

RUINED

by Lynn Nottage



RESOURCE PACK

ALMEIDA
PROJECTS

Introduction



Jenny Jules
Photo: Tristram Kenton

Welcome to the Almeida Theatre's production of *Ruined* by Lynn Nottage.

Ruined's story starts and finishes in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In 2004 Lynn Nottage travelled to the country to research a new play, a re-imagining of Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage*, transposed to Africa and featuring the plight of Congo's women as its central theme.

Nottage began a journey to collect the narrative of these women, whose stories were not being heard. She interviewed many Congolese women who told her in plain words of the treatment they had endured at the hands of the militia. Rape and sexual violence were all too common occurrences in a country still ravaged by civil unrest, in an ongoing war fought over women's bodies.

The very first woman to share her story was called Salima. She related her story of abduction, rape and imprisonment in such graphic detail that Nottage almost begged her to stop. Salima can be found in *Ruined*, her story barely unchanged except that on stage it takes on the guise of fiction.

The more Nottage heard, the further away from *Mother Courage* her play moved: the women's stories breaking out from confinement within Brecht's mould. While there justifiably remain strong resonances between the two plays, Mama Nadi, the central female character in *Ruined*, speaks for herself and the story is one of her country.

Ruined was created using the narratives of the women Nottage met in the Congo and whilst it is a piece of theatre – and undeniably a powerful drama – it is seeking to alert our minds to a very real situation playing out thousands of miles away in Africa. As Shakespeare wrote, 'all the world's a stage', so be it: *Ruined* shines a torch on a part of the world that Western society has found it all too easy to turn away from.

We look forward to welcoming you and your students to the Almeida Theatre and hope that *Ruined* will challenge and inspire you with the humanity of its drama, and engage you with the pertinent issues affecting the Democratic Republic of Congo - not in the recent past, but happening right now.

Charlie Payne
Samantha Lane & Natalie Mitchell
Almeida Projects

For more information about Almeida Projects and our recent work please visit www.almeida.co.uk/education

Contents

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE PACK

This Almeida Projects Resource Pack aims to provide an insight into our process of taking the production from research stage to performance. We hope you will use it to help you in your own investigations into the play both before and after your visit to the Almeida Theatre.

The pack is divided into four sections: the first contains detailed information on the plot, characters and design to refresh your memory of the play in the classroom. The second contains production-specific articles on the creative process, with exclusive input from the artistic team. The third section provides context by covering background material and themes from the play. The final section contains suggestions of practical exercises for drama teachers to use, to enable students to explore the play in further depth, in the classroom and beyond.

LEARNING AREAS

Key learning areas have been identified under the following subjects:

- AS/A Level Drama or Theatre Studies
- AS/A Level English Literature • Geography
- Politics • History • Citizenship

This Resource Pack intends to supplement the academic study of *Ruined* by providing context-specific information about the Almeida Theatre's production of the play, covering the following areas:

- Context and politics of Congo
- Staging and world of the play
- Production-Specific Research and Context
- Rehearsal Technique

This pack may supplement the exercises undertaken in Almeida Projects' Introductory Workshop and is designed to give students wider understanding of some of the issues featured directly in the narrative of the play.

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Production Credits



Ruined by Lynn Nottage

CAST

Mama Nadi
Christian
Sophie
Salima
Josephine
Jerome Kisembe
Mr Harari
Rebel Soldier 1 / Fortune
Rebel Soldier 2 / Laurent
Commander Osembenga
Simon
Guitar
Percussion

Jenny Jules
Lucian Msamati
Pippa Bennett-Warner
Michelle Asante
Kehinde Fadipe
Okezie Morro
Silas Carson
David Ajala
Joel Kangudi
Steve Toussaint
Damola Adelaja
Joseph Roberts
Akintayo Akinbode

CREATIVE TEAM

Director
Design
Lighting
Sound
Composer
Music Director
Choreographer
Fight Director
Casting
Assistant Director
Assistant Designer
Production Manager
Assistant Production Manager
Company Manager
Stage Manager
Deputy Stage Manager
Assistant Stage Manager
Costume Supervisor
Acting Wardrobe Supervisor
Deputy Wardrobe Supervisor
Dresser
Chief Technician
Lighting Technician
Sound Technician
Theatre Technician
Stage Crew / Revolve Operator
Costume Maker
Production Carpenter
Set built and painted by
Stage Management Work Placement
Rehearsal & Production Photography

Indhu Rubasingam
Robert Jones
Oliver Fenwick
Christopher Shutt
Dominic Kanza
Akintayo Akinbode
Coral Messam
Bret Yount
Crowley Poole Casting Ltd
Abigail Graham
Alistair Turner
Igor
Tariq Hussain
Emma Basilico
Laura Flowers
Nicole Keighley
Naomi Buchanan Brooks
Sydney Florence
Eleanor Dolan
Charlie Damigos
Rachel Farrimond
Jason Wescombe
Robin Fisher
Howard Wood
Adriano Agostino
Pradeep Dash
Elspeth Threadgold
Craig Emerson
Souvenir
Anastasia Kaimakamis
Tristram Kenton

Artistic Director
Executive Director
Artistic Associate

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ALMEIDA PROJECTS

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Introduction to the Play



Cast of *Ruined*
Photo: Tristram Kenton

***Ruined* was written by Lynn Nottage in 2007 and awarded the 2009 Pulitzer Prize for Drama.**

Ruined involves the plight of a group of women in the civil war-torn Democratic Republic of Congo. Set in Mama Nadi's bar - a haven for miners, government soldiers and rebel militia, where they come to forget the ruins of war, to drink and dance with women and feed their desires. The play centres on the lives of the women working in the bar and their resolve to survive despite the atrocities they have experienced.

Two new girls arrive at Mama Nadi's bar, both recent victims of militia violence. Mama reluctantly agrees to take them in, and she puts them to work. As the conflict around the bar intensifies, the women continue to entertain their male customers. But as loyalties become divided as the conflict fragments, Mama's attempts to shelter the women from the dangers outside threaten to put their lives - and Mama's business - in jeopardy.

The Democratic Republic of Congo has a long history of civil war and brutal conflict. The country has, in recent years, become a centre for mining valuable minerals including coltan, which is used in the manufacture of mobile phones and the technology the West takes for granted. The systematic rape of women - often extremely violent - has become a chief instrument of war, used both as a means of ethnic cleansing and tribal intimidation. This is the backdrop against which the play was written.

Ruined was commissioned by Chicago's Goodman Theatre, where it received its world premiere in a co-production with New York's Manhattan Theatre Club. In writing the play, Lynn Nottage travelled to the Congo with director Kate Whoriskey, interviewing women who had directly experienced sexual violence. The play was initially intended to be an update of Brecht's *Mother Courage*, transposed to the Congo; but as Nottage heard more and more of the women's stories, the Brecht connection became significantly less important and *Ruined* became a story of the women of Congo first and foremost.

A detailed plot synopsis follows.

Characters



MAMA NADI

Jenny Jules

An attractive woman in her early forties, proprietor of Mama Nadi's bar. She has an arrogant stride and a majestic bearing. She can be flirtatious to get her way and knows how to charm men in the system - an excellent business woman. She has a dark and troubled past which gives her a definite hard edge and steely toughness, but it also gives her an empathetic compassion for 'ruined' women - she takes in women who have been raped by soldiers and offers them a livelihood.



CHRISTIAN

Lucian Msamati

Christian is a travelling salesman, trafficking goods across the border for businesses in the war-torn parts of the Congo. He has a fondness for philosophising and poetry - hence Mama's nickname for him: 'the professor'. He despairs at the unpredictable conflict tearing his country apart and the ignorance of the young men who claim authority. He is in love with Mama and wants to settle down with her.



SOPHIE

Pippa Bennett-Warner

Sophie is a beautiful girl, aged 18. She was a very good student and preparing to take her university entrance exams. However she has been outcast by her village, after suffering some terrible and brutal abuse from the militia - she has been 'ruined', genitally mutilated. She is gentle and very compliant at first, but has a steely determination and sense of survival which ultimately drives her to start deceiving the very woman who took her in.



SALIMA

Michelle Asante

Salima, also 18, is rather a plain girl with a stubbornness and defiance. She too has been attacked by militia men, who raped her, before abducting her and keeping her as their 'concubine' in the forest. Her husband has refused to take her back and she has been exiled from her village. She holds out hope that her husband will come back for her.



JOSEPHINE

Kehinde Fadipe

A prostitute at Mama Nadi's bar. She is resentful of the newcomers and makes little attempt to befriend them. Mr Harari regularly comes to see her, and she hopes he will take her out of the bar, eventually. Her father was the village chief and she was eldest born child. She was attacked by soldiers at her home but none of the villagers came to her aid.



JEROME KISEMBE

Okezie Morro

Jerome Kisémbé is leader of the local rebel militia. He is a powerful man and dangerous, with an unpredictable, volatile temper. He commands a band of men known for their violent demanding of respect. He opposes the 'unjust' rule of the government, tackling violence with violence. He is a regular customer at Mama Nadi's bar.



MR HARARI

Silas Carson

Mr Aziz Harari is a gemstone trader from the Lebanon, in the Congo on business. He has been coming to Mama Nadi's bar for some time and has built up a relationship with Josephine, though this is really no more than a business transaction. He is a gentle man, offering Mama advice and his wisdom as an outsider. He seems at once frustrated and bemused by the desperate situation he perceives in Congo.



COMMANDER OSEMBENGA

Steve Toussaint

He is high in the government, charged with bringing the area surrounding Mama Nadi's bar back into law and order. He is seeking out the rebel militia and destroying their army. He is a brash, loud man, commanding instant respect, but with a volatile temperament and violence concealed ever below the surface of his presence. He is a man used to getting what he wants without having to ask twice.

Characters



FORTUNE

David Ajala

Fortune is Salima's estranged husband. He was a farmer before being enlisted to the government army and is not happy with the soldier's life. He disowned Salima following her attack but now seeks her forgiveness as he still loves her and is full of regret. He stakes his place outside Mama Nadi's and threatens his safety by waiting for his wife.



SIMON

Damola Adelaja

Simon is Fortune's cousin, and they grew up in the same farming village. He has known Salima since childhood and is accompanying his friend to look for his wife, though he does not believe she is still alive. He too was a farmer but has joined the government army and is loyal to Commander Osembenga.



LAURENT

Joel Kangudi

Laurent is a young and hard-faced government soldier, working closely with Commander Osembenga. He is quick to carry out his boss' orders and execute violence where directed.



Lucian Msamati and Jenny Jules
Photo: Tristram Kenton

ACT ONE

Scene 1

A small mining town in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It is mid-afternoon at Mama Nadi's bar, a worn-looking establishment; nonetheless a lot of effort has gone into making it look cheerful. Mama Nadi is there, serving a cold drink to Christian. Christian has been on the road for a long time - many of the roads are impassable with blockades - and having reached Mama Nadi's, relaxes. He has brought Mama Nadi some provisions she requested, including a red lipstick. He flirts playfully with her and it is clear they are old friends. Mama offers Christian a beer, but he declines - he has not drunk alcohol for four years. Christian notices the caged parrot, which belonged to a now deceased village elder. The bird annoys Mama - it speaks a pygmy language that no one understands. Christian tells Mama he has something else for her, and she guesses correctly - he has brought her girls. But three - and she cannot make room for three. Christian offers to give her a good price, reassuring her that business is good. Mama insists on taking just the one and they haggle about the price. They agree and Mama chooses one of the women. She instantly picks out Sophie, and Christian then offers Mama two girls for the price of one - she can take Salima as well. Mama is adamant that she will only pay for one - and this is exactly as Christian would have it. Mama is bemused, but accepts.

Mama calls Josephine, one of her girls. Josephine surveys the two new girls with obvious contempt, but Mama orders her to take the girls to be washed and clothed. Before they go, Mama inspects Salima and Sophie a little closer, sensing them fit for business. Salima is at once nervous and defiant. Sophie is compliant but we see her walking with some pain.

Christian tells Mama about Salima's past - her husband won't take her back after being raped by soldiers and the village that she came from has disowned her. Sophie, he tells her hesitantly, is ruined. Mama is furious that Christian has brought her a ruined girl - she's paid for another mouth to feed and a burden - though she is pretty, she is useless to Mama. Christian urges Mama to keep Sophie, who has been treated appallingly by the militia. Mama dismisses this as outside her responsibility but Christian reassures her that Sophie is a good girl and will work hard, she can clean and sings like an angel. He offers her anything she wants from his truck if she agrees, even Belgian chocolates. He reveals that Sophie is actually his sister's only daughter: his niece.

