! When we started thinking about the musical landscape of the show we knew we wanted to use music to not just locate us in time, but also to connect us to memory. We wanted an eclectic mix, we wanted music that encompassed and revealed the passage of time and we wanted music that told us about our characters and their situation.

The first piece of music we knew we wanted is an odd choice, but it forms the core of our soundtrack. It's an obscure record by an unheard of Belgium band, The Wallace Collection; a song called Daydream.

The Wallace Collection

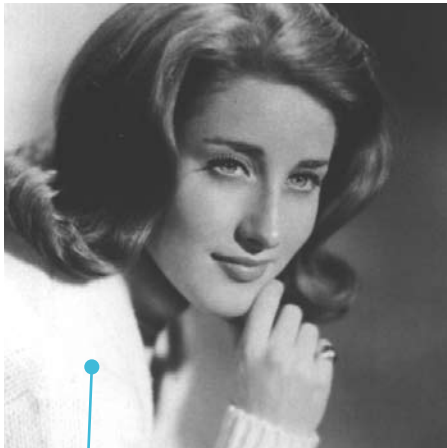
We use it throughout, or at least we use fragments of it

to stitch our sound world together. It's never been a hit in its own right but has been used as a sample in many records. Portishead have sampled it, as has Tricky. I love this piece of music for its haunting bass and string lines. The reason it immediately feels familiar is because the melody is a variant on Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*. This piece, with its descending bass line and dreamy melancholy, seemed to sum up the aesthetic of our Steptoe. One of yearning and sensuous promise, of loss and of tender beauty. It also lyrically reminds us of what it is to feel trapped and to dream of simple freedom.

Threaded into the themes of *Daydream*, we started with Cliff Richard's **The Young Ones**. It was dominating the charts in 1962 when Steptoe first aired under the Comedy Playhouse banner. The album was number one for some time until toppled off the top spot by Elvis.

In stark contrast we also use The Rolling Stones *Paint it Black*. This fits with our Steptoe timeline but also reflects our theme of the changing world that Harold and Albert seem not to notice. The aggression and speed of this song is miles away from the candy floss pop of Cliff. It also has the accolade of being the first number one song to feature a sitar.

We also knew we wanted an anthemic piece of music. A breakout song. A song about empowerment and anger. *You Don't Own Me* was the one. Originally a hit for Lesley Gore and covered by everyone from Dusty Springfield to the Blow Monkeys, this is a



track that speaks for all generations and all genders. Simply, it is a call for freedom and a rallying cry for self preservation.

Lesley Gore

For Albert we wanted songs from his youth. Songs too, about the romance and glamour that were just always beyond reach. We chose The Way You Look Tonight. The version we use is taken from the 1936 film Swing Time. It's the song Fred sings to Ginger. Again there were many versions to choose from (Bing Crosby, Billie Holliday) but it's this version that conjures the old romance of flowing dresses, heels, top-hats and tails.

Swing Time with Fred and Ginger

For ending our story we need something that landed in the era Steptoe and Son ended in. A full stop if you like. Bye Bye Baby from the Bay City Rollers is where we came to. It fitted the bill perfectly in so many ways.

Bay City Rollers

Not just its opening lyrics but also for the complete shifts in what music had become. If telly had gone from black and white to colour then music had shifted from mono to stereo. From short hair and sharp suits to long hair and explosive colours. The girls may have started screaming for Cliff but their daughters were screaming for Eric, Woody, Les, Alan and Derek. The song is actually a cover version of a Four Seasons record but it's the Bay City Rollers version that still has Mums up and dancing at a family wedding. It defines a generation and a new era. It brings us vividly into the 70s and the precipice of history that Steptoe left us hanging from.

There's more to say, more to tell and more to remember, but we will leave the rest as a surprise.

We hope you swim as happily in these musical memories and daydreams as we have.

Please note: Bye Bye Baby by the Bay City Rollers no longer ends the show - it is subsequently been cut in favour of a simpler, more emotive ending... !

Simon Baker, Sound Design and score

Simon has been working with Kneehigh since Brief Encounter in 2007. The show earned him both an Olivier and a Tony Nomination. Since then he has worked on Don John, The Red Shoes, Wonder Nurse (One on One at BAC), Midnight's Pumpkin, The Wild Bride, The Umbrellas of Cherbourg and Wah! Wah! Girls. He is very proud that he got the themes of Blake 7 and Grange Hill into Don John at the RSC.

