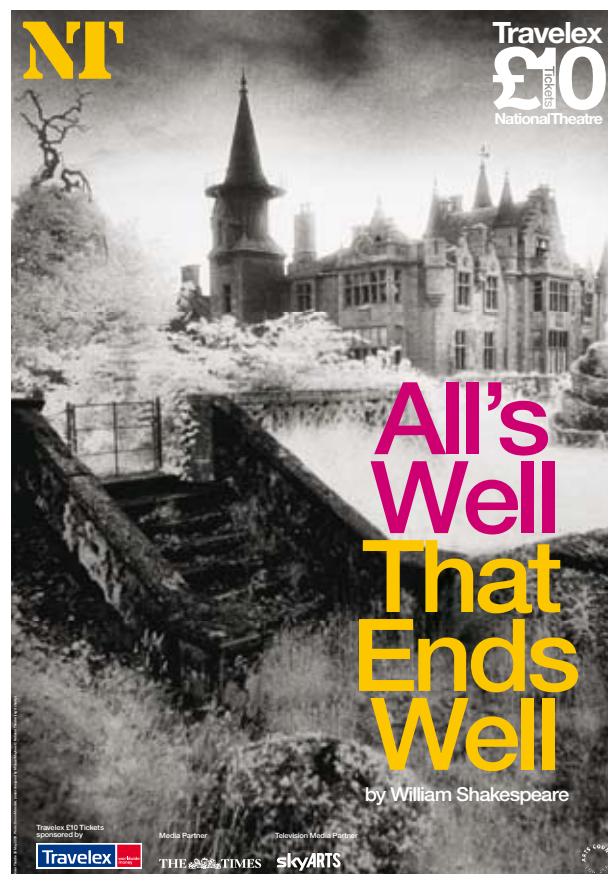


***All's Well That Ends Well*
by William Shakespeare**

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Further production details:
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Sources for some of the dates given in this workpack differ. In each case the most likely date has been chosen, given the available evidence

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The National's production

This production of *All's Well That Ends Well* had its premiere at the National's Olivier Theatre on 28 May 2009.

ROSSILLION

Countess of Rossillion **CLARE HIGGINS**
 Bertram, *her son* **GEORGE RAINSFORD**
 Helena, *her gentlewoman* **MICHELLE TERRY**
 Parolles, *a companion to Bertram* **CONLETH HILL**
 Rynaldo, *the Countess' steward* **MICHAEL MEARS**
 Lavatch, *the late Count's knave* **BRENDAN O'HEA**

PARIS

The King of France **OLIVER FORD DAVIES**
 Lord Lafew **MICHAEL THOMAS**
 First Lord Dumaine **ELLIOT LEVEY**
 Second Lord Dumaine, *his brother* **TONY JAYAWARDENA**
 Gentleman Astringer **JOLYON COY**

THE ARMY

First Soldier (the Interpreter) **ROBERT HASTIE**

FLORENCE

Widow **JANET HENFREY**
 Diana, *her daughter* **HASINA HAQUE**
 Mariana, *her friend* **SIONED JONES**
 Violenta / Isbel / Maudlin **CASSIE ATKINSON**

Lords, Attendants, Soldiers, Citizens

BEN ALLEN, ROB DELANEY, ALEX FELTON, TOM PADLEY, OLIVER WILSON

All other parts played by members of the company

Music played live by:

Marcus Tilt (MD/keyboards)
Ingrid van Boheemen (flutes)
Paul Cott (horn)
Philip Hopkins (percussion)
Rowland Sutherland (flutes)
Gemma Wareham (cello)

Director **MARIANNE ELLIOTT**
 Designer **RAE SMITH**
 Lighting Designer **PETER MUMFORD**
 Music **ADAM CORK**
 Movement Director **LAÏLA DIALLO**
 Projection Designers
GEMMA CARRINGTON and JON DRISCOLL
 Sound Designer **IAN DICKINSON**
 Company Voice Work
JEANNETTE NELSON