Mama calls Sophie back to inspect her closely. She

I paid money for her, not the other one. The other one is plain. I have half a dozen girls like her, I don't need another plain girl.

Mama

Act One, Scene 1

Plot Summary



Pippa Bennett-Warner and Jenny Jules
Photo: Tristram Kenton

Coltan? Let me see. Ah, that's nothing, it's worthless my friend. A month ago, yes, but now you can't get a handful of meal for it. Too many prospectors. Every miner that walks in here has a bucket of it. Bring me a gram of gold, then we talk.

Mama

Act One, Scene 2

quizzes the young girl and we discover that Sophie was a good student and about to sit for her university exams, before the soldiers hurt her. A 'ruined' woman brings shame on the village, so her future was irreparably changed. Mama agrees to take Sophie in and then questions her about her skills - she can sing, and do the books. Mama puts red lipstick on Sophie and admires her beauty. She gives Sophie a drink of liquor to help her pain down below. Christian gives Mama the Belgian chocolates - she eats, savouring every bite. Mama offers Sophie a chocolate, but not Christian. This amuses Sophie but she is quickly subdued when Christian gives her a warning - many men would have left her for dead. Before her uncle leaves, she promises to be a good girl for Mama.

Scene 2

A month later, at Mama Nadi's bar. There is a festive atmosphere. At the bar, drunk and disheveled soldiers drink beers and laugh, at the centre of the group is Jerome Kiseembe, the rebel leader dressed in military uniform. Salima, dressed attractively, is playing pool as the soldiers look on. Mama circulates the bar, wearing a red scarf, acknowledging the rebel leader's colours. Meanwhile, Josephine is lap-dancing for Mr Harari, a Lebanese diamond merchant. Sophie sings. The song finishes and the soldiers ask for another, calling her over, but she ignores them. One soldier calls Mama over and shows her a lump of coltan he stole from a miner. He is proud of his steal, but Mama dismisses it as worthless, saying there are too many prospectors and so there's no more money in coltan. The soldier grows increasingly belligerent as Sophie ignores him and Mama won't take the coltan as payment for a girl. In the end, Mama intervenes and takes his coltan and offers him Salima, assuring him that she is the better dancer. He agrees to this and they dance.

Sophie, released, sings another song about the war. Mr Harari talks to Josephine about Sophie. Josephine tells him that Sophie is ruined - the other girls think she brings bad luck. Mr Harari asks Josephine to put on the dress he has brought her.

Whilst Josephine is changing, Mama asks Mr Harari why he is barefoot. He tells her that a young rebel soldier stole his shoes. Meanwhile Salima struggles briefly with the soldier, who is getting overly friendly. Mr Harari reviews the situation; he chides Mama for taking the man's coltan - he knows how much money that would fetch on the market, and cautions Mama against getting involved in that business. She dismisses his concerns - she cannot understand the fuss about coltan. Mr Harari explains how valuable it

Plot Summary



Cast of *Ruined*
Photo: Tristram Kenton

Your fucking country, some drunk child doing his best impersonation of a rebel soldier liberated my shoes. Every time I come here I have to buy a new fucking pair of shoes.

Mr Harari

Act One, Scene 2

is in the age of mobile phones. Mama shows him some gems she has procured, including a raw diamond, and Mr Harari sets about valuing them - mostly worthless, but the raw diamond might make some good money.

Mama compares Mr Harari to her father; we discover Mama's father used to have a farm, before it was taken by a white man. She tells him how important she feels property rights are - that land is what she wants. But this is not easy in Congo, without picking up a gun. Mr Harari would love to help find an answer to Mama's wishes, but demurs that he cannot even hold onto a pair of shoes in the country - let alone land. He criticises the fickle nature of militia politics in the civil war. Mama agrees, but concedes that even the militia need entertainment.

Josephine returns in the new dress. Mr Harari admires her beauty and even suggests he might have to take her home with him when he leaves Congo. Jerome shouts Mama over - he orders more beer and complains at the lack of mobile phone reception in the bar. Josephine tells Mr Harari about Jerome - he's fearless, 'the boss man', and dangerous.

Salima finally pushes the soldier away and makes for the door. Mama pulls her back in and makes her return to the soldier. Sophie asks if she is ok - the soldier bit Salima and she is upset and does not want to go back to him. Sophie urges that she must.

Scene 3

Morning, in the bar's living quarters. Sophie is painting Salima's fingernails with Josephine's nail polish - they have to rush before she returns. Sophie senses there is something wrong with Salima, and questions her. Salima is frustrated and angry at having to work in the bar and be treated badly by soldiers. Last night, the soldier had told her that some men had been shot, and she thinks one of

Plot Summary



Joel Kangudi and Lucian Msamati
Photo: Tristram Kenton

You, you don't have to be with them. Sometimes their hands are so full of rage that it hurts to be touched.

Salima

Act One, Scene 3

them could have been her brother. She says she misses her family, but Sophie silences her - they promised not to talk about home. But Salima continues, saying aloud the name of her baby; she wants to go home. Sophie sets her straight - they cannot go home. Where else could they go? The village has thrown them both out and it isn't safe for a woman alone. Sophie talks of her physical pain - every step she takes is a reminder of her attack by the militia men, and the pain will never leave.

Salima tells Sophie that she is pregnant. She cannot tell Mama, who will likely turn her out. Sophie shows Salima a stash of money she has been hiding from Mama, taking it from the bar takings and adjusting the books. Sophie tells Salima they won't be at the bar forever, and swears her to secrecy.

Josephine returns and the girls bicker. She reveals an enormous black scar circumventing her stomach and comments that Salima is looking fatter. Salima and Josephine argue. Sophie tries to placate Josephine and they listen to a report on the radio, talking of more civil unrest. Josephine tells the girls that she is going to the city with Mr Harari next month. She provokes Salima more by referring to her family. Salima runs out and Josephine turns on Sophie, jealous of her beauty and seeming dignity. She tells Sophie that she is worse than a whore, she is ruined. She reveals that she was attacked because her father was the village chief, and no one in the village came to her aid, they looked the other way.

Scene 4

Dusk in the bar, bustling with activity. Sophie sings, as Salima and Josephine talk with men. Christian enters, to surprise Mama. She gets him a soda and gives him a list of requests - Sophie has helped her write this. He tells Mama about his latest mission, and that the white pastor has been missing for some days. Rumour has it he had been treating rebel soldiers and upset local militia. The

Plot Summary



Michelle Asante
Photo: Tristram Kenton

*I was just by Yaka Yaka.
When I was there six months
ago, it was a forest filled with
noisy birds, now it looks like
God spooned out heaping
mouthfuls of earth, and every
stupid bastard is trying to get
a taste of it. It's been ugly,
cherie, but never like this.*

Christian
Act One, Scene 4

militia are battling with each other for control of the local area, it is a dangerous time for everyone.

Christian asks Mama to become his lover and business partner, they could move to a city and start again. She dismisses his ideas and proposal - she has her own business. Christian tells her she is too proud and stubborn. He asks for a dance. Mama chides his foolishness.

Just then the Commander Osembenga struts into the bar, a rival militia leader with a pompous stride and dark sunglasses, with a pistol at his side. He is accompanied by a government soldier in uniform. Christian stops dancing and nods deferentially. Mama welcomes him in and brings him a drink, though she asks him to leave his bullets at the bar - house rules, no matter who he is.

Mama asks him what brings him to the bar. The Commander tells her he is looking for Jerome Kisémbé. Mama denies knowing him personally, deliberately neglecting to mention that he is a customer. The Commander tells her Jerome is a dangerous man, and talks about his crimes as a rebel leader committed in the name of peace and reconciliation. He reveals his name, as the new boss man; Mama pours him a glass of her finest whiskey from the United States, taking great care of this important man. He issues a veiled threat to Mama: she is a practical woman, and knows better to allow rebel soldiers through her door. Mama agrees, and beckons over Josephine and Salima to entertain the Commander. Christian urges her to be cautious with the Commander.

The Commander calls Mama back and enquires about Christian. Mama assures him Christian is harmless. The Commander buys Christian a whiskey. Christian is in a dilemma - he urges Mama not to make him drink, he has not had a drink for 4 years and must refuse; but Mama knows the danger of refusing this gesture from the Commander. Christian drinks, with difficulty.

Scene 5

Morning in the bar. Sophie is reading to Josephine and Salima from a romance novel. The listening girls are rapt. Mama enters with her lock box of money and breaks up the gathering - she tells the girls she does not care for romance, as she knows already of the unsatisfactory ending. Salima spots a man approaching the bar, Mr Harari. Salima and Sophie tease Josephine about Mr Harari. Josephine rounds on Sophie, reminding her that she is ruined and men want a woman who is complete - something Sophie will never be. Sophie is upset and Mama sends Josephine out. She tells Sophie to stand up to Josephine.

Plot Summary



Jenny Jules
Photo: Tristram Kenton

Alone with Sophie, Mama asks her to count last night's takings. Sophie begins. She finds Mama's rough diamond in the box and asks about it. Mama tells her it is her insurance policy against the war. Sophie suggests to Mama that she could charge a little more for beer, so they could save up for a new generator. Mama admires Sophie's quickness with numbers but pauses to ask if she has indeed counted everything. Sophie says she has but Mama suddenly reaches inside Sophie's top and produces the bundle of notes hidden there. Angry, Mama threatens to throw Sophie out onto the street. But Sophie begs to stay and tells Mama her why she is saving - there is an operation available to repair the damage on her body inflicted by the soldiers. Mama relents. She takes the money from Sophie and puts it back in the box, congratulating her on being the first girl bold enough to steal from her.

Scene 6

In the bar, the next morning. Josephine is struggling with a drunk miner, whilst Salima sneaks food from under the bar. Christian enters, winded and on edge, covered in dirt. Mama comes to greet him. Christian tells her the white pastor has been killed by Commander Osembenga's soldiers, brutally cut up beyond recognition. Christian asks for a whiskey and Mama is surprised. He gulps down the whiskey and talks about the murder, there were no witnesses and nobody seems to know anything. He criticises the militia - ignorant country boys who don a uniform and assume control. He demands another whiskey - not a Fanta. He knows that killing a missionary means bad things for the conflict. Mama dismisses this - another dead man and she still has a business to run - but she seems overwhelmed. Christian asks Mama to leave with him, to go to Kinshasa, set up a business, the two of them. Mama isn't convinced.

Suddenly Fortune and Simon, two ragged soldiers enter. Fortune is carrying an iron pot. They are very on edge. They ask if this is the place of Mama Nadi - she in turn confirms this. They ask for a meal and a beer and she demands that they empty their weapons and they agree. Sophie enters, noticing the soldiers and the caution in the atmosphere. The soldiers greet her politely. Sophie goes to bring water for the soldiers to wash up.

Mama enquires after the soldiers' origins. They tell her they fight for Commander Osembenga. Fortune asks Mama if Salima is here. Christian starts to answer but Mama cuts him off, asking why the men are looking for her. Fortune gives a description of Salima, convinced Mama is hiding her - he is Salima's husband. Mama coolly tells him she will enquire inside, and exits into the back. Simon



David Ajala and Damola Adelaja
Photo: Tristram Kenton

Call me names, but there's still no Salima here. I think maybe the woman you are looking for is dead.

Mama

Act One, Scene 6

reassures his friend that they will find his wife. A man on the road had described Salima and they are convinced that she is at Mama Nadi's.

Mama re-enters and tells the soldiers that no one has heard of Salima: the soldiers are mistaken looking for her here. Fortune accuses Mama of lying - he is adamant she is here. He tells Mama to tell Salima that he will be back for her, and the men leave. Christian scolds Mama with his eyes.

ACT TWO

Scene 1

Fortune stands outside the bar, waiting. Inside, the girls entertain drunk customers, soldiers and a miner. Mama and Sophie sing: despite the atrocities of war, the door never closes at Mama's place. Josephine dances, beginning playfully; but her dancing becomes more frenzied as she releases her anger. Overwhelmed, reliving her attack in a painful flashback, she claws at the air. Sophie goes to her aid. Meanwhile, Christian is at the bar, drunk and struggling to remain upright.

