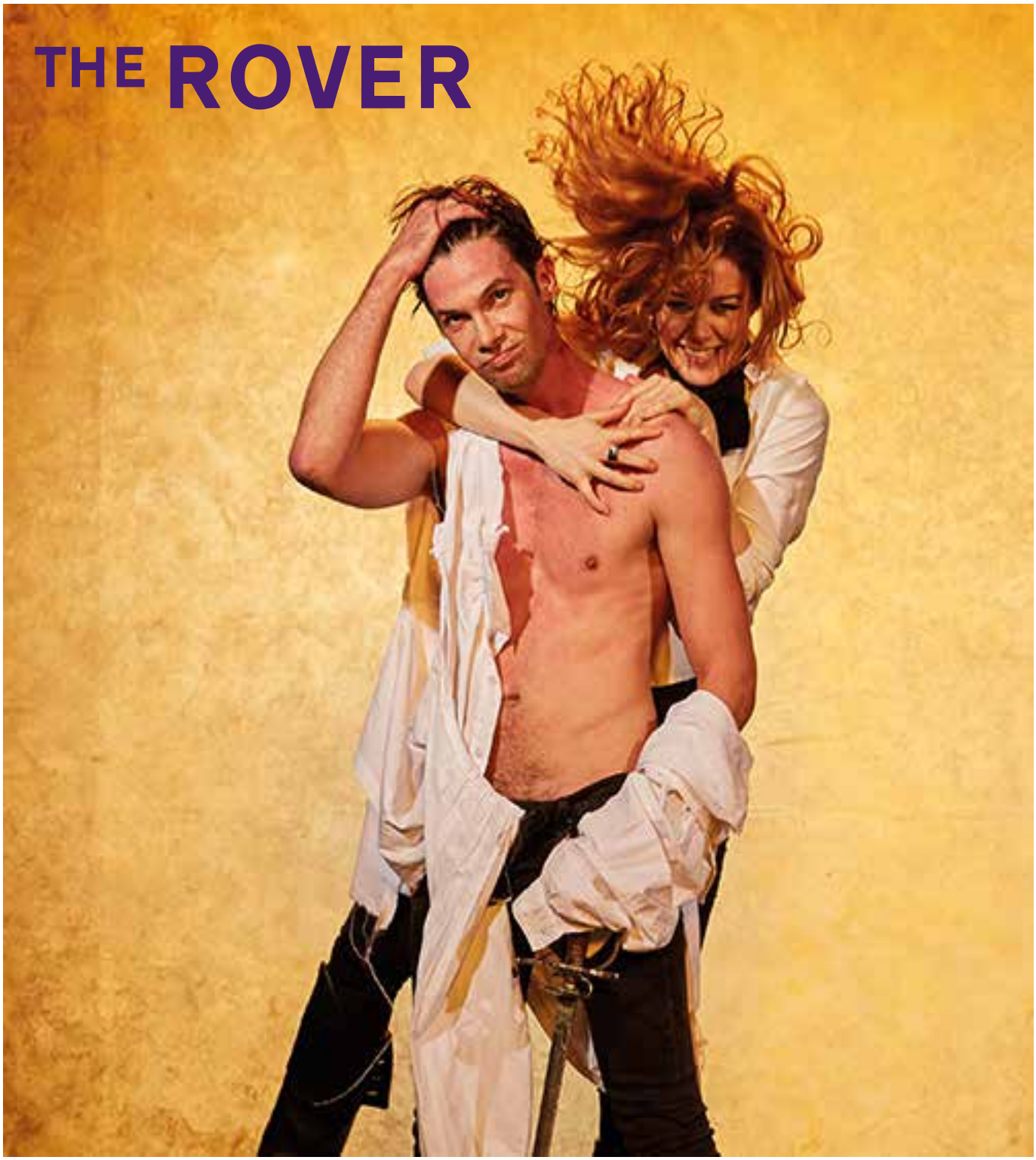


1 JULY - 6 AUGUST 2017

LEARNING RESOURCES

BELVOIR

Belvoir presents
THE ROVER

Writer **APHRA BEHN**
Director **EAMON FLACK**

This production of The Rover *opened at Belvoir St Theatre on Wednesday 5 July 2017.*