Production Manager **SACHA MILROY**
 Staff Director **JONATHAN HUMPHREYS**
 Stage Manager **DAVID MARSLAND**
 Deputy Stage Manager **FIONA BARDSLEY**
 Assistant Stage Managers **VALERIE FOX, CHARLOTTE NEWELL**
 Costume Supervisor **JOHANNA COE**
 Prop Supervisor **ELLIE CONSTABLE**
 Assistant to the Designer **WILLIAM FRICKER**
 Animation Drawing and Textures **SAMUEL WYER**
 Assistant Animator **SHAUN CLARK**
 Assistant to the Lighting Designer **JOHN McGARRIGLE**
 Deputy Production Manager **AL PARKINSON**
 Design Associate **BEN AUSTIN**
 Assistant to the Movement Director **KERRY NICHOLLS**
 Casting **ALASTAIR COOMER & JULIET HORSLEY**
 Textual Adviser **SAMUEL ADAMSON**
 Production Photographer **SIMON ANNAND**



Top: Photo (George Rainsford and Oliver Ford Davies) by Simon Annand

Above: Photo (Michelle Terry) by Simon Annand

Initial work for the director and designer

Before rehearsals begin, the director and designer spend time deciding what world to create for the play.

As a director or designer, you need to understand what Shakespeare wrote before you can make decisions about how you present it. Even if it is a known play, you cannot take the story for granted; you have to tell it afresh to your audience.

There is a simple set of questions that begin this process and help refine your theatrical interpretation. None of the answers you write has to be right, they are for you and your understanding.

WHAT?

What is happening in the scene? What story is being told? What do the audience need to know? Try to write as few sentences as possible for each scene. The plot will be one of the main factors shaping any design/directing decisions you make.

WHERE?

Where is the scene happening? Inside or outside? What does the world surrounding the action seem to be like? Look for evidence in the text. What does Shakespeare tell you about the world? Is it a place you know of geographically – in *All's Well* we go to Paris and Florence – but does it feel like a Paris you know, or is it a historical, fantastical, or magical Paris? Write down all the facts you find, but also any questions you have about the world that may be answered later in the play.

WHEN?

When is the scene happening – in every sense? Is it day or night? Is it a historical reality or a theatrical one? Is it after a major event in the story or before one?

HOW?

How is Shakespeare telling his story? How has he introduced a character, idea or piece of plot? How has he chosen to use his language? What does this suggest about how he thought the play should function?

After gathering this material – there is a lot and it does take time – the director and designer discuss, research and reference as much material as possible in order to establish their world. Are there resonances in the style of the play that you want to bring out? Are there particular moments you see in a certain way? Many different sources are explored at this stage: films, visual art, criticism of the play, past productions, past

casting choices, old reviews, music, historical research. Anything that helps inform how you see the play is useful.

Asking yourself questions helps you clarify your ideas.

- 1) Are we setting it in a realistic or theatrical world?
- 2) Are there historical periods you want to reference?
- 3) If it was a film who would make it?
- 4) What music would it have?
- 5) What paintings does it remind you of?
- 6) What does the set need to do – enable lots of locations or just be one very clear one?
- 7) Does your production fit a genre – thriller, drama, comedy, musical?
- 8) What do you want the audience's relationship to the play to be?
- 9) Does it have a mood?
- 10) What does it smell like?
- 11) Whatever helps you see things more clearly is worth exploring.

All these questions eventually lead to the story you want to tell and how you are going to tell it. Informed by your knowledge of the play, you make your interpretive decisions in order to make the production the most exciting it can be in your eyes.



Photo (George Rainsford as Bertram)
by Simon Annand

The actors begin work

The first day begins with the actors meeting each other. At the National Theatre, the different departments contributing to the production (from marketing to wig-making) introduce themselves in a large circle in the rehearsal room. In our case there were probably as many as 60 people working on the play.

Once the other departments have left, the whole cast play a couple of simple games to calm everyone down and allow them to get to know each other. The first day is usually very nerve-wracking for everyone, so these all help.