Scene 2

In the back room at the bar. Josephine sleeps. Salima is looking at her pregnant stomach and, as Mama enters, quickly hides it under her clothing. Mama asks Salima to go out and entertain the customers. She is reluctant, so Mama wakes Josephine, who obliges, in a bad mood at being woken. Salima asks Mama if Fortune is still outside. Mama tells her that he is. Salima cannot understand why he won't leave - she doesn't want him to see her. Sophie knows he won't leave until he sees her - she believes he still loves her. But Mama coldly dismisses the romance of this idea - one day, it will turn bad, the questions will come, a man not understanding the violation of his wife by other men. Sophie argues but Mama reminds her that Fortune left Salima for dead: this is her home now. The simple life the girls remembered in the village has gone now. Mama tells Sophie she has read too many romance novels.

Mama goes to send Fortune away. Sophie urges Salima to talk to Fortune, but Salima resists, as Fortune does not know she is pregnant. Salima recounts the story of her brutal attack by the soldiers to Sophie, which happened whilst Fortune was buying her a new cooking pot. The soldiers gang-raped her in the garden and killed her baby by stamping on its head. Nobody in the village came to her aid. Salima recalls the moment just before

Plot Summary



Michelle Asante, Kehinde Fadipe, Pippa Bennett-Warner and Akintayo Akinbode
Photo: Tristram Kenton

I'm not being cruel, but your simple life, the one you remember, that...Yeah the one you're so fond of...it's vapour, Cherie. It's gone.

Mama

Act Two, Scene 2

the attack, before everything changed. She tells Sophie that the baby she is pregnant with is not Fortune's. She remembers with pain how his family disowned her after the attack - Fortune beat her ankles. She cannot see him now.

Scene 3

Fortune stands outside the bar in the rain. Mama comes out and advises him to leave - the woman he is looking for is not here. Fortune tells Mama to tell Salima that he loves her. He gives Mama the iron cooking pot for her - it is the pot he had gone to town to get on the day of her attack. Mama scorns his gift, once again telling Fortune to leave, as two drunk government soldiers tumble out of the bar.

Josephine comes out to call the soldiers back, but they leave. Simon appears, out of breath. He tells Fortune that Commander Osembenga is gathering his forces and they will be moving on to the next village tomorrow. They have to leave, but Fortune cannot bring himself to leave Salima. Simon will go inside with Josephine and try to find Salima and have some fun at the same time. Fortune is repulsed at the idea. Simon tells him to give up on Salima - if Fortune stays, he will be killed by the rebel militia, and his fellow soldiers are mocking him, chasing his 'impure' wife. This last comment makes Fortune angry and they struggle, briefly. Simon tells Fortune to be angry at the men who took his wife instead of him, and urges him to kill the rebels to avenge them. Fortune is troubled, he just wants his wife and family back. Simon leaves with a warning that they have been ordered to kill all deserters - he tells his friend Salima is gone.

Scene 4

Christian, drunk, recounts a story of the violence of war and the evil of Commander Osembenga. Mr Harari, Mama and Sophie listen, until Mama quietens Christian - his opinions are dangerous.

Two rebel soldiers enter from the back, with Josephine and Jerome Kisémbé following. Jerome is on edge. He pushes Josephine away. Mama greets Jerome who tells her that Commander Osembenga has been giving the rebel militia trouble, having set fire to several of their villages, and take machetes to anything that moves. The rebels have been forced deeper into the bush. Josephine spots Mr Harari and is at once torn as to where she should place her affection. Meanwhile Jerome issues a threat to Commander Osembenga - his troops will fight him.



Joel Kangudi, Lucian Msamati, Okezie Morro and Silas Carson
Photo: Tristram Kenton

They say we are the renegades. We don't respect the rule of law...but how else do we protect ourselves against their aggression? Huh? How do we feed our families? Ay? They bring soldiers from Uganda, drive us from our land and make us refugees...and then turn us into criminals when we protest or try to protect ourselves.

Jerome Kisémbé
Act Two, Scene 4

Jerome continues his diatribe against the evils of Commander Osembenga, stating that they are only rebels because they do not respect the official rule of law, which has shown itself to be brutal and have no regard for mercy. Mama drinks to the truth of this. Christian hesitantly does the same.

Mr Harari introduces himself to Jerome and buys the rebel leader a drink. Mama encourages the rebel men to stay and enjoy the evening, but the men leave, with action in mind. There is a huge sense of relief at their departure.

Christian does a crude impression of Jerome, and the girls laugh, Sophie playing along. Unseen, Commander Osembenga enters with Laurent, a sullen young soldier. Abruptly Christian stops dancing. The Commander asks about the truck he just saw leaving the bar as he arrived. Christian tells a lie about an aid worker. The Commander is unconvinced and remarks on the vehicle - expensive-looking.

Mama enters and greets the Commander nervously, anxiously glancing at the door. There would surely be trouble if the rebel leader returned. The Commander settles down for a drink, complimenting Mama. She asks him about any trouble with Jerome Kisémbé. The Commander dismisses this 'trouble' - he states he is close to shutting down Kisémbé's rebel militia, they are chasing him down. The Commander accuses Kisémbé's men of committing atrocities at the local hospital, even removing one man's heart: they force his hand to retaliate with force. Sophie brings them drinks but cringes visibly at the thought of this violent man. The Commander calls her back over, but Sophie

Plot Summary



Pippa Bennett-Warner
Photo: Tristram Kenton

tries to pry herself loose. Christian moves to assist but the Commander persists with Sophie on his lap, struggling to get free. Mama takes notice, calling Sophie away but the Commander pulls her back. A struggle ensues as Sophie pushes him away. Mama promises him other women, but he insists on Sophie. Sophie spits at his feet and declares 'I am dead.' Mama is horrified and the Commander is furious. Mama does her best to placate the situation and the Commander eventually relents - but only if Mama will accompany him outside. She knows what this means and acquiesces.

Mama re-enters, and slaps Sophie hard across the face, ordering her to go out to the Commander and give him some pleasure. Christian is shocked but Mama knows how dangerous the situation is - offending the Commander is no light matter and is damaging to her business. Christian balks at her use of the word 'business'. Mama is indignant, criticising his hypocrisy: he is happy to drink at her bar but now he questions her morals because she runs it. She tells of her struggle to survive, to build a business from nothing: she was not always Mama Nadi, but had to find her. Christian makes to leave. She warns that he'll be back when he wants another beer. Christian disagrees: he won't be back.

Scene 5

The Commander and Laurent stumble, laughing, out of the bar. They meet Fortune, who tells them he has seen Jerome Kisémbé inside Mama Nadi's bar and that she was hiding him. The Commander is incensed. Fortune tells him that Mama is also hiding his wife. The Commander and Laurent exit quickly, in pursuit of Jerome Kisémbé.

Scene 6

Dawn at the bar. Mr Harari paces, ready to leave and awaiting a lift out of the area with an aid worker. Mama wipes down a bar and offers him a drink whilst he waits, which he accepts. He is very anxious to leave this war-torn area. He talks about the nature of the war and the difficulty in having to befriend both everybody and nobody at the same time. Mama brushes it away, believing nothing will actually change in the end and so the fighting is futile. Mr Harari expresses his concern for girls like Sophie and makes to leave. Mama stops him quickly, and asks him to sell the diamond: he will take Sophie with him and give her the money from the diamond. He does not entirely understand why but agrees. Mama calls Sophie, but before she can appear, Mr Harari has left in the car, taking the rough diamond with him.



Lucian Msamati and Jenny Jules
Photo: Tristram Kenton

Love. What's the point in all this shit? Love is too fragile a sentiment for out here. Think about what happens to the things we 'love'. How easily they're snatched from us. It isn't worth it.

Mama

Act Two, Scene 7

Fortune enters with Commander Osembenga and soldiers. He stands over Mama and accuses her of hiding Jerome Kitembe. She denies all knowledge, calling Fortune crazy. Once again the Commander challenges her to reveal Kitembe's whereabouts but again she denies all knowledge. She offers the Commander a drink but he refuses. The soldiers raid the bar, finding Mama's lock box. They break it open and take all the money. They throw Sophie, Mama and Josephine onto the floor - they will only stop if Mama tells him where Kitembe is hiding. Josephine, desperate, reveals that he was indeed here.

Just then, Salima enters, a pool of blood forming in the middle of her dress; blood drips down her legs. She screams at the soldiers. They stop abruptly, shocked. Fortune sees Salima and rushes towards her. Mama calls urgently for some hot water to help Salima, trying to keep her alive. Salima dies.

Scene 7

Some time later, in the bar. Sophie sweeps the floor, singing. Mama stands at the door, trying to attract customers. It does not come. She despairs at the state of business now. Times are hard.

Christian enters in a new suit. Mama pretends not to be pleased to see him, concealing her excitement. They greet each other sarcastically, but not without affection. Christian has managed to bribe his way past the road block and is surprised to find Mama is still here. Mama brushes this away, instead criticising Christian's ill-fitting clothes. He flirts with her.

Sophie enters and hugs her uncle. He has brought her a book and a letter from her mother, though he tells her not to expect too much from the latter. Sophie is shocked to receive a letter at all, and exits to read it alone.

Mama expresses her surprise at seeing Christian again, after their last encounter. He fights with himself, but believes they have unfinished business. He once again asks Mama to settle down with him. Again she refuses and tries to change the subject, but he persists, hard. Finally she admits why she cannot: she is ruined. Christian absorbs her words but does not leave. He comforts Mama in his arms and will not let her push him away. He kisses her. Finally, they dance together, Sophie and Josephine watching on.



The Almeida Theatre empty stage
Photo: Bridget Jones

A BRIEF HISTORY:
The Almeida Theatre seats 325 people, and re-opened in 2003 after extensive refurbishment. The building dates back to 1837, and was originally the Islington Scientific and Literary Institution. During the war it was used as a Salvation Army Citadel, and was later a toy factory, before it was converted into a theatre in the late 1970s.

Design is one of the most thrilling aspects of theatre craft. The look of a show helps to set mood, atmosphere, time and place. Design elements for any production include set, lighting, sound and music.

At the Almeida Theatre the set design is the first and last thing the audience sees. As soon as the audience enters they can see the set and this, together with any sound effects, or music, will begin to determine how they will experience the production. This initial impression helps to set the tone for the story to come.

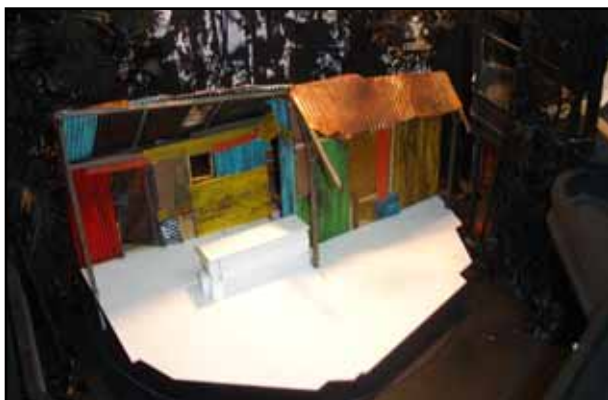
The designer, therefore, has to consider what impression he wants to make on the audience before the play begins. The designer will look for clues in the play text and will liaise with the director and the playwright about these.

There are also practical considerations for the designer, such as how big the stage is; what kind of flexibility is required in terms of entrances and exits; and whether the play is set in a specific time period. The designer often has to be very creative designing a set which calls for several different locations.

Designing for the Almeida Theatre

The Almeida Theatre was not purpose-built as a theatre so does not have the specialised architectural features which typify most purpose-built performance venues: a flytower, orchestra pit, wings, offstage area (indeed our 'back stage' is actually 'sub-stage' in the excavated basement directly below the stage floor). This means that our designers and production teams have to come up with ingenious solutions to create innovative sets in our 'found space'.

The building is famous for its large curved brick wall at the back of the stage. This feature of the building is used as part of the set design for many of the Almeida's productions. Even when the actual wall is not visible in the set, the brickwork is often echoed as a feature in the design.



Ruined Model Box
Set in various configurations. Clockwise from below left: Mama Nadi's bar (interior), sleeping quarters, exterior.
Design: Robert Jones

The designer for *Ruined* is Robert Jones.

For *Ruined*, a highly realistic set, full of detail, has been created to make the audience feel very much part of the action, as if they are immersed in the Ituri Rainforest in the northeast of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The play is set over the period of a couple of months in Mama Nadi's bar, in three distinct locations: inside the bar proper,

outside its front door, and in the women's sleeping quarters to the rear. To create these three locations a mechanical revolve has been incorporated into the design, with a concertina effect allowing the full half the stage to be visible at once in each scene, whilst the other two locations are ingeniously compressed behind, and unfold when the revolve is turned accordingly.