Most recent credits include Matilda The Musical (RSC and Cambridge Theatre – 2012 Olivier Award for Best Sound), Loserville (West Yorkshire Playhouse), Angus Thongs and Even More Snogging (West Yorkshire Playhouse), Batman Live (World Arena Tour), Me and My Girl (Sheffield), The Real Thing (Old Vic), The Norman Conquests (Old Vic and Broadway), Late Middle Classes ((Donmar), La Bete (Comedy Theatre and Broadway), Lord Of The Rings (Theatre Royal Drury Lane and Toronto – 2007 Olivier Nomination Best Sound), Deathtrap (Noel Coward Theatre), Boeing Boeing (Comedy Theatre and Broadway - 2007 Tony Nomination for Best Sound), Di Viv and Rose (Hampstead Downstairs). Bridge Project for BAM/Old Vic Theatre 2009 and The Birds (Dublin).

Emma Rice — Adaptor and Director of Steptoe and Son

Why Steptoe and Son? Why Now?

I think there are many reasons for doing Steptoe now. We are in recession and the poverty experienced by the characters is not a long way from what families of all kinds are experiencing now. They reuse, recycle and graft to work their way out of poverty. One of the choices I have made in this adaptation is to see them succeed in part. By the end of the show, they have climbed out of the desperate situation we first met them in. There is obviously more money than before and basic luxuries such as a TV and a longed for cocktail cabinet, but, of course, it is not only the lack of money that holds them together. The relationship goes much deeper and darker than mere financial constraints.

This brings me to the other, more personal reason for why I wanted to explore this piece. Family. Steptoe is about deep family ties, duty, freedom and the desire to break free. We all feel this at different points in our life, whether as teenagers wanting to leave the homes of our parents, as unhappy adults dreaming of life outside an unhappy marriage, or when caring for a relative and feeling our own identity ebbing away. These emotions recur throughout life in different guises, but strike at the heart of a fundamental conflict – that of duty vs freedom.

And if we have all known what it is like to crave freedom, we also know the opposite; the terrible fear of losing someone or something that we love. Albert holds on tight to Harold through fear and need, two very powerful forces. Families, eh?!

Of course, families also come in all shapes and sizes. Kneehigh is a family with strong ties, friendships and expectations that go back 30 years. At Kneehigh, we really know what it is to want to escape and explore new horizons. We too feel a duty to the company and each other and sometimes this can feel overwhelming. But, unlike Harold and Albert Steptoe, we are not trapped. We understand the need for independence, but also know how brilliant family can be, how liberating family can be and how sometimes staying 'home' is the best thing in the world!

What elements of the original will you be faithful to, and what elements do you plan to change?

I have been very faithful to the text. Almost every word in the piece has been written by Galton and Simpson. They are two of the greatest living comedy writers so I wanted to use their work and bring their work to a new generation. I think there are fewer laughs in the text these days, but the heart of Steptoe still beats loud and strong.

I chose episodes from the earlier series of the sitcom, I felt these were more emotional and the characters revealed more of their inner selves. Later in the series it was more about the situation and less about the men.

What I haven't been faithful to is the setting and the form. In this piece, the moon hovers, a woman dances, cocktails are drunk and a character morphs into Louis Armstrong. I have used music to take us through time and snap us out of naturalism. There is a strong visual poetry that reminds us of the world they are missing and at times, it feels more like an operatic staging than a domestic one.

How has your relationship with Steptoe and Son changed from watching it as a child to now?

I was a little bit young to understand it, and even watch it. I remember seeing the trailers on TV and pretending that I couldn't sleep so I could take a look. The men made me uncomfortable and their cruelty to one another was tough viewing but they were fascinating. The dirt, the desire for sex, the claustrophobia. Even as a child, I recognized these feelings, even if I didn't understand them.

As I write this, I realise that the themes are, of course, very fairy tale... dirt, sex, cruelty, freedom! Ring any bells?

I hadn't thought of Steptoe for decades, but as my parents became older and as I dealt with my own issues of entrapment and duty, Steptoe popped into my mind. As an adult, it now didn't feel like a retro TV programme but a significant text, exploring important themes.

And this is how I have approached it, in the same way as one might approach a Beckett or a Pinter or an Ayckbourn. I think the writing is brilliant: Galton and Simpson were the voice of a generation and so very

British. I haven't trapped the work in comedy, I have let it open out into epic themes and universal dilemmas. This is big stuff and I have let it be so!