EXERCISE 1

Divide into pairs. You have two minutes – one minute each to tell the other person about yourself. Once the time is up, you go round the whole group introducing your partner. This game can be extended by including one lie in what you have told your partner about yourself, that the rest of the group has to try to identify.

EXERCISE 2

Everyone sits in a circle. There should be one less chair than the people in the circle. One person stands in the middle.

Each person makes a statement which is true about them that may also be true of others – i.e. 'Everyone with jeans on' and everyone about whom this is true, gets up and tries to grab a chair.

The person who is left standing makes another proposition 'Everyone who has drunk Coke in the last week.' And so it continues.



Top: Photo (George Rainsford, Jonathan Humphreys and Conleth Hill) by Simon Annand

Above: Photo (members of the company) by Simon Annand

Actors and director start work on the text

Our first step to starting work on the play is to read it through as a whole company. This is a very practical first step. It is not about judging performances, it is just about telling the story in as relaxed and simple a way as possible.

From this point, our rehearsal calls for the next few weeks focus on individual scenes, working in great detail, and broadly as detailed below.

1. We begin by sitting down and reading through the play, making sure everyone understands what the sense of each section is. A useful exercise is for the actor to paraphrase a section until it is clear to everyone. At this point, we also have a couple of very large dictionaries in the rehearsal room, the First Folio script (the first – and still unedited – complete collection of Shakespeare's works, assembled after his death by his acting colleagues), and various other edited versions of *All's Well* that we can cross-reference to make sure we understand what is happening. These sessions also include making some cuts to sections which seem impenetrable, changing certain archaic words we are pretty sure will not be understood, and maybe cutting out what we deem superfluous.

2. We then talk through the characters from the evidence we have in the text.

- Who are they?
- Where have they come from?
- What do we know of them?
- Where are they going?

- What is their relationship to other people in the scene or play?
- What don't we know?

Facts and questions about the scene are discussed, any definite answers are shared, and things to be discovered are floated. With this knowledge, we read the scene again.

3. The director will then explain the geography he/she has envisaged for the scene. To start things off we may decide – if this hasn't been made clear in the text – what a character has done before the scene begins (ie: Have they taken a long journey? Have they been rushing to find someone? Have they just woken up? etc), then the actors will explore the scene on their feet. If they want to discuss something they might stop, and the director may also suggest movements to help the staging. As is often the case in professional theatre, design deadlines come before rehearsals, so a certain amount of this thinking has already gone on.

Everything that happens in these sessions may change radically the next time we look at the scene as we come to understand the play in greater depth, but we will sketch it over and over again until we feel we have got to the heart of it. This process of looking at individual scenes will continue for four to five weeks (we rehearse for six weeks at the NT) before we begin to run the show in any way. In *All's Well*, we began by spending a short session working out how we got from scene to scene, before doing a run of each half.



Photo (Director, Marianne Elliott) by Simon Annand

Movement work



Photo (Hasina Haque, George Rainsford and Michelle Terry) by Simon Annand

A major part of our creative team's vision for the show comes through the use of movement work to create rich images and enable it to move our story forward at the pace we feel it needs. Here is a diary of movement work we carried out to create parts of our production.

WARM UP

1. Everyone in a circle. One person walks across the circle saying their name and the name of the person they are approaching, before the person they have named moves off and repeats the action – i.e. 'Oliver walks to Claire', 'Claire walks to George', 'George walks to Michelle'.

2. A clap is sent around the circle. The aim is for the group to share a rhythm. Once this gets going, start a separate action with its own rhythm, for example, a squeeze of a shoulder passed on, touching your foot to your neighbour's foot. See if you can achieve three simultaneous actions going round at their own paces.

3. Walk the space, feeling the air against the skin. Try to fill the room. Try to keep pace with the others in the group.

- Keeping the same pace, try to move closer together into a smaller space. Stay aware of those around you and try not to collide. Try to keep in fluid motion and

change direction regularly.