Director Indhu Rubasingham was keen to create as much of a realistic impression of Mama Nadi's bar as possible, so as not to divert the audience's attention from the principal story at hand, nor to distract from or indeed fictionalise the very real, very current, situation faced by its characters in the play. The set is surrounded by jungle, lifelike all but sprayed black; this was a deliberate decision to enclose the world of the play inside the playing space, and to give an impression of the isolation of the bar in the Ituri's jungle environs.

Lynn Nottage had previously visited the area - and indeed spoke to many women in the course of writing the play - and her photographer husband, Tony Gerber, had taken many photographs depicting the environment, people, buildings and images of war. These gave the design team real clues as to how the play should look, particularly in terms of costume, architecture, colour and tone; the latter two were particularly influential in the lighting, and the atmosphere the cohesive design needed to create. Sound and music has also been very important within the framework of the design, and sound designer Christopher Shutt created a soundscape of jungle sounds, subtly adding a further element of realism to the set.

The revolve itself adds to the flow of the action, particularly during scene transitions, with several involving action continuing as the revolve moves, creating an almost filmic effect of continuous action. This maintains the flow of the drama and adds to the tension mounting between scenes as the drama - and the conflict outside the bar - escalates.

Because the set is technically very complex, the designer storyboarded the scenes early on in the production process, with a view to the technical team understanding clearly how the revolve needed to be programmed - as with any technical element of a design, be it lighting, sound or costume, there is no room for error and a heavy revolve is certainly not something easy to adjust mid-way through a show: preparation is everything, an element of the rehearsal process in itself.



Indhu Rubasingham in rehearsal
Photo: Tristram Kenton

Director Indhu Rubasingham answers 10 questions in detail about her production of *Ruined*.

Almeida Projects: Why did you decide to direct *Ruined*?

Indhu Rubasingham: It was actually the relationship with the writer and believing in the writing. I decided to direct *Ruined* because I had met Lynn and worked with Lynn on her last play, *Fabulation*, which we did at the Tricycle Theatre. We had an incredible working relationship and got on really well, but I also really believed in her writing – I thought it was amazing, clever, specific and theatrical, and saying something interesting. When we were doing *Fabulation*, she was working on *Ruined*, so she was

telling me about it at that time, and then she sent me a draft. It was a fantastic play and of course I wanted to do it, but I'd known it was going to be a good play regardless, because I believed in her as a playwright.

AP: What attracts you to the Almeida Theatre? What appeals to you about the space

IR: What's lovely about the Almeida's space is its relationship with the audience. It's very intimate and you can really create a world which the audience can be part of – and yet it's also quite a big space, so you can put on a 'big' play. So it's about the audience: it feels like a very strong relationship between the stage and the audience which is very exciting as a director.

AP: Why do you think *Ruined* is relevant to audiences now?

IR: I think *Ruined* is a really important play because it sheds light and it shines a torch on something which we as a society, as a community, are choosing to ignore and turn our head away from. So it's an important play because it makes us have to look at a society and issues that are going on in a part of the world that there's an international responsibility for. Even though it's set in the Congo, I think it's also universal about what we ignore - what we choose not to look at - and how women are abused in many situations around the world. It was interesting because someone who came to see it said to me 'I know this is about the Congo but it's so good to see a play which is led by women and you see how they have to deal with men and the situation they're in'. And then she said 'Because I feel like that happens in London'. Obviously not to the extreme that it does in *Ruined*, but it was interesting that she found she could really relate the play to here. I hadn't seen that, but of course it's about sexual politics and how we abuse them.

AP: What research do you do before rehearsals begin?

IR: Whenever I've done plays that have been set in a different part of the world, I love to go to that part of the world, just so you can see all the land and smell the air. I did talk to the Almeida about going to Congo but it's not the safest place. So I couldn't do that for this play, but that's what I love to do in terms of research: be in the land, meet the people. But then it's generally reading around the subject. My main form of research here is the writer, because obviously she has all the research and the ideas of why she wrote the play, so I met her and talked to her at length; then watched documentaries that Lynn recommended, read round, internet research... I'd have to be honest I found this a hard play to research because I read a bit about what was going on and, well, there's



Photo: Tony Gerber

only so much you can take in because it was too much, too harrowing.

AP: What's the world of the play like, in this production of *Ruined*?

IR: What we're hoping to create for the audience is that you're inside Mama Nadi's bar, that you feel her bar, that you feel the isolation in the jungle; it's as authentic as it possibly can be, that you can smell and feel it as realistically as possible.

AP: How did you go about understanding what life is like for women in the play?

IR: It was really hard. One of the things I kept saying to the actors is that we've got to take away our 'Western lens' from these characters, and we have to really engage with them as honestly and truthfully as we can. By that I meant that it's very easy in the West to think that everything's fine and to have strong opinions and values and to think, 'it's dreadful that these things happen'; but when society has broken down around you, you have to survive and so it's like taking away any sense of judgment. When something bad happens to us in the West it becomes a big deal, whereas these people, the women in particular, they have to get on – they can't indulge in what's happened to them and express those emotions in the way that we can here. So it was really trying to engage with how these women are survivors and are resilient rather than going into the emotional victim world, which I think we might presume; and that's what I meant about taking away the Western lens. How do these people survive? So it was an ideology: a real stripping away of our Western perspective to help engage with those characters. We also watched documentaries looking at women in the Congo. And we did a lot of movement with Coral, the choreographer, to shed our Western skin and get into the physicalisation of those characters and that world. What was great was the number of actors who were from Africa or had very strong connections with Africa and who could bring their experiences into the rehearsal room; we were really lucky that we also had an actor who was Congolese who could contribute hugely to the world of the play.

AP: None of the characters is entirely virtuous or entirely malicious. Why do you think this is?

IR: I've kind of answered this in the last question: it's how to survive and what cost you will take to survive that. I think in a way using those words as well, virtuous, it's again from a Western perspective; and it's very easy to have your morals and your belief system when life is fine. Take everything away

Interview with the Director



Photo: Tony Gerber

from you, strip everything bare, what do you need to do to survive? And that's what these characters are faced with, like what they need to do to survive on a day to day basis. It's like when we were rehearsing one of the end scenes, thinking about when one of the women gets raped: there's nowhere she can go to for help, she can't go to the police, she can't go to her family, so she can't stand there and say, 'that's really terrible that's happened to me', and scream about it, she then has to move on. Then also if you have been a victim of violence, what often happens is that violence becomes a known behaviour. So, you have to become hard and tough in order to survive. So it's not quite the right question: these characters are dealing with much more complex issues than trying to be 'good'.

AP: How is directing a new play different to working on other, older texts? What unique challenges does having the playwright in the rehearsal room pose?

IR: A lot of people ask me this and a lot of people think it's really problematic, and I don't understand that, personally! What's amazing about having the playwright in the room is that you have the direct source to hand, so instead of trying to

second guess what a dead author meant by a particular moment or a line or whatever, you've got that author there to tell you – it's a brilliant resource, it's just the best, really! But then equally with that, there's a possibility of changing little things or trying different things and seeing how they fit. Lynn's amenable and she also wanted to try new things for the actors in this production. Working on new writing, I've always found it really exciting working with a writer, because you're creating work as you're going and you don't know if it works... and it's just very exciting.

AP: What does this play mean to you, personally? What's your inspiration?

IR: This play reminds me of why I went into the theatre in my late teens. I remember seeing *The Normal Heart* which was a play by Larry Kramer about AIDS, when I was about 15 or so, and it really impacted on me: it was a really political, important piece of work. What *Ruined* is saying is something really important. It's a really brilliant play but it's also beyond being a really brilliant play: even before the play, it goes back to the women Lynn interviewed to get those stories, and then it's about the play and then it's about the actors. It's exactly why I think theatre can work and be important, and where I feel the most fulfilled, because artistically it's brilliant writing and politically it's a very important subject, and therefore it's showing an audience something they didn't know or didn't expect and need to know.



Lynn Nottage in rehearsal
Photo: Tristram Kenton

Lynn Nottage was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1964.

Her parents were a schoolteacher and a child psychologist. Keen on theatre from an early age, she attended New York's High School of Music and Art, before Brown University and Yale School of Drama. Her work often deals with the lives of African Americans and the struggles of women.

Apart from *Ruined*, *Intimate Apparel* is probably Nottage's best known play, centred on the story of an African-American woman's journey to independence, with her moving to New York to pursue her dreams and becoming a seamstress.

Fabulation, or the Re-Education of Undine could be seen as a thematic sequel to this, and once again involves an African-American woman dealing with change in New York. Undine is a successful publicist living in Manhattan until her husband leaves her taking all her money. She is forced to return to Brooklyn, to her former existence, and to deal with her working-class relatives.

Nottage was awarded the Guggenheim Grant for Playwriting in 2005. In 2007 Nottage won the MacArthur Foundation Genius Grant and the National Black Theatre Festival's August Wilson Playwriting Award. *Ruined* itself won several high-profile awards including an Obie for Best New American Play in 2008 and the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 2009.

Lynn Nottage is a visiting lecturer at Yale School of Drama and sits on The Dramatists Guild Council, an alumna of new American dramatists.

Selected Plays

- 1993 *Poof*
- 1995 *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*
- 1998 *Mud, River, Stone*
Por'Knockers
- 2002 *Las Meninas*
- 2003 *Intimate Apparel*
- 2004 *Fabulation, or the Re-Education of Undine*
- 2007 *Ruined*

Lynn Nottage writes here about the journey she went on in in search of *Ruined*.

Six years ago, I travelled to East Africa to interview Congolese women fleeing the armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo. I was fuelled by my desire to tell the story of war, but through the eyes of women, who as we know rarely start conflicts, but inevitably find themselves right smack in the middle of them. I was interested in giving voice and audience to African women living in the shadows of war.

The circumstances in the DRC are complicated; there is a slow simmering armed conflict that continues to be fought on several fronts, even though the war officially ended in 2002. You have one war being fought for natural resources between militias funded by the government and industry, you have the remnants of an ethnic war, which is the residue of the genocide in Rwanda that spilled over the border into Congo, and then you have the war that I examine in my play *Ruined*, which is the war being waged against women. To throw some statistics at you, according to International Rescue Committee, nearly 5.4 million people have died in that country since that conflict began; every month, 45,000 Congolese people die from hunger, preventable disease and violence related to war. The fact is the war in Congo is the deadliest conflict since World War II. It is sometimes called World War III, because of the international interests that fuel the conflict in order to exploit the land, which is rich in minerals such as gold, coltan, copper and diamonds.



Photos: Tony Gerber

In 2004 I went to East Africa to collect the narratives of Congolese women, because I knew their stories weren't being heard. I had no idea what play I would find in that war-torn landscape, but I travelled to the region, because I wanted to paint a three dimensional portrait of the women caught in the middle of armed conflicts; I wanted to understand who they were beyond their status as victims.



Photos: Tony Gerber

I was surprised by the number of women who readily wanted to share their stories. One by one, through tears and in voices just above a whisper, they recounted raw, revealing stories of sexual abuse and torture at the hands of both rebel soldiers and government militias. The word rape was a painful refrain, repeated so often it made me physically sick. By the end of the interviews I realised that a war was being fought over the bodies of women. Rape was being used as a weapon to punish and destroy communities. In listening to their narratives I came to terms with the extent to which their bodies had become battlefields.

Lynn Nottage on *Ruined*



Photo: Tony Gerber

I remember the strong visceral response that I had to the very first Congolese woman who shared her story. Her name was Salima, and she related her story in such graphic detail that I remember wanting to cry out for her to stop, but I knew that she had a need to be heard. She'd walked miles from her refugee camp to share her story with a willing listener. Salima described being dragged from her home, arrested and wrongfully imprisoned by men seeking to arrest her husband. In prison she was beaten and raped by five soldiers. She finally bribed her way out of prison, only to discover that her husband and two of her four children were abducted. At the time of the interview she still had not learned the whereabouts of her husband and two children. I found my play *Ruined* in the painful narratives of Salima and the other Congolese women, in their gentle cadences and the monumental space between their gasps and sighs. I also found my play in the way they occasionally accessed their smiles, as if glimpsing beyond their wounds into the future.

“My play is not about victims, but survivors.”