Set & Costume Designer **MEL PAGE**
Lighting Designer **MATT SCOTT**
Composer & Sound Designer **STEVE TOULMIN**
Dramaturg **CHARLOTTE BRADLEY**
Choreographer **CAMERON MITCHELL**
Movement Director **SCOTT WITT**
Associate Designer **CHLOE GREAVES**
Personal Assistant & Access Support Worker **KERRY STAMELL**
Production Manager **SALLY WITHNELL**
Technical Manager **AIDEN BRENNAN**
Stage Manager **LUKE McGETTIGAN**
Assistant Stage Manager **JENNIFER PARSONAGE**

With
GARETH DAVIES
TAYLOR FERGUSON
LEON FORD
NATHAN LOVEJOY
ELIZABETH NABBEN
TOBY SCHMITZ
NIKKI SHIELS
KIRUNA STAMELL
ANDRE DE VANNY
MEGAN WILDING

***The Rover* is supported by the Nelson Meers Foundation.**

We acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation who are the traditional custodians of the land on which Belvoir St Theatre is built. We also pay respect to the elders past and present.

CONTENTS

BELVOIR

Rehearsal / Brett Boardman 2017
Production Photos / Anna Kucera 2017
Cover Image / Daniel Boud 2016
Learning Resources compiled by Belvoir Education, July 2017

ABOUT BELVOIR

One building.
Six hundred people.
Thousands of stories.

When the Nimrod Theatre building in Belvoir Street, Surry Hills, was threatened with redevelopment in 1984, more than 600 people – ardent theatre lovers together with arts, entertainment and media professionals – formed a syndicate to buy the building and save this unique performance space in inner city Sydney.

Thirty years later, under Artistic Director Eamon Flack and Executive Director Brenna Hobson, Belvoir engages Australia's most prominent and promising playwrights, directors, actors and designers to realise an annual season of work that is dynamic, challenging and visionary. As well as performing at home, Belvoir regularly takes to the road, touring both nationally and internationally.

Belvoir Education

Our Education Program provides students and teachers with insights into the work of Belvoir and first hand experiences of the theatre-making process.

Belvoir Education offers student workshops, teacher professional development workshops, work experience, VET placements, archival viewings and a wealth of online resources designed to support work in the drama classroom. Our arts access programs assist schools in Regional NSW and Western Sydney to access the company's work.

Explore our education pages at **www.belvoir.com.au/education**

CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

Eamon Flack
Director

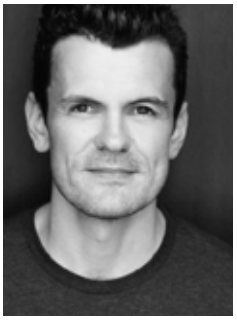
Charlotte Bradley
Dramaturg

Gareth Davies
Ned Blunt

Taylor Ferguson
Hellena

Leon Ford
Belvile

Chloe Greaves
Associate Designer



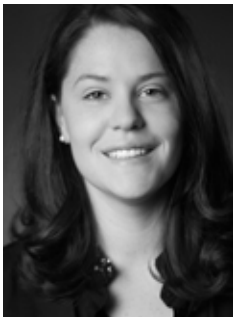
Nathan Lovejoy
Don Antonio / Frederick

Luke McGettigan
Stage Manager

Cameron Mitchell
Choreographer

Elizabeth Nabben
Florinda

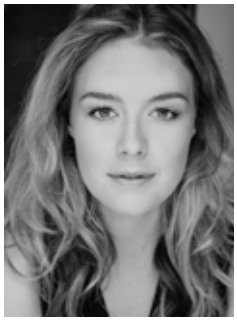
Mel Page
Set & Costume Designer



Jennifer Parsonage
Assistant Stage Manager

Toby Schmitz
Willmore

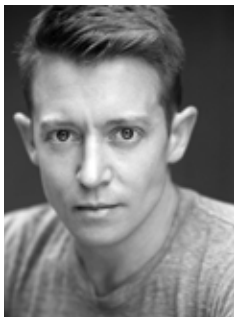
Matt Scott
Lighting Designer



Nikki Shiels
Angelica Bianca

Kiruna Stamell
Callis

Steve Toulmin
Composer & Sound Designer



Andre De Vanny
Don Pedro

Megan Wilding
Moretta / Lucetta

Scott Witt
Movement Director

DIRECTOR'S NOTE: EAMON FLACK

...A devil on't, the woman damns the poet. All I ask is the privilege for my masculine part, the poet, to tread in those successful paths my [male] predecessors have so long thrived in... If I must not, because of my sex, have this freedom, but that you will usurp all to yourselves, I lay down my quill and you shall hear no more of me. No, because I will be kinder to the brothers of the pen than they have been to a defenceless woman. I am not content to write for money alone. I value fame as much as if I had been born a hero, and if you rob me of that, I will retire from the ungrateful world, and scorn its fickle favours. Aphra Behn

