

ALMEIDA
PROJECTS

Tom and Viv

PROJECTS PACK



Welcome to our production of TOM AND VIV by Michael Hastings. This is the first revival of the play since its controversial premiere in 1984. At the time of writing, director, Lindsay Posner is in rehearsal with actors on stage fine-tuning the production before press night on 22nd September 2006.

The life and times of TS Eliot and Vivien Haigh-Wood have been the subject of much literary debate, speculation and society gossip. In his intensely moving play, by turns funny and completely devastating, Michael Hastings creates a fictional story encompassing the personal tragedy set against the epic tale of a society family - the Haigh-Woods - in the throes of disintegration.

The play spans 1915- 1947, reproducing and satirising the language and attitudes of its era. Some of the language, occasionally racist and snobbish, is hard to hear in 2006. It does serve as a timely reminder of a time when a rigid class system prevailed, when public life remained the province of the white, male, Christian, upper and middle-classes.

This Projects Pack explores the production and its context. We hope you find it useful in helping you to ask and answer questions provoked by the play.

ALMEIDA PROJECTS

Under the artistic directorship of Michael Attenborough, the Almeida presents an eclectic programme, ranging from redefined major classics to the cutting edge of brand new work. Our Projects reflect the main programme's ambition by finding ways to challenge and excite our participants about the work you come to see at the Almeida. We also hope to inspire you to approach your own theatre work in the same spirit of generosity and risk-taking that we encourage in our rehearsal room.

Workshops

Before you see the production, one of our Projects Team will be visiting you for a workshop, bringing some of the techniques explored in the rehearsal room, the challenges the play presents and some questions. The sessions are designed to be practical and participatory so please come energised and ready to work wearing appropriate clothes and shoes.

Hosts

When you come to the theatre, you will be met by one of the Projects team who will be on hand to answer your questions and listen to your feedback about the production. Please do take advantage of this opportunity to find out more about how the production has evolved since the preview period.

Thanks to all of the creative team and the cast who have been so generous in their enthusiasm and support of the Projects work.

We look forward to welcoming you to the Almeida soon.

Rebecca Manson Jones
Director, Almeida Projects

*"I am
threaded
through
every line of
poetry he
wrote since
we met" Viv*

Tom and Viv

by Michael Hastings

IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

Vivienne

Tom

Rose

Maurice

Louise

Charles

William Leonard Jones

Charles Marion Todd

*Other voices provided by
members of the cast*

Frances O'Connor

Will Keen

Anna Carteret

Robert Portal

Laura Elphinstone

Benjamin Whitrow

Benjamin Whitrow

Will Keen

Director

Design

Lighting

Composer and Sound

Movement

Dialect Coach

Casting

Casting Assistant

Assistant Director

Production Manager

Company Manager

Stage Manager

Deputy Stage Manager

Assistant Stage Manager

Costume Supervisor

Wigs and Hair Creator

Wardrobe Supervisor

Wardrobe Deputy

Dresser

Wigs and Hair Supervisor

Chief Technician

Lighting Technician

Theatre Technician

Assistant Technician

Production Carpenter

Scenic Artist

Set Built by

Lindsay Posner

Giles Cradle

Neil Austin

Adam Cork

Jane Gibson

Penny Dyer

Maggie Lunn

Camilla Evans

Sarah Norman

Igor

Rupert Carlile

Suzanne Bourke

Lorna Earl

Harry Niland

Brigid Guy

Darren Ware

Catrina Richardson

Jennifer Moore

Charlotte Damigos

Zoe Goodchild

Jason Westbourne

Robin Fisher

Howard Wood

Mark Cunningham

Craig Emerson

Magnus Irvin

Rocket Scenery and

Scott Fleary Ltd

Hugo Glendinning

Production Photography

Almeida Projects

Director of Projects

Projects Co-ordinator

Group Bookings Assistant

Workshop Team

Rebecca Manson Jones

Ned Glasier

Sarah Tipple

Martin Barron, Curtis

Jordan and Sarah Tipple.

Will Keen and Frances O'Connor
Photo: Hugo Glendinning



1915

The action takes place in various locations between 1915 and 1947. There are five main scenes: 1915, 1921, 1927, 1930, 1947.