In *Ruined* Mama Nadi gives three young woman refuge and an unsavoury means of survival. As such, the women do a fragile dance between hope and disillusionment in an attempt to navigate life on the edge of an unforgiving conflict. My play is not about victims, but survivors. *Ruined* is also the story of the Congo. A country blessed with an abundance of natural beauty and resources, which has been its blessing and its curse.

Lynn Nottage, April 2010.

In the Rehearsal Room



Akintayo Akinbode in rehearsal
Photo: Tristram Kenton

Everyone talk talk diamonds, but I...I want a powerful slip of paper that says I can cut down forests and dig holes and build to the moon if I choose. I don't want someone to turn up at my door and take my life from me.

Mama

Act One, Scene 2

Assistant Director Abigail Graham talks us through the process from page to stage in her rehearsal diary.

Week One

How do you begin to tackle a play that explores the effect of a brutal civil war on the women of the Democratic Republic of the Congo? A war where, as the Amnesty International saying goes 'Rape is Cheaper than Bullets'; where there are no rules and where it is safer for women to work as a prostitute in a brothel than it is for them to live in their villages where they are taken without regard? You dive straight into the play, balancing the research with laughter and playing in the rehearsal room.

After the initial read through on day 1, Rob Jones, the designer, explained the model box to the cast and creative team. The set is incredibly authentic and this authenticity is going to be carried through to the costumes – the women's dresses are to be made by an African dressmaker in Brixton, not a traditional theatre costume maker.

Playwright Lynn Nottage and I had each prepared some research for the actors to take away and read outside of the rehearsal room. For example, we gave them information on the civil war on sexual violence in the region and a list of all of the places mentioned in the play and information surrounding them in relation to their characters. We also stuck a map of the DRC and pictures of relevant places onto the rehearsal room wall.

After lunch, director Indhu Rubasingham and the cast dove straight into Act One, Scene 1, finding the emotional shape of the scene, what each character is doing to the other, what emotional impact their lines have on all of the people in the scene. Many directors would do this sat around a table, but Indhu does it on her feet, allowing her to guide the actors into physically finding it themselves. We continued to work through the play in this way and by the end of the week, we'd got through the whole play.

In addition, someone from Amnesty International came to speak to us on the second day to answer any specific questions we may have had, and watched an enlightening but upsetting documentary called *The Greatest Silence*. Our Musical Director and Drummer Tayo has also been working with the members of the company who sing, teaching them songs and helping their voices to become more Congolese.

The physical language of the Congolese people is the opposite of us Londoners. Where as we are closed, upright and private, they are open and lead from the



Jenny Jules in rehearsal
Photo: Tristram Kenton

While I'm singing, I'm praying the pain will be gone, but what those men did to me lives inside of my body. Every step I take I feel them in me. Punishing me. And it will be that way for the rest of my life.

Sophie

Act One, Scene 3

pelvis. Coral Messam (choreographer) put the actors through their paces over the course of a very sweaty 2 hours. The majority of the play takes place in the bar of Mama Nadi, where the women's singing and dancing entertain soldiers and miners. It is vital that the characters dance and move like they are in a bar along a remote road in the Congo and not on Upper Street. I've got a feeling Coral is going to be coming in quite a bit!

The movement work, coupled with Indhu's inclusive rehearsal methods means that the ensemble forms really quickly. The relationships are effortlessly beginning to look like they have a history.

I have never worked on a play as emotionally hard hitting as this, nor have I been in a rehearsal room where there is so much laughter and lightness. I think I speak for everyone involved in the production as I write, thank goodness for that.

Week Two

This week has been a little unusual in that one of our actresses has been absent due to injury. She sustained this on a previous job and after an investigation, she was immediately operated on. Sadly the recovery time needed after the operation means that she has had to withdraw from the production and the role will need to be re-cast – not something that usually happens midway through rehearsals!

This week, I was reminded how fragile people, and hence theatre is. However, unlike us, the people of the DRC do not have time to indulge their fragility or their emotions. The lives of the characters in the play depend on them being resilient to the traumas they encounter. Some of the scenes are very upsetting, much of this week was spent, reminding ourselves of the cultural context, remembering the women in the Greatest Silence Documentary and how they just carry on despite being raped and maimed, removing any emotional indulgence or sentimentality from bits that we, as Westerners, find upsetting.

We also went through the scenes at a slightly slower pace than in the first week, working out what is happening to all involved from moment to moment, stopping every half a page to unpack responses and try different ones.

Coral was in for more movement sessions, putting the company through their paces as well as choreographing specific dances that are in the play. We also had a dialect coach in. She had visited the Congolese Embassy and recorded a Congolese woman speaking in

In the Rehearsal Room



Michelle Asante, Steve Toussaint and Kedinde Fadipe in rehearsal
Photo: Tristram Kenton

My father was chief! The most important man in the village, and when the soldiers raided us, who was kind to me? Huh?

Josephine
Act One, Scene 3

English. The accent has a slight French lilt to it and each actor has been given a CD and will be having individual dialect sessions.

By Saturday, we had recast. Pippa Bennett-Warner is in her third year at RADA, this is an amazing opportunity for her, and she is a great actress who luckily for us, can sing and looks perfect!

Week Three

The wonderful thing about the way that Indhu works is that it is light, inclusive and whilst she and everyone works very hard, she makes sure no one takes it or themselves too seriously. The room is full of laughter, there is no space for egocentric behaviour and as a result the ensemble forms very quickly. Thus, Pippa was welcomed in with open arms and made part of the family very quickly.

Despite Pippa only having had the script for four days, Indhu and the team did not put the breaks on as we had a lot to catch up on. We started rehearsing the play again from the beginning, working at double speed so that the characters were growing; the play was progressing but also so that Pippa could catch up. She also spent a lot of time with Tayo learning the songs, and learning how to de-westernise her voice.

The actors have also begun to improvise the off stage moments which make the scenes more truthful.

By Thursday we did our first stagger through of the play and it was brilliant. Due to the pace at which Indhu works and



Pippa Bennett-Warner in rehearsal
Photo: Tristram Kenton

Everyone looks dangerous to me, until I've shared a drink with them.

Commander Osembenga

Act One, Scene 4

how inclusive and non-academic her approach is, all of the actors seemed very confident and comfortable at all times.

It was great to see how much we'd achieved as well as how far we have to go. The skeleton is there, everyone is telling the same story and the characters are beginning to seem real. I can safely say it's the best stagger through I've ever seen. Thankfully though, there's a long way to go as we've got 2 more weeks of rehearsal and a week of previews left to refine the play.

Rather than doing notes, Indhu worked them into her rehearsal. This takes the pressure off the company and reminds them that it's just part of the journey of making a play.

Sydney Florence, the costume supervisor, has begun to do costume fittings and everyone seems really happy.

The play also needs six supernumeraries. These are non-speaking parts who serve to make the scenes fuller and more lifelike. The challenge has been finding people who can act but are looking for the experience of being part of a professional company. This is not as easy as it may sound. The casting is very specific, they need to look Congolese, they need to be able to pick things up quickly. We've decided to go for 2 teams of 3 to cover the run. I met 30 people, and of those only 5 are suitable. Luckily, we have 2 more weeks!

Week Four

In the play, the war encroaches closer and closer into the bar. We spent much of this week reminding ourselves of the outside circumstances and what that would do to the characters.

Indhu also introduced structured improvisations into scene rehearsals. Her process has been focused on clear storytelling and finding the emotional truth of the relationships. The improvisations have helped to clarify both of these things as well as to help the actors understand the thoughts behind each line.

We've also been doing specific exercises on scenes to layer them more effectively. For example, in Mama and Christian's relationship in the first scene, we looked at removing the charm and charisma and making it purely about business. We then gradually re-introduced the charm and humour that comes so naturally to the actors.

In the Rehearsal Room



Silas Carson and Jenny Jules in rehearsal
Photo: Tristram Kenton

These ignorant country boys, who wouldn't be able to tell left from right, they put on a uniform and suddenly they're making decisions for us.

Christian

Act One, Scene 6

The final member of the acting company joined us this week. Joel plays a miner, and a government soldier. Joel was born in the Congo so has been really helpful when it comes to specific gestures, the accent and movement. Just like with Pippa, he has been welcomed with open arms and by Wednesday, it was like he'd always been there.

Coral continued to make the actors sweat in movement sessions and it is really paying off; the dances and the way in which the characters move generally is very far removed from how they did when we began rehearsing. We've been looking at YouTube clips to help and there is a real authenticity to the way we are physically telling the story.

We ran the play on Thursday and it was incredible to see how much the play had grown in a week. The scenes have much more detail in them; there is a real sense of the world outside of the bar; it is much easier to see who holds the power and status in each scene and the bar is beginning to feel very real.

This time Indhu did a note session and worked the notes into the scenes. It is so exciting to see the play take shape and to witness the world come to life.

Week Five

This week has been about detail. Literally going from beat to beat, making sure that we are telling the story of what happens moment to moment as clearly as possible. As there is a lot happening in the bar scenes, each character's individual story is more complex to tell. We are lucky to have the luxury of a fifth week, so we can afford to spend two hours on a 20 minute scene; working out how to tell a story



Pippa Bennett-Warner in rehearsal
Photo: Tristram Kenton

But if you want to go back out there, go, but they, your village, your people, they won't understand. Oh, they'll say they will, but they won't. Because you know, underneath everything, they will be thinking she's damaged. She's been had by too many men.

Mama

Act Two, Scene 1

with a look or glance away, working out exactly when is the best moment for a character to enter or exit in order to tell their story and the story of the scene in the best way possible.

By the time we got to the run through on Thursday, the play was in incredible shape. There were a few people who had not seen the play but need to, for example head of wardrobe and the Almeida's Artistic Director Michael Attenborough. Judging by the emotional reactions from our audience, we're feeling quietly confident that we're doing a good job.

A short note session followed and we worked through the scenes quickly to bed the notes in. In certain places Indhu asked the actors to pull back, in certain places to remember the layers we'd worked on the week before. In some cases, helping a scene reach it's potential was as simple as taking the air out and shortening the pauses.

By Friday lunchtime we'd found our final supernumery. A big sigh of relief all round. Looking forward to introducing them to the company and rehearsing them in, as frankly, as much as I've enjoyed (!) playing a Congolese miner and prostitute I think it's best for all involved if the people who are going to be playing them on stage step into the breach!

Tech Week and Previews

Ruined is a very technical play. There's a revolve, the sound of the rainforest and a battle which storms the stage to name a few technical challenges. We've had three 12hr days to tech the show. We work as fast as we can, often going over moments several times ensuring that it looks right and that the actors are safe. But, by the time we get to first preview, we're ready. The play has a shape and the actors are looking forward to it. The audience response was fantastic. We only rehearsed one bow but the audience wouldn't stop clapping until the cast re appeared. The whole auditorium was on it's feet. It was an amazing thing to witness.

The hardest bits to get right are the transitions between scenes and we continued to refine those during our week of previews. The creative and production team come in at 10 and we work sections without the actors until 2. Then we neatly slot the actors in. Once that's done, Indhu works notes with the cast. This process continues until press night. I feel we have done justice to the stories of the people of the DRC and everyone involved is very pleased with what we have achieved.

The following section provides background material on the play, including key themes and social and historical context.



The Democratic Republic of Congo is a vast country in central Africa, one rich in economic resources; and yet the country is one of the worlds poorest, with a long history of rife corruption and civil war.

The first European known to have visited the region was Portuguese navigator Diogo Cao in 1482 who established ties with the then King of Kongo. During the 16th and 17th centuries, British, Dutch, Portuguese and French merchants engaged in the slave trade.

In 1884 European powers recognised King Leopold II's claim and he announced himself head of the 'Congo Free State'. King Leopold expanded and consolidated his control and exploitation of the region at the cost of millions of deaths of Congolese people.

Known as Zaire until 1997, the DRC has faced constant civil unrest, with government corruption widespread and militia groups forming and fragmenting and re-forming almost constantly over the last century. The region is made up of several peoples, notably the Hutus and Tutsis. As the power structures oscillated between the various interest groups, often reinforced by the control or influence of residual colonial powers, so communities of exiled and refugee populations were established throughout the region, many of whom formed armed groups and rebel factions within and across country borders. Other countries in the region and further afield also fuelled conflict through the

These idiots keep changing the damn rules on us. You file papers, and the next day the office is burned down. You buy land, and the next day the Chief's son has built a fucking house on it. I don't know why anybody bothers. Madness.