Not that money wasn't a necessary consideration for Aphra Behn. She wrote for money because money was a better form of dependency than a husband. Her own had died or run off a few years into the marriage. This was in 1666, six years after the severe republic of Oliver Cromwell had given way to the restoration of Charles II. Without a husband Behn was free to live by her own means, which she proceeded to do to the utmost. First she went to Antwerp to spy for the king. When she returned to London he managed not to pay her costs and she spent time in a debtor's prison. A few years later she wrote her first play, *The Forc'd Marriage*. In the decade that followed she became a fixture in London's rampant theatrical and literary world. She wrote plays and novels, she published scandalous letters, she was commissioned to write lyrics and poetry. She lived with a bisexual lover. She was foul-mouthed and sexually forthright. She was praised and very much pilloried: "that lewd Harlot that Poetick Quean/Fam'd through whitefryars you know what I mean", wrote one who wasn't a fan. The language is familiar to outspoken women today: "abominably vile", "odious and obscene." Her worst critic withheld final judgement and let the facts of her life speak for themselves: "Poverty, Poetry, Pox are plagues enough for one." She died in 1689 at the age of about 49. The story of her life is the story of a ferocious determination to be judged by the same standards as men, to live as freely as men, to speak as freely as men, and to outlive herself. She was buried in Westminster Abbey. The inscription on her grave reads, "Here lies a proof that wit can never be/Defence enough against mortality."

The Rover premiered in 1677 but it's set twenty years earlier, during the time of Cromwell's republic, when the young deposed prince Charles was in exile and his cavaliers with him. These are the Englishmen we meet in Naples – swords for hire, Royalists adrift. The prince himself remains in the wings, anchored off the coast of Naples: it's from his ship that Willmore (our Rover) has taken shore leave. He's a figure of considerable interest, Willmore. Behn's audiences enjoyed his pleasing resemblance to one of the great celebrities of the time, the filthy and splendid Earl of Rochester, whose circle Behn moved in. But Willmore could just as well be a sly and loving portrait of the young exiled prince, free of England and Cromwell's Taliban-like rule, discovering the liberty he would bring home to his Restoration a decade later. And it's this, the play's desperate, painful, profane desire for freedom, that makes it so alive.

Behn and Rochester belonged to a circle of hard-living wild creatures who used sex, poetry and drink to overthrow the old pieties. The 1960s come to mind. But there was a greater uncertainty at play in Behn's time: would this new libertine era survive? During Behn's lifetime the world had been turned upside down twice. A generation earlier England had lived through an apocalyptic civil war. Charles I was beheaded and the religious authoritarian Oliver Cromwell ruled the country as a republic. Charles II's Restoration unleashed a new freedom in England, but even if the regime held, nothing was certain any more. On top of that there was plague and fire, casual violence and disease. Life was quickly snuffed. Rochester died young. Behn died, it seems, in pain. But in the time they had, they and their circle developed their lives and art into a new way of living. They refused the afterlife, they cashed in on the value of profanity. And it was language which extended the reach of their short, threatened lives. Wit, poetry, the cut and thrust of intense conversation concentrated their experiences and extended the time they had. They doubled every fleeting thought and sensation by talking about it with a ferocious, almost mad eloquence. Like Wilde two centuries later they used language to invert the moral order of the day. They toyed with the sacred. They left nothing untested. They were impudent, debauched, pox-ridden Royalists and they helped make secular thought and life a living reality.

This is the story of a group of women who take the opportunity of Carnival time in Naples to try on different versions of themselves. Their disguises free them to speak a new truth. The more they perform themselves, the more they become themselves. But freedom is never so easily won.