ACT ONE

TEA DANCE, OXFORD

VIV tries to get TOM to dance. They are deeply in love but have only recently met. VIV persuades TOM to come to London to her family's town house. She wants to go to lots of society events. TOM is reluctant, he doesn't have the right clothes.

VIV: *Tom? Oh Tom!
Plunge! Just
plunge!*

DIRECT ADDRESS - ROSE #1

ROSE, VIV'S Mother, talks about the HAIGH-WOOD'S holiday home in Anglesey where she and her husband spend the summers. ROSE worries about "Vivie" getting into relationships. VIV is not the marrying type.

TOM: *What do we
know about
ourselves?*

VIV'S BEDROOM

TOM is uncomfortable about being in VIV's bedroom. They discuss getting married and the scandal it will cause if they marry in secret. They promise to love each other forever, in sickness and in health.

VIV: *That's our gift
to each other.*

DIRECT ADDRESS - MAURICE # 1

MAURICE HAIGH-WOOD talks about his older sister's antics at his school. He claims he survived the First World War because every bullet missed.

MAURICE: *It was a
fantastic
honeymoon
wasn't it?
Bags of
candlelight?*

THE HAIGH-WOOD LONDON HOUSE, HAMPSTEAD

MAURICE congratulates VIV on her marriage. He offers her a drink. She reminds him that she never drinks. He asks about the honeymoon. Her responses aren't exactly as expected. MAURICE is looking forward to the huge family row about the secret marriage but VIV has only returned to drop off some laundry. TOM enters with the laundry basket. MAURICE doesn't realize who he is. VIV is anxious to leave but MAURICE insists on a toast to their honeymoon.

VIV: *Bags. I set
fire to the
curtains.*

DIRECT ADDRESS - TOM # 1

TOM remembers his solitary nights on the pier at Eastbourne.

TOM: *I believe
family
unity is the
root of all
culture.
Vivie is my
life. I'll care
for her
always.*

ALLEN & HANBURY'S CHEMIST

VIV picks up a prescription. LOUISE, a young assistant, warns her that taking both drugs together can cause dangerous side effects. She explains that VIV's pituitary problem causes a hormonal imbalance and mental instability.

DIRECT ADDRESS - ROSE #2

ROSE believes that VIV married in secret so that she could not prevent it. She is worried about TOM.

THE HAIGH-WOOD LONDON HOUSE, HAMPSTEAD

TOM meets ROSE. He is nervous. ROSE offers him tea. She asks about the wedding and the honeymoon. They ran out of money after 6 days. She reads TOM a letter from the Hotel about the damage VIV caused to the room. The Hotel is not suing because TOM behaved so well. ROSE asks what VIV told TOM about her illness. He says "nothing." She is very proud of him and thinks he will make a wonderful member of the family. She asks him to keep VIV's illness a secret.



Frances O'Connor and Will Keen as Tom and Viv
Photo: Hugo Glendinning

Maurice: In our family you learn to say nothing at all. .. and all will be revealed

Viv: She calls me a 'bag of ferrets'.

1922

Viv: Nobody goes to work after a party like that.

Tom: I envy them.

CHARLES, VIV's father, asks TOM about his prospects: he has been cut off by his father, earns a pittance from lectures and he and VIV have been offered a room in Bertrand Russell's flat. Russell is a notorious figure in London life, a communist and pacifist. Satisfied that no scandal or expense will ensue from the marriage, CHARLES wishes to resume his holiday.

VIV arrives. She is very excited, talking incoherently about the war, TOM, "Bertie" and the class system. ROSE ushers the men out of the room and calms VIV. VIV reveals that TOM is sexually inexperienced. She is suffering excessive menstrual bleeding and headaches. Sometimes she takes her medication all at once.

A LONDON STREET

TOM AND VIV are walking. VIV wants distraction. TOM proposes a trip to a joke shop. VIV is delighted.

DIRECT ADDRESS - ROSE #3

The Honourable Bertrand Russell has started an affair with VIV. ROSE sends MAURICE to collect TOM and VIV.