Mr Harari

Act One, Scene 2

profitable arms trade and the exploitation and control of the region's rich mineral deposits. The country was a Belgian colony until 1960, whereupon independence brought the country immediately into an army mutiny and a bold attempt at secession by the province of Katanga, an area hugely rich in natural mineral wealth.

In 1961, the then prime minister, Patrice Lumumba, was seized and killed by troops loyal to army chief Joseph Mobutu. Mobutu himself seized power in 1965, when he renamed the country Zaire and himself Mobutu Sese Seko. He turned the country into a centre for campaigns against the Soviet-backed Angola and in doing so guaranteed US backing. But he simultaneously made Zaire synonymous with corruption.

Following the Cold War, the US lost interest in Zaire and the country's internal corruption intensified. In 1997 neighbouring Rwanda invaded the country to flush out extremist Hutu militias. This gave a sharp boost to the anti-Mobutu rebels, who quickly captured the capital, Kinshasa, overthrew Mobutu's government, installing Laurent Kabila as president and renaming the country the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Despite the new government, political unrest continued apace. A new rebellion was provoked by a surging rift between Mr Kabila and his former allies, the latter backed by Rwanda and Uganda. Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe in turn took Kabila's side, and the whole country effectively became a battleground of continental proportions.

This conflict, known as the Second Congo War, raged between 1998 and 2003, and has been termed Africa's world war. The five-year war pitted government forces, supported by Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe, against rebel militia backed by Uganda and Rwanda. The war was one of the worst emergencies in Africa in recent decades and claimed approximately three million lives, in a combination of war violence or its by-products of disease and malnutrition.

Despite a peace deal and the formation of a transitional government in 2003, civil unrest has never entirely ceased. In 2008 an escalation of coup attempts and localised violence caused renewed fighting in the eastern part of the country. Thousands of civilians were displaced when Rwandan Hutu militias clashed with government forces. Another rebel militia group led by General Laurent Nkunda had signed a peace deal with the government, but clashes broke out just months later. Gen Nkunda's forces advanced the provincial capital Goma in the autumn, attacking government bases and causing civilians and troops to flee. UN peacekeepers desperately tried to hold the line alongside the remaining government forces. In January 2009 the government attempted to bring the situation under control by inviting in troops from neighbouring Rwanda to engage in a joint campaign against the rebel Hutu militias active in the east of the DRC. General Nkunda was arrested by Rwanda, who had until then seen him as a key ally. At present eastern areas remain beset by widespread localised violence.

This unending conflict may be in no small part due to the war's economic as well as political motivations. The country's vast mineral wealth is often at the centre of points of conflict, fuelling fighting by rival factions and splinter militia groups taking advantage of the continuing anarchy to make personal gain. The West's persistent reliance on technology manufacture demanding the Congo's mineral ores brings a sustained fan to the fire of a war turned in on itself.

CONGO FACTFILE



Full name: Democratic Republic of the Congo

Population: 66 million (UN, 2009)

Capital: Kinshasa

Area: 2.34 million sq km (905,354 sq miles)

Major languages: French, Lingala, Kiswahili, Kikongo, Tshiluba

Major religions: Christianity, Islam

Life expectancy: 46 years (men), 49 years (women) (UN)

Monetary unit: 1 Congolese franc = 100 centimes

Main exports: Diamonds, copper, coffee, cobalt, crude oil

GNI per capita: US \$150 (World Bank, 2008)

Amnesty International UK is working in partnership with the Almeida Theatre on for this production of *Ruined*. Amnesty provided the following article on the effect of the conflict on women in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

We have been campaigning to Stop Violence Against Women against the legal background of the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. One of our concerns has been the impact of conflict on women – most commonly reported as rape, though war and conflict affect women in many different ways. *Ruined* is about the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) but the effects of conflict on women are similar everywhere, be it in Northern Ireland, Israel/Occupied Territories, Balkans or Afghanistan.

During and after a conflict, civilians try to go about their normal daily lives – feeding their family, earning a living, seeking education, keeping healthy and maintaining a semblance of dignity and family life. All civilians, men, women and children, face great hurdles in trying to keep things together. But



Photo: Tony Gerber

the particular challenges faced by women are often poorly understood. In peace negotiations and reconstruction efforts, the policies, solutions and resources proposed often fail to target the root problems and traditionally focus on men, the returning soldiers. Women are usually completely absent from the decision-making process and their needs, and the key role they can play, are not highlighted in reconstruction programmes. UN Security Council Resolution 1325, passed in 2000, is very clear that we cannot expect to achieve a lasting, sustainable peace and economic regeneration unless the

whole society, including the at least 50% who are women, are able to play a full economic and political role in designing, delivering and implementing the peace. However, these are fine words which often fall short in practice.

A recent example was in Liberia, where there were many women ex-combatants. Some had chosen to join armed groups, others were abducted; almost all suffered mass rape, were often forced to act as 'army wives' and bore many children. In the first attempted peace initiatives, the UN programme of disarmament and re-integration, conceived by men, failed to factor in the experiences of these women ex-combatants. Some well-intentioned reintegration initiatives offered access to education and training, and to small funds to start income-generating schemes. To benefit from these schemes, ex-combatants had to come forward, hand in their weapon and declare themselves ex-combatants. In many cases, however, the women had either not been given weapons or male commanders had taken them away. As a result it was almost exclusively men who benefited from the programmes. The training and education schemes, with no childcare, were set up in locations and at times making it difficult or unsafe for women to attend.

Women were deterred from declaring themselves ex-combatants as they faced being stigmatised and ostracised in their communities – either because they might have committed violent acts, or because they had been raped. The UN initiatives did not take account of the reality and severity of stigma against such women, or offer any measures to tackle it.



Photo: Tony Gerber

NUMBERS: IN THE KIVU PROVINCES

About **1600** women are raped every week, mainly by armed men.

More than **8000** cases of rape were reported in 2009.

At least **1,350,000** people are displaced; around **1,000,000** of these were displaced in 2009.

Source: UN Office of Humanitarian Affairs, 9 February 2010

Encouragingly, many local women are taking the initiative and developing schemes to help women rebuild their lives and those of their children, to the advantage of the local community and economy. The most successful of these precisely address the need to create safe women-only spaces to tackle stigma. They also always include income-generating schemes to give women some independence, as they are often rejected by the men on whom they have traditionally depended. Such schemes not only benefit the women themselves but also strengthen the long-term economic stability of their communities. Their income generation is usually reinvested in local businesses and their community, which raises the general standard of living, creates employment and stimulates trade and stability. According to the World Bank Gender Action Plan: 'A host of studies suggest that putting earnings in women's hands is the intelligent thing to do to speed up development and the process of overcoming poverty. Women usually reinvest a much higher portion in their families and communities than men, spreading wealth beyond themselves. This could be one reason why countries with greater gender equality tend to have lower poverty rates.'

Rape: A Weapon of War

There is a tendency to assume that rape is a natural fallout of war, or a few bad apples running wild. In fact, during wars, attacks on civilians have always been termed War Crimes but it was never taken that seriously. The use of rape as a systematic tactic of warfare though only began to be really widely recognised in the Balkans conflict.

The Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Tribunal of (the former) Yugoslavia 1998 was unusual in being drafted with input of women's groups following that conflict. As a result it included the most extensive definition of rape of any country, even today. The ICT of Rwanda and Yugoslavia have reaffirmed that rape – even just one rape – is a war crime, but that rape on a mass and widespread scale as a tactic or weapon of war is a crime against humanity and can be a constitutive element of genocide.

'Rape as a weapon of war' refers to the deliberate, strategic and widespread use of rape as a tactic to achieve military goals. The aim of war is generally to gain control of a territory and its resources. To do this you have to exterminate, subjugate, win over or cause to flee the enemy or target population; you also aim to minimise the cost, outlay and loss of your own soldiers' lives, and ensure that the enemy is not able to regroup or form any viable opposition or resistance. Rape is a cheap and easy means to achieve this. It requires no major financial outlay, weapons, ammunition or transport systems. It spreads terror and causes populations to flee the land you want to take over. It is so utterly destructive that people cannot look each other in the eyes let alone form a working resistance. In many cases the rapes take place in front of family and community, men and boys may be forced to rape their own relatives. And of course men and boys themselves may be raped.

Mass rape is not a 'fair' way to fight: this is precisely why it is prohibited in the laws of war. The problem is that as long as mass rape as a strategy goes unchallenged it will continue to be a preferred weapon or tactic. Women who are victims of rape in conflict will often be pregnant from the rape with little or no access to choices or services on how to deal with this. There are of course severe risks of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV aids. Many of the women will be subjected to horrific injuries and mutilations. In many cases they will have severe long-term internal vaginal and anal injuries. These are often life-threatening but can also result in problems in childbirth and fertility for the future and can often result in severe tearing and laceration that can cause haemorrhaging, fistula and severe infections. Women who bear such disabling illnesses and



Photo: Tony Gerber

Rape: A Weapon of War



Photo: Tony Gerber

injuries or who have been victims of rape, particularly in the context of the DRC, are 'ruined'. They will be rejected and ostracised by their husband, family and community. This will mean that in societies where few women have been given access to education or to the labour market and where a woman's status and access to income is dependent on her role as a wife and mother then she will also be unmarried, undesirable and destitute having to turn to anything at all as a survival strategy.

War crimes have been committed by all those involved in fighting in the DRC. The UN has also clearly identified that if you do not prosecute and provide redress for war crimes such as rape and other human rights violations committed in a conflict then the conflict will be reignited, prolonged and deepened (UN resolution 1820). Amnesty is calling for better implementation of both Resolution 1325 involving women in post conflict decision making and Resolution 1820 challenging impunity for war crimes notably rape in conflict.

Amnesty International welcomes this brave play as an illustration of many of the horrors of the conflict in DRC and conflicts around the world. We hope you will join us in our struggle for human rights.

Heather Harvey

Stop Violence against Women campaigner, Amnesty International
www.amnesty.org.uk

Conflict Minerals in the DRC



Photo: Lucy Cullen

Well, my darling, in this damnable age of the mobile phone it's become quite the precious ore, no? And for what ever reason God has seen fit to bless your backward country with an abundance of it.

Mr Harari

Act One, Scene 2

Sexual violence in Congo is often fuelled by militias and armies warring over “conflict minerals,” the ores that produce tin, tungsten, and tantalum – the ‘3 Ts’ – as well as gold.

Armed groups from Congo, Rwanda, and Uganda finance themselves through the illicit conflict mineral trade and fight over control of mines and taxation points inside Congo.

The story does not end there. Internal and international business interests move these conflict minerals from Central Africa around the world to countries in East Asia, where they are processed into valuable metals, and then onward into a wide range of electronics products. Consumers in the United States, Europe, and Asia are the ultimate end-users of these conflict minerals, as we inadvertently fuel the war through our purchases of these electronics products. This trail has been well documented by the United Nations and others.

The principal conflict minerals are:

TIN (produced from cassiterite)

Used inside your mobile phone and all electronic products as a solder on circuit boards. The biggest use of tin worldwide is in electronic products. Congolese armed groups earn approximately \$85 million per year from trade in tin.

TANTALUM (produced from coltan)

Used to store electricity in capacitors in iPods, digital cameras, and mobile phones. 65 to 80 percent of the world's tantalum is used in electronic products. Congolese armed groups earn an estimated \$8 million per year from trading in tantalum.

TUNGSTEN (produced from wolframite)

Used to make your mobile phone or Blackberry vibrate. Tungsten is a growing source of income for armed groups in Congo, with armed groups currently earning approximately \$2 million annually.

GOLD

Used in jewellery and as a component in electronics. Extremely valuable and easy to smuggle, Congolese armed groups are earning between \$44 million to \$88 million per year from gold.



Photo: Tony Gerber

Ruined is set in the Ituri region of the Democratic Republic of Congo. This page outlines the specific conflict that has plagued the North Eastern part of the country.

The official dates of the conflict are 1999-2003, however there was 'low-level' violence, requiring an EU peace keeping force until 2008. The conflict in the North Eastern Region is between the agriculturist Lendu tribe and the pastoralist Hema tribe. The Nationalist and Inegrationalist Front (FNI) represent the Lendu and the Union of Congolese Patriots (UPC) fight for the Hema.

Increased violence as a result of 'borrowing' ethnic ideology from the Hutu-Tutsi conflict. Human Rights Watch reported that the Lendu began thinking of themselves as kin to the Hutu, whilst the Hema began to identify themselves with the Tutsi.