The free-for-all of Carnival that licenses the direct expression of female sexual desire and social ambition also opens the door to male dominance and violence. Behn's play is not an uncomplicated tale of self-actualisation, but a persistently challenging meditation on gender relations. This ambiguity is embodied in the striking figure of Angellica Bianca. Like Behn, she is a woman who has forged her own path, around the periphery of the marriage market. Carnival is superfluous to Angellica Bianca, she doesn't need it to express her power or sexuality. She is by many measures the most powerful person in the play, though tragically it does not secure her happiness. Behn refuses to align herself with the "virgin" or the "whore". This taxonomy is still with us. Women are still pinned to a moral and sexual lexicon. But Behn toys with this lexicon and begins to undo it, to set the women in the play free of its awful strictures.

I'll leave the final word to Virginia Woolf:

"All women together ought to let flowers fall upon the tomb of Aphra Behn, for it was she who earned them the right to speak their minds."

Eamon Flack

THE LIFE OF APHRA BEHN

While Aphra Behn's life is shrouded in mystery, some extraordinary facts are known: she was the first female playwright to earn a living through her creative work. And not merely earn a living, but Behn was one of the most successful playwrights of her time. She worked as a spy for the King, she was arrested for the politics in her plays, and she boldly defended herself and her work against sexist attacks throughout her life. Behn was a radical. Yet she was in danger, for a moment in history, of being lost to the ages.

For centuries after her death, Behn was largely forgotten. She was little heard of and almost never read. In this sense, she shared the fate of many of the dramatists who wrote during the Restoration, a group who scandalised its own times and haunted the next two centuries with their works of excess. But there is no doubt that Behn's reputation suffered additionally because she was a woman. She competed on equal terms with men and never concealed her authorship or gender. Her writing was bold, frank and witty, and frequently explored the entanglement of sex and power. As a result, Behn endured vicious attacks on her personal morals, which continued in the centuries after her death. The English writer John Doran gave a sample of the hostility Behn attracted when he wrote in 1864 that she was "the most shameless woman who ever took pen in hand, to corrupt the public." Female critics were just as severe. "The disgrace of Aphra Behn," declared the 19th century critic Julia Kavanagh, "is that, instead of raising man to woman's moral standard [she] sank woman to the level of man's coarseness."

Perspectives started to shift in the early 20th century, when sexual standards relaxed and an interest in women writers developed. Virginia Woolf understood Behn's significance in paving the way for female writers when she paid tribute to her in *A Room of One's Own*. Woolf, however, lost sight of any literary merit when it came to Behn's work. She and Behn were writers of different times: Woolf wrote when art was romantically seen as a means of self-expression, while Behn wrote openly for money and political purpose, as did her contemporaries. It was not until the emergence of the modern feminist movement in the 1960s and 1970s that Behn was written about seriously as a major woman writer.

So, who was Aphra Behn? While very little is known about Behn's early life, it is estimated that she was born in Kent in 1640. It's believed that her father, Bartholomew Johnson, was a barber and her mother, Elizabeth Denham, cared for the children of the wealthy Culpepper family. Sir Thomas Culpepper later described Behn as his "foster sister" and it was thought that he perhaps introduced her to the royal circles in which she later moved. Behn was born into a world rife with religious and political tension as the Civil War racked England. By 1642, the puritans had closed the theatres, radical political and religious groups had emerged, and the King was publically executed in 1649.

In 1663, Behn's life took an unusual turn when her father was appointed to a military outpost in South Africa and she sailed with her family to Surinam. The time Behn spent at the English settlement provided inspiration for her famous novel *Oroonoko*, which chronicles the story of a black African prince betrayed into slavery in a New World English colony. It's a remarkable work for many reasons, not least because it's often touted to be the first novel penned in English, and contains the earliest stirrings of protest against slavery.

After England surrendered Surinam to Holland, Behn returned home in 1664. It's believed she married a Dutch merchant named Hans Behn, though very little is known about the union, which did not last more than a few years.

By 1666 Behn had come to the notice of the King, possibly through Thomas Culpepper. The King admired Behn for her vivacious personality and great wit, and recruited her as a spy (code-named "Astrea") in Antwerp during the war from 1665 to 1667. Behn's chief mission was to establish an intimacy with William Scot, an English expatriate who was supposedly intent on overthrowing the monarchy. Behn was to lure Scot back to the English side with promises of a pardon and a considerable reward, and to gather information on the Dutch fleets and merchant ships. Although she was helpful in exposing the secret plans to exterminate the English fleet in the River Thames in 1667, Behn was virtually abandoned by the King and landed in debtor's prison when she returned to London in 1668. Her debt was reportedly paid by an unknown person and she was permitted to leave by 1669.