Why have you chosen to introduce the female character?

Because I was never going to make a show with just two men! Oh no! I needed to see what they were missing, what was passing these foolish, trapped, blinkered men by. The woman represents change and awareness, sex and compassion. She tries to get in to their world but they don't let her and ultimately she moves on without them. She transforms, changes, engages and eventually leaves them in her wake. Nothing will stop her from living her life, even if it is alone.

Most of my work explores female freedom in this way. I will always be interested in the battle to walk your own path, to be in your own skin, to grab life.

Some people have commented on the fact that the actress takes her clothes off a lot and have raised eyebrows at the 'suitability' of that. Perhaps some feel I am exploiting the female body... but they are missing the point! We have to see her changing, shedding skins in the journey to find herself and her freedom. We have to see flesh, we have to see vulnerability. Bodies are not all about sex, they are flawed and chaotic and complex. I need the audience to see her re imagine herself, see her grow and become the many aspects of a person that we are all capable of being.

She is me, and my mum and my gran and my sister. I also hope she is you.

Could you tell us a little about the rehearsal process?

Well, it was different than most in that we had a lot of lines to learn. This was a big task for the actors so we broke the days up with silly badminton games and yoga. We had the cast from early in the process and I made sure that we kept working physically as well as crunching through the text. Slowly, the piece came together and we are working on it still. No piece of theatre is ever finished, you just get to know it better. The ideas and understanding keep coming!

What lessons do we learn from the show as an audience?

I hate the notion of theatre teaching lessons. I am not in the business of educating or having a 'message'. I use theatre to explore my own experience and memory and try to stay instinctive. I want theatre to entertain, surprise and reveal, but it is really up to the audience what it might mean to them.

For one person they might feel an affinity with Harold. Another with Albert. Another with the Bunny Girl! At different stages we feel and understand different things. We also have different questions. I try to explore my experience with truth and tenderness and hope that what I discover will resonate with the people who see it. They will bring their own truths and their own understanding.

What I do know is that, in this show, I see my Gran peeling apples and working from dawn to dusk. I also see her shortly before she died being cared for by my parents. In my mind's eye, I see me caring for my Mum and Dad as they become frail and I also see my need to run away. I see my past and my future in very British colours.

Emma Rice, Joint Artistic Director of Kneehigh.

She has directed *The Red Shoes* (2002 Theatrical Management Association [TMA] Theatre Award for Best Director), *The Wooden Frock* (2004 TMA Theatre Award nomination for Best Touring Production), *The Bacchae* (2005 TMA Theatre Award for Best Touring Production), *Tristan & Yseult* (2006 TMA Theatre Award nomination for Best Touring Production), *Cymbeline* (in association with the Royal Shakespeare Company for The Complete Works festival), *A Matter of Life and Death* (Royal National Theatre production in association with Kneehigh), *Rapunzel* (in association with Battersea Arts Centre), *Brief Encounter* (tour and West End; Studio 54, Broadway - a David Pugh and Dafydd Rogers Production in association with Kneehigh); *Don John* (in association with the Royal Shakespeare Company and Bristol Old Vic); *Midnight's Pumpkin* and *The Wild Bride*. Rice was nominated for the 2009 Olivier Award for Best Director for *Brief Encounter*. Highlights for her include taking *The Red Shoes* to China, *Tristan & Yseult* at Restormel Castle in Cornwall, *Brief Encounter* opening in Studio 54 and performing in *Wolf* at Tregadillick Village Hall. Emma's latest work also includes the West End production of *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*, *Wah! Wah! Girls for World Stages* and *Oedipussy* for Spymonkey.

Company Stage Manager — Steph Curtis

Steph tells us about her role as Company Manager and Stage Manager for Steptoe and Son.

As Company Manager my job is to look after the welfare of the company, act as a representative for Kneehigh and deal with any company issues which arise. This is through rehearsals, production period and whilst on tour. As Stage Manager my role is to facilitate the director, designer, production manager and the creative team in the process of putting together a show and be the communication and organisation within the rehearsal process to make sure ideas are realised and everything runs smoothly and efficiently.

When a show is up and running, my role as stage manager is very much to act as the ongoing communication and organisation between Kneehigh, the touring company and the creative team. With the Production Manager, I liaise with venues we are touring to in order to plan the visit, inform them of the technical and practical requirements of the show, and maintain the artistic integrity of the show. And on a day to day basis make sure that the production elements are ready and set for each performance.

