

## A GUIDE TO

# LIGHT SHINING IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Thank you for joining us to bring Caryl Churchill's radical and challenging play to life in these radical and challenging times.

Because this is a radical and challenging play we've put together this short guide.

*Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* is a non-narrative play from 1978 which mixes Brechtian and feminist theatrical techniques. It is set in the 1640s, a time of total cultural, economic, political and social confusion - much like our own time. The play uses religion to look at how ideology restricts the better possibilities of our society - much in the way that the ideology of neo-liberal capitalism does today.

While some characters reappear, there is no traditional plot or character arc. It helps when you are watching to think of each scene as a mini play of its own, and the 8 actors as different people in each scene. The scenes loosely group together in four sections:

The first section consists of many small scenes which show many different people struggling to survive in a world of religious dogma and class inequality. It shows the viral spread of radical new ideas, and people realising that they can take action to change their lives for the better. This section is about the excitement of change.

The second section is one single scene which Churchill edited verbatim from the historical Putney Debates of 1647. This scene shows soldiers from the victorious opposition army arguing about whether to establish a new kind of government which gives a vote to all Englishmen. This scene is about the failure of change.

The third section is another collection of small scenes that show what happens when the promises of a better life have been betrayed: many people searching for even newer, more radical ideas; and others returning to old forms of privilege and inequality. This section is about the consequences of failed change.

The final section is a "prayer" meeting, in which a group of survivors and dreamers gather together to try to keep the desire for change alive. This scene is about not giving up on change. It shows that the failure of political revolution was also the birth of cultural revolution.

Without this cultural revolution, the real life stories in our other repertory show, *Wayside Bride*, would not have come to pass. Nor would a place like Belvoir be possible.