BERTRAND RUSSELL'S FLAT

MAURICE is uncomfortable in the "Bolshevik's" flat. He assumes that TOM will have had a big row with Russell but TOM is his great friend. They speak about MAURICE's and VIV's upbringing: they hardly knew each other. MAURICE knows little about VIV's illness because his family keeps secrets. MAURICE asks TOM if there is anything wrong between him and VIV. TOM replies that there isn't. VIV arrives. She refuses to speak to TOM. MAURICE goes to the car. VIV reads letters between TOM and Bertie who arranged the affair between them.

TOM AND VIV'S FLAT

LOUISE delivers VIV's medication. VIV is trying to Hoover. The Hoover blows up. LOUISE discovers it is covered in olive oil. VIV says she did that to make it go faster. They laugh.

HOTEL - ST LEONARD'S.

DIRECT ADDRESS - CHARLES # 1

CHARLES has retired to the coast. He has arranged for TOM to get a job at his bank and an account with his tailor. TOM has published two volumes of poetry.

TOM and VIV read CHARLES extracts of TOM's poems. In the introduction, VIV implies that TOM regrets marrying her.

A BLOOMSBURY PARTY

MAURICE and ROSE dance in fancy dress. VIV, dressed as a boy, discusses the ill-opinion the other guests have of her. VIV asks MAURICE to go home with her. She is reluctant to be alone with TOM.

TOM AND VIV'S FLAT

TOM is leaving for work. VIV has hidden his briefcase and umbrella. MAURICE is asleep on the sofa, still in fancy dress. He overhears the whole argument but pretends not to. TOM asks him to help them.

HOTEL - ST LEONARD'S

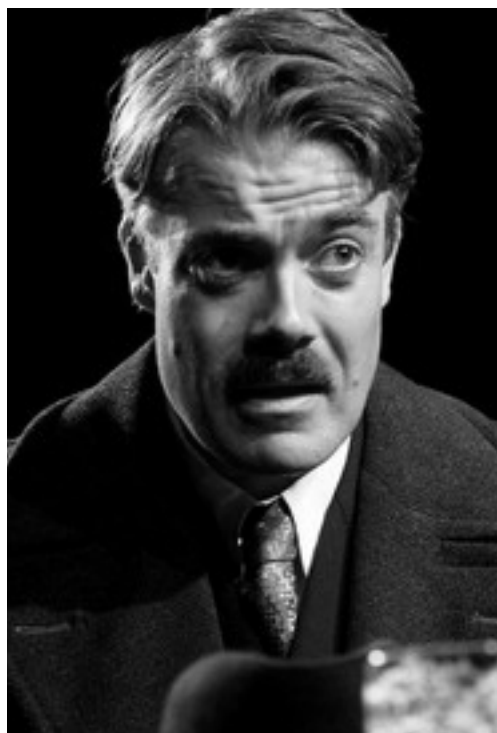
TOM visits CHARLES. TOM intends to take a leave of absence from working at the bank, to concentrate on his poetry.

1927

THE HAIGH-WOOD LONDON HOUSE, HAMPSTEAD

DIRECT ADDRESS - MAURICE #2

MAURICE returns from his new life in Kenya. TOM edits a magazine, THE CRITERION, and sits on the board of directors for a small publishing house. CHARLES has died.



Robert Portal as Maurice
Photo: Hugo Glendinning

VIV demands to know how much she has been left in the will. There is nothing. The Estate has been put into a trust. The will take control of all Viv's financial affairs. TOM and MAURICE are the Trustees. VIV ridicules MAURICE's life, TOM's intention to be baptized into the Church of England and the fact that she is not allowed to publish her poems in THE CRITERION under her own name.

THE OFFICES OF THE CRITERION

TOM and VIV write fake letters to the editor. They have run out of chocolate. MAURICE enters with a box and they play fight over it. MAURICE tells them about the THE WASTELAND review in the Nairobi paper.

ALLEN & HANBURY'S CHEMIST

TOM picks up a prescription for VIV. He overhears LOUISE telling her colleague that she has joined the Women's Labour Group.

TOM AND VIV'S FLAT

TOM arrives home late. VIV grabs the bag he has in his hand and assumes the whoopee cushions inside are a present. They play a game. TOM suddenly tires of the joke. The cushions are for his board of directors.