In the rehearsal stages of Steptoe and Son, part of my job is to keep all areas of the team informed and act as the main point of contact in the rehearsal room to all the different departments involved in creating the show. For each rehearsal I send out a report which keeps all involved and informed in the creation of the show to assist the ideas and needs of the rehearsal room being realised. For example as rehearsals progress, the director may request specific props or sound effects, or a certain piece of action or choreography may have an impact for the costume department. The daily rehearsal report means those members of the creative team who are unable to be in the rehearsal room still can keep in touch with the show.

I enjoy the variety of work I'm required to do on a daily basis, the variety of places I get to go, and that everyday is different and brings new challenges. It never gets boring. Putting on Steptoe has been great fun and the small cast has meant a really special and intimate process. There are a lot of props involved in the show and creating some sort of order from the chaotic world of junk has been an enjoyable challenge.

Steph Curtis

Studied Technical Theatre Arts at Middlesex University. She worked as a Deputy Stsge Manager for various theatres over several years and whilst working freelance was employed by Birmingham Rep as Deputy Stage Manager for Brief Encounter which was a co production with Kneehigh. She then went with that show from Birmingham to Leeds and London, after which she was asked to work on Kneehigh's next production of Don John. Steph has worked with Kneehigh ever since, and from this initial role as Deputy Stage Manaer worked into the role as Company Stage Manager for the Company.

Rehearsal Process for Steptoe and Son

Samuel Wood, Assistant Director of Steptoe and Son gives us a sneak peak behind the scenes...

Week 1

Day 1 is arguably the most thrilling time of any rehearsal process. Months, sometimes years of careful planning, work shopping, script work, casting, designing, budgeting all culminates in the gathering of a group of people whose sole purpose is to turn that preparation into the reality of a living, breathing piece of theatre. We are now a company. We'll be spending the next four weeks in the rehearsal room, living, eating, breathing and realising our own version of the comedy genius that is Galton and Simpson's Steptoe and Son. An all at once daunting and exhilarating prospect.

1 We find ourselves in Rehearsal Room 3 of West Yorkshire Playhouse, the space literally packed and littered with piles of props and costume rails bursting with clothes. Perhaps the most important part of this early stage is for us to spend some time getting to know one another. Equally important, is for us to make a creative environment to work and play in, so the first day is spent working together to sort through the chaos. We clear the space; hang bunting, and with much fun and laughter we create a huge Steptoe and Son banner to go on the wall. Here is the cast, from left to right, Dean Nolan who is playing Harold Steptoe, Mike Shepherd and joint Artistic Director of Kneehigh who is playing Albert Steptoe and finally Kirsty Woodward who is playing a multitude of different parts throughout the whole show.

The first week of rehearsal is aimed at a steady and productive exploration of the text, movement and as we move through the rest of the week we start to develop a pattern of working. With a small cast and a big show like this it's going to be physically demanding for all involved so we spend every morning doing a thorough

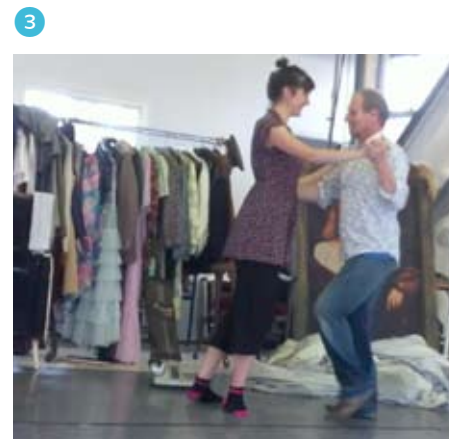
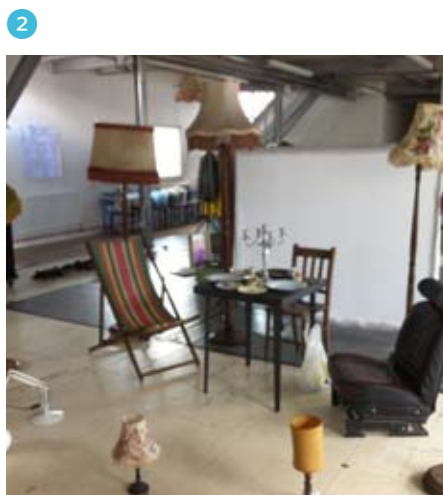
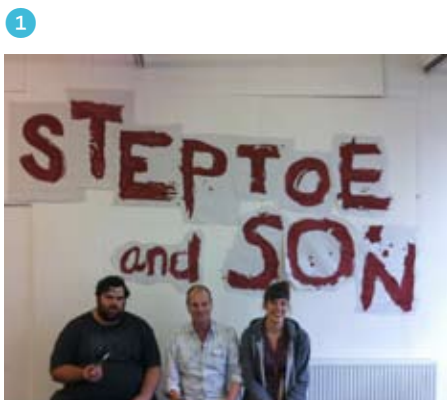
physical warm up with meditation and yoga exercises. Games are also really important to help the company bond, focus and just have a bit of fun, so we play badminton.