At this point, Behn made a decision to pursue something that was unheard of for a woman at that time: to support herself financially through writing. It's almost impossible to over-emphasise just how momentous it was for a woman in the 17th century to dare to enter the strictly male-dominated arena of professional theatre. There were, however, a few factors which helped make this possible. Charles II's return to the throne in 1660 signalled a reversal of the Puritan ethic, the new King was desperate to distinguish himself in every way from his predecessors. When the theatres reopened, they set out very deliberately to subvert traditional values and attitudes. Additionally actresses were permitted to appear on the public stage for the first time and a number of female authors had their works performed. Behn, however, was the first British woman to make a living as a creative writer. She subsequently became one of the most famous and prolific playwrights on the London theatre scene, staging 18 plays from 1670 to 1689.

Behn's first couple of plays were romantic tragicomedies including *The Forc'd Marriage*, which was her first big hit when it premiered in 1670. As its title suggests, it dealt with a subject that Behn would continually return to throughout her career: the damaging effects of arranged marriages. The later part of this decade saw the emergence of sex comedies, which were more daring than anything in the 1660s. They proved a short-lived phenomenon and the early 1680s saw a swing against such candid works – but during this window Behn penned some of her most popular works including 1677's *The Rover*, a particular favourite of the King. Like many of her plays, *The Rover* was a comedy but also a highly sophisticated debate about sexual politics during the Restoration period.

While Behn had established herself as one of London's leading playwrights at the close of the 1670s, she was still subject to frequent attacks on her work. Most often the charge was immorality, whether in her personal life or in her plays. When criticised, Behn's strategy was to counter-attack. When her 1678 play *Sir Patient Fancy* was criticised as "bawdy" Behn complained that she was being singled out for criticism on this score simply because she was a woman. In a preface to the play, she complained that male playwrights were permitted to live the most scandalous lives and write the most bawdy plays, "but for a woman it was unnatural".

Behn was also not afraid to assert herself when it came to her deeply conservative political views, which are often difficult to reconcile with her status as a boundary-pushing female writer. Her expression of these views ended up causing a hiatus in her playwriting career. In 1682, the King ordered Behn's arrest for her attack on the illegitimate son of Charles II, the duke of Monmouth. In an epilogue to her 1682 play, *Romulus and Hersilia*, Behn wrote of the threat the duke posed to succession. While it seems unlikely that she was imprisoned, Behn's productivity as a playwright declined sharply thereafter.

The final years of Behn's life do not seem to have been happy or easy. She became ill, and when she stopped writing plays, found herself in debt again. In a final surge of creative energy Behn turned to fiction, and one of her most famous works, the aforementioned *Oroonoko*, was published a year before she died in 1989. At the end of her life, Behn still craved literary fame – a shocking stance for a female writer. Behn deserves this fame for her creative work, cultural importance and revolutionary legacy: she gave women a public voice.

References

W.R. Owens & Lizbeth Goodman, *Shakespeare, Aphra Behn and the Canon*, Routeledge, 1996.

Janet M. Todd, *The Secret Life of Aphra Behn*, Rutgers University Press, 1996.

Belinda Webb, '*Aphra Behn: Still a radical example*', The Guardian, 2007

INTERVIEW WITH THE DRAMATURG, CHARLOTTE BRADLEY

The Rover was written by Aphra Behn in 1677 but Belvoir's production of _The Rover_ has been edited by dramaturg Charlotte Bradley for a modern audience. Charlotte has pared down Behn's original text, removed minor characters and updated the jokes. We caught up with Charlotte a week before opening night and asked her a few questions about the dramaturgy process for this production.

Did Eamon (as the director) give you a brief as dramaturg on _The Rover_?

Eamon knew that with this show he really wanted it to be entertaining. You can totally imagine a version of this play which takes, for example, a feminist angle on the gender politics in the play and focuses in on that as a primary interest. But Eamon really wanted to bring out the sense of energy and fun in the play so in the first edit I really tried to focus on keeping things moving along quite quickly.