LENARE PHOTOGRAPHER'S STUDIO

TOM and VIV pose for a formal photographic portrait. VIV tells of her deep fear that TOM will leave her and she will be institutionalized; TOM takes the oath of baptism into the Anglican faith.

1932

ACT TWO

THE HAIGH-WOOD LONDON HOUSE, HAMPSTEAD

TOM has enlisted the help of an ex-policeman, JANES, to have VIV committed to a mental health institute. He introduces JANES to ROSE, who is against the idea. TOM plans to take a post at Harvard for 6 months and is worried VIV won't cope alone. MAURICE defends TOM's decision. He lets slip that VIV is carrying a knife in her handbag. VIV has also caused a potentially lethal car accident. VIV arrives - she senses an atmosphere.

TOM AND VIV'S FLAT - NIGHT

VIV waits for TOM. He insists on talking with VIV about her recent behaviour. VIV explains that it has been because she was not told about TOM's decision to go to America and because she is not allowed to visit him at his offices. TOM tries to get her to see the potential danger in her actions. TOM tells her how difficult he has found their marriage. JANES arrives with two doctors and ROSE, who have come to assess VIV's condition. ROSE asks for VIV's knife. VIV attacks her mother. It is a knife from a joke shop. VIV answers the doctors' questions correctly and avoids committal.

DIRECT ADDRESS - LOUISE #2

It has taken LOUISE 19 years to achieve her ambition to become night nurse. She has a flat above the shop and has

Tom: *Right from the start. We kept secrets. You didn't tell me. I had to find out.*

1935

... And we'd go home and go through the bills. Count the medicine bottles. Say goodnight. And I used to sit in the deckchair by the bed ...

joined the National Society for Lunacy Law Reform. The family continues to seek VIV's committal but VIV's nerves hold. Whilst in America, TOM files for separation and does not visit VIV when he returns. VIV takes to looking for him. In her desperate state, she is admitted to an asylum.

A COURT OF LAW

The order to put VIV away indefinitely is finalised. TOM apologises to ROSE. ROSE accuses TOM of having used the family to gain acceptance in British society and of having betrayed them.

A BANK

VIV escapes from Northumberland House and tries to send a cheque to TOM. The clerk tells her she no longer has an account.

A PUB

TOM and MAURICE talk through TOM and VIV's marriage. TOM is unable to remember a single moment of true passion. MAURICE is leaving for Africa, leaving TOM to settle up the family's finances.

NIGHT NURSE FLAT, ABOVE ALLEN & HANBURY

VIV turns up at LOUISE's flat. She has escaped from the home to attend a lecture given by TOM. LOUISE blames TOM for VIV's plight but VIV is fierce in her defence of TOM. LOUISE tells VIV that if she can stay out of the asylum for 30 days, the law says she doesn't have to go back. JANES arrives.

1947

You were lodged inside my mind. I'd say, 'Don't Vivie. Please, no, Vivie. Let's not, Vivie' and -we've gone from one room to another trying to pretend we are not strangers.

NORTHUMBERLAND HOUSE

DIRECT ADDRESS - MAURICE # 3

MAURICE has returned from life abroad. He has married a wonderful American "girl". They are inseparable. ROSE died in 1941. MAURICE has returned to London and is working in the City.

VIV enters with a tea trolley. They talk about his life in Africa. VIV has lived quietly with little post and no visitors. She wasn't able to attend her mother's funeral and hasn't heard from TOM for 12 years. MAURICE asks after her health, she says she is as sane as he is. When MAURICE leaves, she asks him to take a cake to TOM. MAURICE breaks down.

VIV is left alone.

An American Air Force Doctor, CHARLES TODD, arrives. He has VIV's records. The combination of her medication would have left her intoxicated. Modern diagnosis identifies her condition as an hormonal imbalance which is easily treatable. According to the conditions of her father's will and the trustees, she seems to have been kept in the home at her own expense and at her husband's insistence. VIV leaps to TOM's defence and declares him to be the greatest living poet who has her undying love. The Air Force Doctor leaves.