- Spread out again into a large space. Individually slow down to as slow as you can go. It will take the time it takes. Finally, come to a stand still and rest both feet on the ground. Close your eyes and think of the two opposing energies – down to the ground and up to the sky. Very slowly, begin to walk. Be aware of the transference of weight, from one foot to the other. Slowly build up your pace until you are at normal walking speed.

- Pause the group. The next task to, as a group, choose when to stop and when to start again. No one should lead, it should be a group decision, intuitively made. Try it out. Are people forcing it? See if you can just let it happen. Be conscious of not getting into a rhythm.

- Now the group is responsible for one person staying still at any one time. See how hard this is.

- Now try having just one person moving at any one time. Wait for the person to fully stop before anyone else moves. Try not to pre-empt. See how fluid it can be.

4. Form a circle. Anyone walks in towards the centre, someone joins them. As in the earlier exercises, this shouldn't be forced. When both are facing each other, look each other in the eye and bow down and up before parting. Each pair's interaction will be unique and take its own amount of time.

- Begin again – this time when the two people are in the middle anything can happen – i.e. touch, communicate, hold etc. Again, these will be unique little moments.

- Finally, begin again – this time, when you are in the middle and your partner offers something – don't give your first instinctive reaction – use your second thought. See how this affects your interactions.

BEGINNING WORK ON TABLEAUX

Exercise 1

Form a line with the whole group across the room. They should be given a word – PROTESTING, CELEBRATING, WARNING etc. When you say go they must move across the room acting the word. They can interact or be solo – the most important thing is to act the word fully. The leader can shout STOP at any point, then as a group, they must freeze before slowly returning to neutral. Think of as many contrasting words as possible.

Movement work Cntd...

- Divide the group into two. They each have a scenario to improvise physically. Again, the more contrasting the better – eg: football match/funeral, party/getting ready to walk another 100 miles etc. The leader can control these, turning them off and on and pausing them. See the dramatic and exciting images you make.

2. Group yourselves into pairs. From a neutral starting point, in suspended time, improvise on a given word or topic – eg: goodbye, giving/receiving news, hello. Take it very slowly and see if you can keep in continuous motion.

Once we move onto more specific work, we realise that we must tailor the working process to the story we want to tell. We wanted a glorious procession to start the second act of our play, where a group of women are waiting to see the soldiers return from war. We used a very structured improvisation to create it:

Exercise 2

1. Each actor in the procession chooses a prop. Line up and begin moving in celebration, in slowed time. The actors can do whatever they like. Think of how you can show the situation expressively. When the director shouts go, move into real time. Then when they shout freeze, stop.

2. Everyone relax and analyse what has been done – was it clear? What exact story are we trying to tell? Who are the main characters? We decided our lead actor had to be more obviously a hero, so he should be lifted. Also, is there a way the actors can cue their own movement? A loud shout, or drum, or whistle, or a specific physical cue from someone in a prominent position?

3. Run the exercise again. What has changed? What is clearer? Maybe the actors shouldn't freeze at the end but return to slow motion? Always ask: is it telling the story we want to tell? How could it be clearer? We continue running the scene, adding detail and colour until it feels right.

Another important aspect of movement in our production of *All's Well* is the use of silhouette and shadow work. This was a key part of our design vision: where the 3D world of humans is set against a shadowed story-telling world. One of our main sources

for this was the illustrator Jan Pienkowski, whose art we referenced regularly in creating this work.

In *All's Well that Ends Well* there is a key scene – the bed swap – where a wife plays a trick on her husband in order that he should sleep with her. It is quite confusing in the play, so in order to make sure the audience understood this part of the story, the director and designer decided to use shadow-play to tell it.

Exercise 3 – Diana

1. Set up a sheet with a large light behind it and a bench in between.

2. Helena's friend sets up the bed. How is it best to stand to make the story clear – profile or straight on? What makes the story interesting – little details or big clear gestures and actions?

We found that the more stylised the movement, the more effective it seemed to be. For example standing in profile so that the shadows of the fingers could be seen was far better than doing it as you normally would.