Background: The Belgain colonists favoured the Hema, resulting in them being wealthier and better educated than the Lendu. This divergence continued into modern times. However, the two peoples have largely lived together peacefully, practicing extensive intermarriage. Northern Hema people speak Lendu, southern Hema people speak Hema.

Longstanding grievances about land issues erupted on at least 3 previous occasions 1972, 1985, 1996. A lot of the animosity revolves around the 1973 'land use law', which allows people to buy land which they do not inhabit and then force residents to leave two years later when ownership can no longer be legally contested. Some Hema were allegedly using this tactic in 1999.

The 1994 Rwandan genocide made people even more aware of their tribal and linguistic affiliation. Influx of Hutu refugees into the region, which led to the 1st Congo war served as further emphasis. However, when the 2nd Congo War began in 1998, the situation between the Hema and Lendu tribes reached the level of regional conflict. The area was occupied by the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) and the Ugandan backed Kinsangani faction of the rebel Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD-K) under the leadership of Ernest Wamba dia Wamba.

The Ituri province was created out of the eastern Orientale province in June 1999 by James Kazini, commander of the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF). He ignored the protests of the Rcd-K leadership and appointed a Hema to be the new governor. This convinced the Lendu that Uganda and the RCD-K backed the Hema over them and violence erupted between the 2 groups. Reports indicate that Lendu trainees refused to join the RCD-K and instead set up ethnically-based militias.

Fighting began to slow in late 1999 when the RCD-K named a neutral replacement to head the provincial government. However in 2001, it flared up again after the UPDF replaced the government with a Hema appointee. The RCD-K appointee was moved to Kampala and held by the Ugandan government without explanation. Wamba dia Wamba's (RCD-K) military base collapsed shortly after as it was now without Ugandan support, largely because it was perceived to have a pro Lendu stance.

Although the official conflict ended in 2003, the low level conflict that continued has killed tens of thousands more people. The continued Ituri conflict has been blamed both on the lack of any real authority in the region, which has become a patchwork of areas claimed by armed militia, and the competition among various armed groups for the control of natural resources in the area. 50% of militia members are under 18 and some are as young as 8.

A guide to some of the key places mentioned in *Ruined*.

BUNIA

Bunia is a city in Democratic Republic of the Congo and is the capital of Ituri Province. The city was formerly the headquarters of Ituri district when it was part of the former Orientale Province. As of 2009 it had an estimated population of 106,197. Bunia lies at an elevation of 1275m on a plateau about 30 km west of Lake Albert in the Great Rift Valley, and about 25 km east of the Ituri Forest. The city is at the center of the Ituri conflict between the Lendu and Hema. In the Second Congo War the city was the scene of much fighting and many civilian deaths were incurred. Consequently the city is the base of one of the largest United Nations peacekeeping forces in Africa, and its headquarters in northeastern DRC. There are White Christian Missions in Bunia and have been since the Belgians occupied DRC.

The main dirt highways connecting north-eastern DR Congo with Kisangani to the west and Butembo and Goma to the south pass through Bunia, but have fallen into disrepair and are virtually impassable, especially after the frequent rains. Bunia is only 40km from the Ugandan border running down Lake Albert, but there are no road connections across the Great Rift Valley to the closest Ugandan towns of Toro and Fort Portal. Instead a dirt highway going north-east reaches Arua and Gulu north of the lake. Before the war made the route impassable, this was the chief trade route between the DRC and Uganda, as well between the DRC and Juba in Sudan, and Bunia was an important market city, for cross-border trade as well as internal trade.

Bunia is linked to the small port of Kisenye on Lake Albert by a 60-kilometre dirt track via Bogoro, which has a spectacular and dangerous 600-metre descent of the western escarpment of the Great Rift Valley. Kisenye has a jetty from which boat transport can link with Mahagi-Port at the north end of the lake, and with Butiaba on the Ugandan side and Pakwach on the Albert Nile.

CHINA

From the DRC, coltan is exported to facilities, such as Ningxia Non-ferrous Metals Smeltery in China, for processing and is manufactured into consumer and industrial goods sold in North America and Europe.

ITURI RAINFOREST

The Ituri Rainforest is about 63,000 km square in area, and is located between 0° and 3°N and 27° and 30° E. Elevation in the Ituri ranges from about 700 m to 1000 m. The average temperature is 31°C and the average humidity is about 85%. The Ituri forest is the home of the Mbuti pygmies, one of the hunter-gatherer peoples living in equatorial rainforests characterised by their short height (below one and a half metres, or 59 inches, on average).

KISANGANI

Population in 2004 was 682,599, 447 m above sea level, 696 km from Bunia and 2912 km from Kinshasa. The city's land area is estimated at 1910 square kilometres. The City of Kisangani has a density of 229 inhabitants per square kilometre. The language most spoken at home by the population in the city is Swahili and Lingala, followed by French. The official language of Kisangani is French as defined by the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Kisangani is the 3rd largest city in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the largest of cities that lie in the tropical woodlands of the Congo. It is the provincial capital of Tshopo. Formerly known as Stanleyville in French, the city takes its present name from Boyoma, the seven-arched falls located north of the city, whose name was also initially given to the landscape on which the city is located. Kisangani is the Swahili name of the city, whilst in Lingala it is called Singitini (or Singatini), each of which share the same meaning of 'the City on the Island'.

Kisangani is the nation's major inland port after Kinshasa, an important commercial hub point for river and land transportation and a major marketing and distribution centre for the north-eastern part of the country. It has been the commercial capital of the northern Congo since the late 1800s. Kisangani has been home to influential politicians, including the national hero Patrice Emery



Photo: Tony Gerber

Lumumba, the first prime minister of the country. Before the country gained independence from Belgium in 1960, Kisangani was reputed to have more Rolls-Royces per capita than any other city in the world.

In 1999 the city was the site of the first open fighting between Ugandan and Rwandan forces in the Second Congo War. This followed the fracturing of the anti-government rebel Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD) into camps based in Kisangani and Goma. The fighting was also over the gold mines located near the town. The local population were caught in the crossfire between Ugandan and Rwandan military forces which led to the destruction of about a quarter of the city and some 3000 fatalities.

LEBANON

Mr Harari is a Lebanese diamond merchant. Beirut is 2,256 miles North East of Bunia.

MBUTI

The Mbuti people have lived in the Ituri Forest for many thousands of years, and it is even speculated that they might be the earliest inhabitants of Africa.

ORIENTALE PROVINCE

Orientale (formerly Haut-Zaïre, then Haut-Congo) is a province of the Democratic Republic of Congo. It lies in the northeast of the country, and its provincial capital is Kisangani. It borders Equateur province to the west, Kasai-Oriental to the southwest, Maniema to the south, and Nord-Kivu to the southeast. It also borders the Central African Republic and Sudan to the north, and Uganda to the east. The Ituri district of Orientale was the scene of Ituri conflict. The Ituri province was created out of the eastern Orientale province in June 1999 by James Kazini, commander of the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF).

UGANDA

Christian imports cigarettes from over the border in Uganda. Uganda borders the Ituri region of the DRC. The Ugandan People's defence force created 4 provinces out of the Orientale region in 1999, including the Ituri. The Ugandan's backed a Hema to become leader of the Ituri province twice, in 1999 and in 2001. They also support pro Hema militia.

YAKA YAKA MINE

The Yaka are an ethnic group of Southwestern Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola. They number about 300,000. They live in the forest and savanna areas between the Kwango and Wamba rivers. They are very artistic. Many of their religious and cultural customs transcend ethnic boundaries, and are shared with the Suku and Lunda.

Practical Exercises

The play deals with a number of issues that are particularly interesting to explore in the classroom, particularly the link between mobile phone use in the West and its impact on the Democratic Republic of Congo; and specifically the impact that this has on women in the DRC. Below are just a few suggested exercises for use in lesson time to investigate the themes of the play in further depth.

Exercise 1. **There's no blood on my mobile!**

Duration: 25 mins

Aim: To understand the context of the play, particularly in relation to the mining of coltan and the impact that this has on those living in the DRC

Practical Work: Read through the context articles in the pack on pages 32-41. An article in *The Independent* in May 2006 said: 'Men, women and children – lots of children – pick desperately with makeshift hammers or their bare hands at the red earth, hoping to find some coltan or cassiterite to set on the long conveyor belt to your house, or mine.'

Brainstorm the supply chain, or 'conveyor belt', of coltan – how does it reach the consumer and what are the consequences of mobile phone consumerism in the West? Now think about this physically. Create six, eight-beat phrases – three relating to the use of coltan and three highlighting its impact in the DRC. Now try playing these all together – a literal conveyor belt from the mines to the consumer.



Now try playing these all together – a literal conveyor belt from the mines to the consumer.

Evaluate: Ask the students to consider who should take responsibility for the situation in the DRC. Is it the consumer who willingly upgrades his or her mobile phone and consequently fuels the demand for more coltan? Is it the mobile phone companies who all have Corporate Social Responsibility Policies, yet claim that they do not know the origin of the minerals used in their products? Or is it the rebel groups in the DRC using coltan to fund weapons? Or is it the corrupt Congolese government and its army, with its horrific human rights record? Ask volunteer students to represent each level in the supply chain, from the miners in the DRC through to the consumers in the West and have them arrange themselves first in order of supply/demand and then in order of overall responsibility.

Exercise 2. **Playing with Status**

Duration: 30 mins

Aim: To explore hierarchy in the everyday lives of people in the DRC – particularly the women.

You will need: Multiple copies of Script Extract #1 (p46-47)

Practical Work: To warm into this exercise, have students silently order themselves in a line by age, height, colour of hair, birth date etc. What gives a person status? Is it positions of authority or are

their other factors? Have students read the following scene between Mama Nadi and the Commander – how does the status play out between them? Try playing the scene on a line with the actors taking a step forwards or backwards on every line, depending on their status. This is a very visual way of seeing how status shifts.

Evaluate: Ask the group how they felt playing the scene on a line? Was it clear who gained status and when? Was it always obvious who had the higher status? What does this exercise say about the role of women in the DRC? Using this analysis, it might be worth replaying the scene using the original text.

Exercise 3. **Salima's Story**

Duration: 30 mins

Aim: To explore the horrific impact that the conflict in DRC has on women

You will need: Multiple copies of Script Extract #2 (p48-49)

Practical Work: Read Salima's story. She is confiding in Sophie about the atrocities inflicted on her when she was kidnapped by rebel forces – and it is the reason why she is ignoring her husband, Fortune, who has come to find her, and leaves him sitting in the rain. In groups, try playing this scene, in slow motion, while Salima tells her story. Try to physically exaggerate her ordeal - the kidnap, the rape and torture, the fact that she is forced to clean and serve the soldiers and then the fact that her family turns her back on her.

Evaluate: It is the job of the director to make the audience feel Salima's pain – as well as visualising it. How did physicalising the story help to achieve this? Try replaying the story through a series of between three and six emotional feelings – both vocalising and physicalising them – from anger, to blame, to shame, to pain... How does this help you to get into the mindset of the character?

Exercise 4. **Verbatim Theatre**

Duration: 20 mins (plus share back time)

Aim: To try out verbatim theatre techniques to explore and understand some of the methods that were used by Lynn Nottage in the writing of *Ruined*

You will need: Dictaphones/recordable MP3 players and earphones (one per pair)

Practical Work: Get into pairs, each pair with a dictaphone/MP3 player or pen and paper. Interview each other in turn on a subject of your choice (favourite food, last time you went shopping, earliest memory). The interviewer should record or write down the exact words of their partner. The interviewer then re-enacts the recording, using the same words, tones and gestures, as realistic as possible, back to the whole group.

Evaluate: Verbatim theatre is a type of documentary theatre created using the exact words of people interviewed about a particular topic or event. How did the actors feel? Was it easy? When might this be a useful tool for telling a story through theatre? Can the group think of any examples of verbatim theatre or television they have seen?



Script Extract #1

Ruined Script Extract #1

Taken from Act One, Scene 2

Mama Can I get you something?

Commander Bring me a cold Primus. A pack of cigarettes, fresh.

Mama guides the Commander to a chair. She signals Sophie to fetch the beers.

Mama Monsieur, I must ask you to leave your bullets at the bar, otherwise you don't come in.

Commander And if I choose not to.

Mama Then you don't get served. I don't want any mischief in here. Is that clear?

The Commander, charmed by her tenacity, laughs with the robust authority of a man in charge.