One of the most interesting aspects of the way Kneehigh works is that the other creatives; set designer, lighting designer, sound designer, choreographer are all a regular presence during rehearsals. This not only means other key creative minds are in the room as the work is being made but more importantly we can begin to incorporate lighting, sound, and other technical elements at a much earlier stage. 2 This builds a richer more cohesive production where the acting and technical elements work in harmony with each other.

Armed and ready to go we start to gently tackle certain sections of the play, looking at how the props, music, dance and movement might work with the text. For example, using the mass of props at our disposal, and with designer Neil Murray on hand, we start to build a 'look' for each of the scenes.

Music is playing a massive role within the production and Emma has selected an array of iconic artists of the 60's & 70's from Louis Armstrong and Fred Astaire to Elvis Presley and the amazing Dusty Springfield. The music is being used to underpin the action and break the intense naturalism of the Steptoe's claustrophobic world, giving the audience an insight into their deepest fears and desires.

With music playing such a large role, hand in hand with that comes the potential for dance and movement. It is using this fantastic soundtrack as a base that choreographer Etta Murfitt starts to work with the actors. 3 Here Mike Shepherd and Kirsty Woodward



take their first tentative steps at tackling the waltz to Fred Astaire's 'Putting on the Ritz'. Lots of fun.

Alongside all of this, Mike, Dean and Kirsty have lines to learn! Particularly Mike and Dean who have a mere four weeks to learn the full four original episodes of Steptoe and Son Emma has chosen to make up the show. Each of these episodes is half an hour long and mainly consists of dialogue between the father and son. They have a mammoth task ahead of them but I will be there every step of the way helping them to get the lines down before the first performance.

Week 2

Week two sees us moving rooms into the largest of the Playhouse's spaces, Rehearsal Room 1. Waiting for us as we enter is one of the key pieces of the design, the scrap yard cart. Apart from being up three flights of stairs, Rehearsal Room 3 was too small to hold this huge piece of set so we have relocated to this larger space to make working with the cart during rehearsal a reality. ⁴ The purpose of the cart is to hold all the props and junk collected by the two rag and bone men, it's a massive presence dominating the space. In addition it's also mobile and can move about the stage, so our plan is to use the actors themselves to wheel the cart around during the performance. What this means is the cart and its movements are going to be nothing short of a logistical nightmare so we need to start working with it as soon as possible. The construction department at WYP have done a fantastic job and it's not long before the company have their hands on it, assessing how it moves and what we might be able to do with it.

Rehearsal Room 1 is also better equipped, namely with a more comprehensive lighting and sound system.

Lighting and sound are playing a very large part in this production. Emma and Sound Designer Simon Baker have decided to underscore large sections of the show with a constant flow of music, which will quietly play under each of the scenes as it takes place. As with the cart, this underscoring is something the actors and stage management need to know as soon as possible.

Having better lighting at our fingertips allows us to create and emulate the actual theatre environment the show will be performed in. ⁵ With any production the lighting and sound go a long way to creating the world and its atmosphere. Having these elements brought in early means the production is being built from the ground up with these things in mind. Here lighting designer Malcolm Rippeth makes good use of the many practical lamps we have to create a rich and moody setting while we look at specific scenes.

Moving through the week, we continue to play games, have fun and trudge on through learning the lines. It's really important the actors solidify their lines as soon as possible. Not only will this make them more comfortable and prepared for the first show but as any actor will tell you, it is all but impossible to act properly when you have a script in your hand. Having to look down at a script breaks the connection they have with another character/actor so the sooner they can ditch the scripts the better.