3. Bertram enters, blindfolded. How do we show his sexual drive in shadow? If Diana is feeding him grapes, how can we show this most successfully using shadow?

5. Bertram is left alone with Helena. How do we show the tentativeness and physical desire – do they touch? No, it is more erotic if they don't but we make sure that the shadows can be seen close to one another.

This method required lots of experimenting in order to make the story clear and exciting. The most important thing is to find a clear and distinct language.



Photo (Hasina Haque and George Rainsford) by Simon Annand

Ensemble work

There are groups of various lords in *All's Well That Ends Well*, as indeed there are in many court settings in Shakespeare's plays. Alongside main rehearsals we ran character work sessions to help these individuals have a life of their own. We worked in a number of ways:

1. Research

We put a lot of research into the life of a lord and asked ourselves the following questions:

What does it mean to be a lord in court? Where would I have come from? What would my aspirations be? What would my daily life consist of? What is my upbringing likely to have been like? What is the hierarchy and how strong is it?

We assembled a narrative for an 'average' lord.

2. Imaginative biography

After putting together this research, we put ourselves into the shoes of a lord and asked ourselves the following:

What is my individual story? Who were my parents? Which lords are my friends with at Court? What is my main function?

It is important to find something which excites you in these small roles so that you can give them life.

3. Improvisation

As the lords in the play are going to war, we held a drill session to get a sense of how it might feel to be in the military. The cut-throat world of court and its political manoeuvrings was something we wanted to explore, so we arranged a poker game to be played in character.

Think of situations that can play out that will help put people in contact with a world they are not familiar with.



Top: Photo (Marianne Elliott directing the Company) by Simon Annand
Above: Photo (the lords, with Oliver Ford Davies playing the King) by Simon Annand

Voice and text work

Alongside the main rehearsal, actors may have individual sessions looking not at acting but at the text and their vocal technique, in order to check that their thoughts are clear and that they will be heard in a very large auditorium. Here are a number of exercises that are used with complex text by the Head of Voice at the National Theatre, Jeannette Nelson.

1. Walk the punctuation

Take your speech and walk the punctuation out loud, changing direction at commas and stopping briefly at full stops. Take your time and do not rush. This is not about performance but getting the speech into your body and understanding the complex thoughts. You can repeat this exercise a few times until it has become clearer to you. This is particularly good to use for monologues or soliloquies.

2. Chairs

Most speeches and monologues in classical text explore a central discussion or argument. It is useful as an actor to physicalize these arguments to make them clear and very distinct both to you and an audience. This is not an academic exercise but a practical acting one. It was used by our voice department with the actor working on this speech.

Helena:

'Till I have no wife, I have nothing in France.
Nothing in France, until he has no wife!
Thou shalt have none, Rousillon, none in France;
Then hast thou all again. Poor lord! Is't I
That chase thee from thy country and expose
Those tender limbs of thine to the event
Of the none-sparing war? And is it I
That drive thee from the sportive court, where thou
Wast shot at with fair eyes, to be the mark
Of smoky muskets? O you leaden messengers,
That ride upon the violent speed of fire,
Fly with false aim; move the still-peering air,
That sings with piercing; do not touch my lord.
Whoever shoots at him, I set him there;
Whoever charges on his forward breast,
I am the caitiff that do hold him to't;
And, though I kill him not, I am the cause
His death was so effected: better 'twere
I met the ravin lion when he roar'd
With sharp constraint of hunger; better 'twere
That all the miseries which nature owes
Were mine at once. No, come thou home, Rousillon,
Whence honour but of danger wins a scar,
As oft it loses all: I will be gone;
My being here it is that holds thee hence:
Shall I stay here to do't? no, no, although
The air of paradise did fan the house
And angels officed all: I will be gone,
That pitiful rumour may report my flight,
To console thine ear. Come, night; end, day!
For with the dark, poor thief, I'll steal away.