So you began reworking the play before rehearsals began…

That's right. _The Rover_ is actually based on another play called Thomaso by a playwright and theatre director / owner called Thomas Killigrew so first I looked carefully at that play because what was really interesting about that was saying 'what are the things that Aphra Behn has changed?' because that seems to me to be the best clue to the content that she was most interested in. So I drew on some different resources for the first edit of the play. One of them was this _Thomaso_ by Killigrew but the other really valuable resource was the script that Barton prepared for the Royal Shakespeare company production of The Rover in 1986. And what Barton did was takes a lot of long monologues in the original play and chop them up into dialogue because it's easier as an audience to understand text as a an exchange rather than as one long piece. I really drew on that idea.

So it's a substantial edit that you've made. It's significant!

Yes, we made some big changes to it!

And were you meeting regularly with Eamon during this time to discuss your pre-rehearsal drafts?

Yes. It was definitely a collaborative process. Eamon and Tom Wright (Belvoir's Artistic Associate) and I sat down together and we talked about the themes of the play that we were most interested in, the characters that we were most interested in, and what we wanted the mood to be. Then I went away and basically just filleted, cutting as much out of the play as I could. I combined characters, I tried to clarify some meanings and I would decide when a joke was funny now or not… because sometimes a joke is so much about what is happening at the time. For example, a joke about Christopher Pine just won't be funny in a decade!

Have you been making any changes in the rehearsal room?

I was in the rehearsal room for the first week and a lot of that week was spent reading through the script and discussing the meaning of lines. Another key part of my role was helping people unpick the meaning of lines, and not only from a basic textual reading sense, but also from an historical sense. I would say 'this makes sense because in Italy at the time the Spanish were in charge…' or 'the aristocratic women were being put into nunneries just as par for the course!' So I was providing that kind of insight for the cast and creative team. That was the first week of rehearsal and since then I've just popped up to the rehearsal room if they need clarification on a particular line or on any of the context. But Eamon has been pulling back in lines, re-ordering events and inventing new jokes as well and I haven't been involved in that, but certainly there would be times when a dramaturg would be more closely involved with the ongoing development of the play script. What will happen now is I will go in for lots of the previews and the dress rehearsal and say to Eamon 'oh, I don't think the storyline here is making much sense…' or… 'perhaps here we could speed things up a bit…' that kind of feedback.

So for a student interested in dramaturgy... they don't have to want to be a playwright do they...

Not at all, no. In fact there is probably something quite good about a dramaturg having an objective relationship to the playwriting process. The nature of what a dramaturg does on an existing text, like *The Rover*, as compared to what a dramaturg does on a new play is also very different. So Anthea Williams (Belvoir's Associate Director – New Work) works a lot with our new playwrights and she does a version of dramaturgy which is very much about helping someone shape their play or rationalize the existence of certain characters, or of playing with the way that certain characters speak... so there are crossover skills. But I guess the thing that helped me prepare for what I did in *The Rover* is that my degree is in Theatre History and English Literature and I did a lot of research reading around what academics have said about Aphra Behn and about the play... reading different versions of the play that have been produced by other companies and so on... essentially what you do to write an essay on the play!

And you have directing experience as well... do you think there is crossover there? That a dramaturg and a director must both be able to imagine a text in performance...

Yes, I think that is right. And I think that whenever you're a member of a creative team, whether you're a designer, a dramaturg, or even an actor... I think most of the time everyone has that directorial vision for the play, the version of the play that *they* would most like to see. And one of the challenges of the theatre, as a very collaborative art form, is that you have to know when to let go of your vision of something and participate in the vision of the director. If I was to direct a version of *The Rover*, it would be so different I think. It would have similarities with what Eamon is doing, but it would be different. And there is no way that I'm saying that I could direct something as well as Eamon, it's not a question of the quality, it's a question of the interpretation.

I'm wondering now, after hearing about all your reading and research, do you have a very strong image of Aphra Behn in your mind? Do you feel like you have gotten to know this writer a little bit?

I do! I actually think it's so hard for us to really imagine what it would be like to be, well to be a human in that time, let alone a woman in that time and a woman playwright... and a single woman which was a very difficult thing. She did have a husband who died, and she remained unmarried for the rest of her life, which is why she started playwriting – to pay the bills. And it is so easy to imagine this kind of 'wonder woman' character but I think she was probably just as complicated and conflicted as everyone is. Like I think some of her politics, or the way that she talks about some of the lower class women in the play, is not very nice! So I have this image of her which is as a very complex character. I think she was clearly amazing, but almost alien to us, like any person from that time is.

1677 is truly a long time ago isn't it?