We make a further steady and productive exploration of the dance and music revisiting and firming up some of the movement we began to create in week 1. The main job of the week however is getting to grips with the cart. Last week we spent time building a look for each scene, from that work we knew which props were needed for each scene. This week we have spent

5



6



4



literally hours figuring out a system to get all those props on and off the cart for the different scenes, which is once again, all being done by the actors. It's been time consuming but very rewarding work.

Week 3

It barely seems like yesterday that we started this show but we've done two weeks already! 6 The breaking news is that the lines are really starting to come together for Mike and Dean now which means they are spending a lot more time on the rehearsal room floor with Emma.

Everyone is working hard and this week we have managed to put a skeletal structure on all the scenes, which means that the shape of the play as a whole is starting to show itself. We are running long sections of the piece back to back, which is giving the actors a really good idea of how everything knits together. Etta is still working with the actors and everyone is beginning to feel confident in their dances and movement. We even end the week with a staggered run-through of the whole play! This is the first time we have put the play together in its entirety. Most first run-through's can be a bit of a shambles but considering the colossal task these three actors have, performing a full length play by themselves, moving a massive cart and all the props that make up the show, the result was very positive.

And yes, we are still playing badminton. It's actually got quite competitive now.

Week 4

Smaller entry this week folks as we are steaming ahead with the show. We walk into week 4 with a renewed energy and conviction to really nail this show and get it fit and for tech week and the first performance. We're essentially going through each moment in the play with a fine-toothed comb, seeing what works, what doesn't, what needs more detail. It's been really positive and we're even ahead of schedule, so much so that Emma decided she wanted to put a bunny girl who makes a cocktail for an audience member into the show.

Next week we take the show into the theatre. Very exciting...

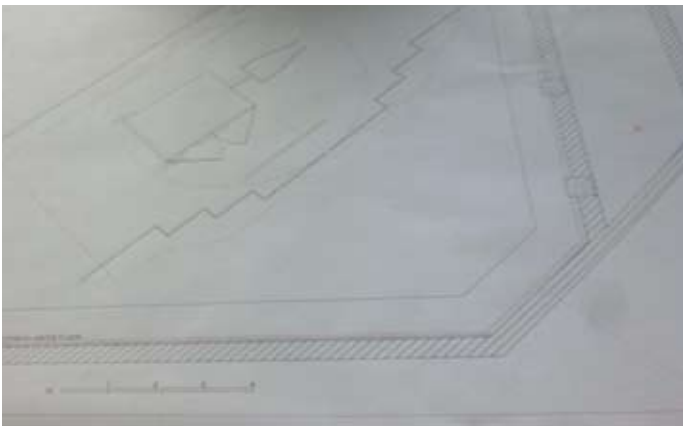
Tech Week

Tech week is when everything comes together, all the time, energy and preparation. Over the page I have included the journey of our Steptoe and Son cart, from its earliest stage as a model to its final place on the stage ready for performance. These pictures don't merely give you an insight into how a piece of set is made but more importantly they encapsulate the very process of making theatre. It shows us how the smallest idea from a creative mind is realised and brought to life for the stage. Enjoy.

1 We start with an idea



2 Then we think about how to make that idea a reality



3 Then we make the idea



4 Then we put the idea in rehearsal and get ready for



5 ...the first performance



Samuel Wood Assistant Director (West Yorkshire Playhouse)

Kneehigh's Steptoe and Son will be Samuel's first time working with the company. He began his career as an actor performing nationally and internationally with some of the largest producing theatres across the UK; including the Royal Shakespeare Company, National Theatre and Bristol Old Vic. Samuel is currently being funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council to complete his MA in Theatre Directing through Birkbeck College. He has previously held the position of Resident Assistant Director for both RADA and the West Yorkshire Playhouse. Assistant Director credits include: *Where Have I Been All My Life?* (New Vic Theatre Newcastle), *King Lear*, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *Angus, You: The Player* (West Yorkshire Playhouse); *Original Bearings* (Slung Low); *The Workroom*, *The Tyrant* (RADA); *Toad*, *Sunday Morning at the Centre of the World* (Bad Physics).

As a Director and Co-Director: *The Rain King*, *Casanova Jack*, *Love me Contender*, *Miss Brando* (Theatre in the Mill, Bradford) *Little Foot* (WYP/NT Connections), *Moments Designed* (WYP), *Killer Joe*, *4:48 Psychosis*, *Spring Awakening*, *Agamemnon*, *Bacchus and Pentheus* *Ovid Tales* and *Asylum*.