(Act III, scene 2)

At a basic level in this speech Helena is talking either to herself or Rousillon. To help make this clear they set up two rows of chairs. When talking about Rousillon she would be on one of the rows and when talking about herself on the other, changing into different chairs when she had new thoughts. The most important thing this exercise achieves is that you physically feel the changes in thought during the speech and can be specific about who the thoughts are directed at.

3. Leading the scene

In Shakespeare and rhetorical drama, all speech is about convincing others of something. In *All's Well*, a good example of this is in Act II, scene 4, where Bertram is trying to convince Diana to go to bed with him. An exercise used to help the actors with this speech involved two actors walking the space and making the other listen to them. Physical contact was not allowed nor was shouting. One has to use the thoughts in the speech as powerfully as possible in order to persuade the other actor to turn and listen to them. They could only stop and listen if they really believed the other actor.

4. Scoring points

Another useful exercise, created by Cicely Berry for people acting in rhetorical drama.

Two sheets of paper with the different characters' names on each. Every time you think your character has scored a point during the scene you put a tick on the piece of paper. See how many points you can score. This exercise helps you get inside the world of persuasion and use thoughts to change another person's mind.

Look at Bertram's seduction of Diana and try this exercise.



Top: Photo (George Rainsford and Hasina Haque) by Simon Annand

Technical work

After about six weeks of rehearsal we move into the theatre. At this stage, the set has been built, the costumes fitted, made, or found, and all props prepared. We then have around two and a half days of technical rehearsal – the period in which we try and put all the elements together in a way that will be most exciting and clear for an audience. At this point, we also add in a band of six live musicians, our composer Adam Cork – who has written music cues for the production – our video designers Gemma Carrington and Jon Driscoll, lighting designer Peter Mumford, and sound designer Ian Dickinson.

Two of the most important elements of this process are the order of events and timing – what story do you want to tell and when. If there is a lighting change, is it a snap or a fade; if there is music, it is a bar or a brief sound; if furniture needs to be moved do we have a moment when it is taken off or do we do it as the next scene is beginning and overlap the action? This means that the whole creative team – including the actors – edit and work. The general guiding principle – though there are occasional exceptions – is that the creative team try to work with what the actors and director have already decided upon. The play is the thing, and the play is told by the actors, thus everyone works to make the story clear by lighting what is significant, highlighting events at the story's centre, and making the whole piece as easy to understand as possible.



Photo (members of the company) by Simon Annand



Photo (Sioned Jones, Hasina Haque, Michelle Terry and Cassie Atkinson) by Simon Annand

Previews

Once we have finished teching the show (technical rehearsals), we give eight preview performances. These are open to a paying public, but with an awareness that there is still work being done. During this period, lighting, sound and video teams work most mornings, and the actors arrive in the afternoon to rehearse with the technical team prior to the performance in the evening. The director also gives acting notes during this period, so the play is still very much work in progress. In the case of *All's Well*, the size of the show meant that some technical work had not been completed to a satisfactory level in the tech rehearsal, and there was still work to be done.

The final event that marks the completion of the show is the press night, when critics, and guests of the cast and creative team are invited to see the show. Every company deals with this pressure differently, but our director made it clear she has no interest in what critics write and that our cast shouldn't either. Paying too much attention can affect the production negatively, whether reviews are good or bad, as people can become over-confident or be knocked off centre – both of which get in the way of the play and the production.

Following this, and because the NT is a repertory theatre and has different shows playing in the same theatres at different times, the show comes off for a period, and then comes back at a later date. Each time the company comes back we may have a line run (ie: go through the actors' lines) or walk through the play to refresh the actors' memories. The staff director will watch the runthrough and give any notes that seem necessary to make sure the show stays in a good state and things do not go awry.

In addition to this, there are understudy rehearsals. In a big show such as this, there are a group of actors playing smaller parts, who will also understudy one or maybe two of the larger parts. Again the staff director directs these actors so that, in the event of a principle actor being unable to perform due to illness or an emergency, their part can be covered for one or more shows by somebody who is familiar with it.



Photo (Michelle Terry and George Rainsford) by Simon Annand



Photo (Oliver Ford Davies and George Rainsford) by Simon Annand