It really is! Here is one of the things that surprises me about that time. Women had only just been allowed on the stage and about ten years before *The Rover* was presented to an audience there was a royal decree saying that women 'must' play female roles on stage. This is quite a change when you think that only fifty years earlier boys were playing all the female roles in Shakespeare's plays. But what I thought was really interesting about that time was that the company took the box office revenue for the first and second days, and then on the third day of performances the playwright would receive the box office revenue. Even just thinking about that little detail, about something as mundane as how you got paid for your job, is just so different from how it works now.

Gosh, yes... to decide to be a playwright in 1677 in order to be able to put food on the table... to need the box office to sell well on the third day of the run!

Yes! And something else historical that design students might be interested in is that Aphra Behn was known for loving all the new stage technology. In our production there is this great reveal where the scenic curtains are pulled back and there is this huge image of Angellica Bianca and then Angellica throws open this door and there she is again in the flesh. And that image is actually in the play text. Aphra Behn writes that first you hear Angellica Bianca talked about, then you see her picture, then you see her behind a silk curtain and then finally you see her revealed. So this design direction is built into the play itself, which is really amazing because when you see the play being produced today you can still feel Aphra Behn's kind of directorial control over the production. I think I am probably more excited about this than anybody but I do think it's really cool! She is clearly as super intelligent woman right?

REHEARSING THE ROVER

Taylor Ferguson

Describe what you see in the photo above. How would you describe the expression on Taylor's face? What emotion is Taylor's character Hellena conveying to the audience?

Nathan Lovejoy & Andre De Vanny

Describe what you see in the photo above. How would you describe the expression on each actor's face? Where is the focal point for each character in this moment? How does the staging play with status? Who do you think is going to win the fight and why?

Megan Wilding and Nikki Shiels

Describe what you see in the photo above. What do you think the relationship is between these two characters?

What do their stances say about their situation?

PRODUCTION ELEMENTS

The elements of production are the technical and visual elements used to manipulate the elements of drama in order to effectively tell a play's story.

In these notes we are going to look at *The Rover*

Costume design references

Set model box

COSTUME DESIGN REFERENCES

A selection of Mel Page's design references. Mel sourced these images online using Google's search engine.

Elizabeth Nabben

Nikki Shiels

Mel Page's design reference.

Mel Page's design reference.

Taylor Ferguson & Kiruna Stamell

Andre De Vanny

Mel Page's design reference.

Mel Page's design reference.

Gareth Davies & Leon Ford

Nikki Shiels

Mel Page's design references.

The Ridotto in Venice by Pietro Longhi. Image sourced by Mel Page.

Toby Shmitz, Elizabeth Nabben, Kiruna Stamell, Nikki Shiels, Leon Ford & Andre De Vanny

PRODUCTION ELEMENTS

SET MODEL BOX

Set Model Box: *The Rover* by Mel Page (2017)

Set Model Box: *The Rover* by Mel Page (2017)

Questions to consider after seeing this production

1. How many different locations do you remember in the production?

2. What is the key difference between the early model box design & the final set design? Why might this change have taken place?

3. Were any of the set pieces (furniture) used in more than one scene?

4. How were key set pieces used to create different locations?

PRODUCTION WEEK PHOTOGRAPHS

Belvoir's Head of Production Sally Withnell has the responsibility to plan for and oversee Belvoir production weeks in the theatre. Production week is very busy at Belvoir. When one show closes (on a Sunday night) the Production Department begin to 'bump in' Belvoir's next show the following Monday morning. Actors begin working in the theatre from Wednesday for technical and dress rehearsals with their first preview playing to an audience on Saturday night.

Sally took some photographs of the *The Rover* production week to share with us. In these images you can see the floor being set in place before the flats, swinging door, curtains, Angellica Bianca backdrop, *Napoli* sign and pool are installed by the Belvoir staging crew. In the final images you can see the lights being focused on the set and actors joining the stage for a technical rehearsal.


Napoli


Napoli


Napoli

PODCAST

Nikki Shiels

Director Eamon Flack, dramaturg Charlotte Bradley and actors Taylor Ferguson, Elizabeth Nabben, Toby Schmitz and Nikki Shiels share their thoughts on Aphra Behn's 1677 battle of the sexes, and what this classic holds for a modern audience.

Produced by Zoe Ferguson for Belvoir

Listen to the *The Rover* podcast online here: https://belvoir.com.au/schools-performances/the-rover/

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