Commander Do you know who I am?

Mama I'm afraid you must edify me, and then forgive me, if it makes absolutely no difference. Once you step through my door, then you're in my house. And I make the rules here.

The Commander chuckles to himself.

Commander All right, Mama. Forgive me.

The Commander makes a show of removing the bullets from his gun and placing them on the table.

Commander And who said I don't respect the rule of law?

A drunk Government soldier dirty dancing with Josephine spots the Commander and jumps to attention.

Gov't Soldier 1 Commander, beg my pardon.

Commander Take it easy, young man. Take it easy. We're all off duty. We're in Mama's house. Clean up.

The Commander sits down, and unzips his jacket. Mama opens a pack of cigarettes and passes them to the Commander.

Mama Monsieur, I don't recall seeing you here before.

Commander No.

Mama lights the Commander's cigarette.

Mama What brings you to mon hotel?

Commander Jerome Kisémbé, the rebel leader.

The Commander studies her face to gauge the response.

Commander You know him, of course.

Mama I know of him. We all know of him. His name is spoken here at least several times a day. We've felt the sting of his reputation.

Commander So, you do know him.

Mama No, as I said I know of him. His men control the road East and the forest to the North of here.

The Commander turns his attention to everyone. Scrutiny. Suspicion.

Commander Is that so?

Mama Yes, but you must know that.

The Commander speaks to Mama, but he is clearly addressing everyone.

Commander This Jerome Kisémbé is a dangerous man. You hide him and his band of renegades in your villages. Give them food, and say you're protecting your liberator. What liberator? What will he give, the people? That is what I want to know? What has he given you Mama? Hm? A new roof? Food? Peace?

Mama I don't need a man to give me anything

Commander Make a joke, but Kisémbé has one goal and that is to make himself rich on your back, Mama.

The Commander grows loud and more forthright as he speaks. The music stops. The Bar grows quiet. Tense.

Commander He will burn your crops, steal your women, and make slaves of your men all in the name of peace and reconciliation. Don't believe him. He, and men like him, these careless militias wage a diabolical campaign. They leave stains everywhere they go. And remember the land he claims as his own, it is a national reserve, it is the people's land, our land. And yet he will tell you the government has taken everything, though we're actually paving the way for democracy.

Mama I know that, but the government needs to let him know that. But you, I'm only seeing you for the first time. Kisémbé, I hear his name everyday.

Commander Then hear my name, Commander Osembenga, banga liwa.

A moment. Mama absorbs the news, she seems genuinely humbled. Christian backs away as if to disappear.

Commander You will hear my name quite a bit from now on.

Mama Commander Osembenga, forgive me for not knowing your name. Karibu. It's a pleasure to have such an important man in our company. Allow me to pour you a glass of our very best whiskey. From the U.S of A.

Commander Thank you. A clean glass.

Mama Of course. Karibu.

Mama fetches the Commander a glass of whiskey. She makes a show of wiping out the cloudy glass. She pours him a generous glass of whiskey and places the bottle in front of him.

Mama *(seductively)* We take good care of our visitors. And we offer very good company. Clean company, not like other places. You are safe here. If you need something, anything while—

Commander You are a practical woman, I know that you have the sense to keep your doors closed to rebel dogs. Am I right?

The Commander gently takes Mama's hand. She allows the intimacy. Christian looks on. Contempt.

Mama Of course.

Script Extract #2

Ruined Script Extract #2

Taken from Act One, Scene ?

Salima Do you know what I was doing on that morning?

A calm washes over Salima.

Salima I was working in our garden picking the last of the sweet tomatoes. I put Beatrice down in the shade of a Frangipani tree, because my back was giving me some trouble. Forgiven? Where was Fortune? He was in town fetching a new iron pot. "Go," I said "Go, today man or you won't have dinner tonight!" I had been after him for a new pot for a month. And finally on that day the damn man had to go and get it. A new pot. The sun was about to crest, but I had to put in another hour before it got too hot. It was such a clear and open sky. This splendid bird, a peacock had come into the garden to taunt me, and was showing off its feathers. I stooped down and called to the bird. "Wssht, Wssht." And I felt a shadow cut across my back, and when I stood four men were there over me, smiling, wicked school boy smiles. "Yes?" I said. And the tall soldier slammed the butt of his gun into my cheek. Just like that. It was so quick, I didn't even know I'd fallen to the ground. Where did they come from? How could I not have heard them?

Sophie You don't have to—

Salima One of the soldiers held me down with his foot. He was so heavy, thick like an ox and his boot was cracked and weathered like it had been left out in the rain for weeks. His boot was pressing my chest and the cracks in the leather had the look of drying sorghum. His foot was so heavy and it was all I could see, as the others..."took" me. My baby was crying. She was a good baby. Beatrice never cried, but she was crying, screaming. "Shhh" I said. "Shhh." And right then...

Salima closes her eyes.

Salima A soldier stomped on her head with his boot. And she was quiet.

A moment. Salima releases-

Salima Where was everybody? WHERE WAS EVERYBODY?!

Sophie hugs Salima.

Sophie It's okay. Take a breath.

Salima I fought them!

Sophie I know.

Salima I did!

Sophie I know.

Salima But they still took me from my home. They took me through the bush, raiding thieves. Fucking demons! "She is for everyone, soup to be had before dinner," that is what someone said. They tied me to a tree by my foot, and the men came whenever they wanted soup. I make fires, I cook food, I listen to their stupid songs, I carry bullets, I clean wounds, I wash blood from their clothing, and, and, and...I lay there as they tore me to pieces, until I was raw...five months. Five months. Chained like a goat. These men fighting...fighting for our liberation. Still I close my eyes and I see such terrible things. Things, I can not stand to have in my head. How can men be this way?

A moment.

Salima It was such a clear and open sky. So, so beautiful. How could I not hear them coming?

- Sophie** Those men were on a path and we were there. It happened.
- Salima** A peacock wandered into my garden, and the tomatoes were ripe beyond belief. Our fields of red sorghum were so perfect, it was going to be a fine season. Fortune thought so too, and we could finally think about planning a trip on the ferry to visit his brother. Oh God please give me back that morning. "Forget the pot, Fortune. Stay,"..."Stay," that's what I would tell him. What did I do, Sophie? I must have done something. How did I get in the middle of their fight?
- Sophie** You were picking sweet tomatoes. That's all. You didn't do anything wrong.
- Sophie kisses Salima on the cheek.*
- Salima** It isn't his baby. It's the child of a monster, and there's no telling what it will be. Now, he's willing to forgive me, and is it that simple, Sophie? But what happens when the baby is born, will he be able to forgive the child, will I? And, and...and even if I do, I don't think I'll be able to forgive him.
- Sophie** You can't know that until you speak to him.
- Salima** I walked into the family compound expecting wide open arms. An embrace. Five months, suffering. I suffered every single second of it. And my family gave me the back of their heads. And he, the man I loved since I was fourteen, chased me away with a green switch. He beat my ankles raw. And I dishonored him? I dishonored him?! Where was he? Buying a pot? He was too proud to bear my shame...but not proud enough to protect me from it. Let him sit in the rain.
- Sophie** Is that really what you want?
- Salima** Yes.
- Sophie** He isn't going to leave.
- Salima** Then I'm sorry for him.

Further Reading

There is a wealth of information about the Democratic Republic of Congo, the conflict, treatment of women and conflict minerals. Below are a selection of sources that may be used as a starting point for students researching the play for anyone interested in finding out more about the current situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo and some of the issues explored in *Ruined*.

Amnesty International UK

www.amnesty.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=581

A page devoted to the Democratic Republic of Congo, featuring links to Amnesty campaigns in the country, outlining the conflict and highlighting the principal humanitarian crises. (2010)

BBC: DR Congo gang rape crisis 'spreading', new study says

news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/8621394.stm

A very recent article on the rise of violent sexual attacks on women in the DRC. (2010)

The Guardian: Lynn Nottage: A Bar, A Brothel and Brecht

www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2010/apr/20/lynn-nottage-ruined

Lynn Nottage interviewed in the Guardian about her inspiration behind the play, coinciding with the European Premiere of *Ruined* at the Almeida Theatre's production. (2010)

V-Day: Stop Raping Our Greatest Resource

drc.vday.org

A campaign raising awareness of and combatting the systematic rape of women in the DRC. (2010)

The Guardian: Lynn Nottage's Ruined: A worthy Pulitzer prizewinner?

www.guardian.co.uk/stage/theatreblog/2009/apr/21/lynn-nottage-ruined-pulitzer-prize

Interesting Guardian Blog post debating the awarding of the 2009 Pulitzer Prize for Drama to *Ruined*. (2009)

Bad Connections

www.danchurchaid.org/where_we_work/denmark/campaigns/roskilde_festival/bad_connections

A detailed but clear report by Danish charity DanWatch on how your mobile phone is linked to abuse, fraud and illegal mining in the Democratic Republic of Congo. (2008)

Rape of the Congo

www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2009/aug/13/rape-of-the-congo/

South African journalist Adam Hochschild writes in depth about the continuing violence in the country. (2009)

Doctors Without Borders / Médecins Sans Frontières

www.doctorswithoutborders.org/news/article.cfm?id=1836

A field report into the situation faced by women in the DRC. (2006)

Wikipedia: The Second Congo War

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Congo_War

A comprehensive overview of the conflict dubbed 'Africa's world war': a good starting point for further research.

The Rape of Nation, Marcus Bleasdale

Schilt Publishing, 2009. Collection of photographs of the conflict in the DRC by photojournalist Marcus Bleasdale with a foreword by John le Carré. A selection of Bleasdale's candid and evocative photographs can be viewed online at www.marcusbleasdale.com

ALMEIDA PROJECTS

World Premiere

The Door Never Closes

by Rex Obano

a play for young people

25 - 28 May 2010

“Are you willing to suffer the consequences when you use the phone? Everything leads to everything else and you might not like the everything else.”

Marley's not been answering his phone. So Ayley decides to let herself into his flat. She's got something important to tell him. But Marley's got other plans. He wants to make a new life for himself, away from crime and the estate, fighting for his country.

Yet Marley's phone keeps ringing. Who is it and what do they want? One hour later, Marley's out cold, and Ayley comes face to face with the caller, who wants something from them both.

A new play for young people aged 13 and above, commissioned by Almeida Projects in response to the Almeida Theatre's production of *Ruined* by Lynn Nottage, *The Door Never Closes* follows two young people at crucial points of change in their lives, navigating their path through a world in which technology determines their personal relationships. The play gives students a creative opportunity to engage with the issues of choice and personal responsibility across the curriculum, particularly within drama, English and citizenship.

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Director **Polly Findlay**
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PERFORMANCES

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WORKSHOPS

Free with all bookings, our introductory workshop gives participants an insight into how *The Door Never Closes* has been created and enhances curriculum learning through a practical exploration of the ideas in the play. Workshops are led by professional theatre directors and actors and will take place at your school in lesson time, or after hours if preferred.

TICKETS

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Visit www.almeida.co.uk/education to find out more about the production and our work with local schools

Almeida Projects

Ruined

Almeida Projects Resource Pack

Written and designed by Charlie Payne, with contributions from Amnesty International UK, Abigail Graham and Samantha Lane.

Measure for Measure by William Shakespeare was produced at the Almeida Theatre 15 April - 5 June 2010.

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Quotes and script extracts from *Ruined* by Lynn Nottage.

Photographs of the Congo by Tony Gerber. Almeida Projects photography: Bridget Jones, Lucy Cullen and Ludovic des Cognets.

ALMEIDA
PROJECTS

Almeida Projects is the Almeida Theatre's community and learning programme.

Inspired by the Almeida's productions, Projects delivers a range of high quality, innovative activities to make the theatre accessible to young people, inspire them creatively and encourage an exploration of the power and potential of theatre.

Almeida Projects provides an active, creative link between our theatre and its audience, more specifically an audience that may not have considered that the theatre might not be for them.

Our aim is to act as a catalyst to their energies, to their hunger to participate - celebrating the creativity of young people in the best way we know how: by offering them our experience, our expertise and our unique theatre.

Michael Attenborough
Artistic Director, Almeida Theatre

Almeida Projects' work draws on all aspects of theatre, working with thousands of people each year, and includes: drama projects in partnership with local schools and community groups; the Young Friend of the Almeida scheme; and a subsidised ticket scheme for schools with introductory workshops and resource materials. For more information please visit our website.

www.almeida.co.uk/education

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