DIRECT ADDRESS - LOUISE#4

There is a very severe winter. VIV contracts pneumonia and dies unexpectedly. LOUISE attends the funeral. She recognizes TOM and MAURICE. At the end of the funeral, TOM gets to his knees and starts clawing at the soil.



*“You won’t belittle me like that. I gave Tom the title to *The Waste Land*. I worked beside him on the *Criterion* magazine. I am threaded through every line of poetry he wrote since we met. *Ash Wednesday* is dedicated to me, should you look ... Each day of my life has been a frightful battle to stay sane. Never gave up. In spite of some. And Tom has had my undying love. And he will have it to the last breath of my body. And he knows. And that you can never take away.”*

Viv

Frances O'Connor as Viv
Photo: Hugo Glendinning

the characters

Tom



TOM

AGE 26-58

An American scholar from a good family. In awe of Europe and the Europeans. Quiet, bookish and ill-at-ease in social situations. Meets and marries VIV in 1915 and loses his family allowance. Works in a bank for his living and writes poetry in his spare time. Enjoys friendships with the notorious "Bloomsbury Group". Edits a magazine "The Criterion" and joins a publishing house. On death of father-in-law becomes joint trustee of the family estate. Becomes increasingly interested in religion and is baptised at the age of 40. Files for separation from his wife and does not contact her again.

Viv

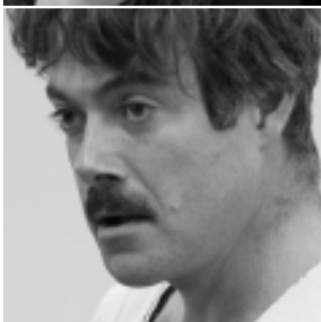


VIV

AGE 26-58

Talented and intelligent daughter of wealthy and traditional English society family. Suffers ill-health from onset of puberty. Engagement in 1914 is cancelled by her mother. Meets and marries TOM in 1915. Struggles to maintain sanity and marriage despite increasingly erratic behaviour. Finally committed to an asylum where she repeatedly attempts to escape and make contact with TOM. Dies unexpectedly in the asylum.

Maurice



MAURICE

AGE 19-51

Good-humoured but dull-witted gentleman educated at public school and army college. Survives the First World War and struggles to make career in the city or in Africa. Eventually becomes Chief of Police, Lagos and returns to England to make a career in property. He allows family events to wash over him, sticking to the stiff upper lip code. He helps TOM to have VIV committed.

Rose



ROSE

AGE 54-73

Wealthy wife of land-owner from family steeped in class tradition and prejudice. From early days a defender of her daughter's secret which she is ashamed about. Opposes any attempt to have VIV committed but declines to take her in herself. Her children do not/cannot attend her funeral.

Charles

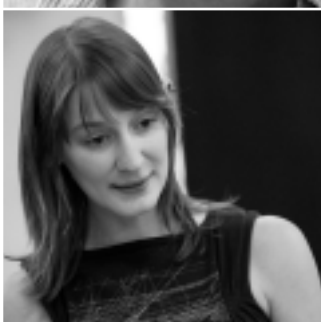


CHARLES

AGE 70-82

Wealthy landowner and absentee landlord living most of his time in remote house in Anglesey. Passion for painting landscapes. Likes to keep life on a superficial level. Takes no interest in VIV's illness but helps TOM and MAURICE to get started in life.

Louise



LOUISE

AGE 21-40

A working-class chemist's assistant who works her way up to night nurse over 19 years. She joins various groups for the advancement of women. Becomes a friend and confidante of Viv.

WILLIAM LEONARD JANES

AGE 80

Works all his life from age of 10 as boy soldier to ultra-discrete security for well-to-do families.

CHARLES MARION TODD

AGE 30

An American Air Force Doctor.

When the creative team and later the cast start work on a play, one of the first things they do is carefully examine the text to discover any facts about the characters and their world. This provides a definitive basis on which to develop the life of the character in rehearsals.

Every piece of dialogue in a play is there to advance the plot or reveal character or both.

Use the extracts from TOM AND VIV in this pack to see how many facts and assumptions you can make about the characters and their opinions. Write down the obvious ones and then think what opinions and influences might lie behind what they say. Use the context of the synopsis material to help you.

“So,
now you're
famous on a bookshelf.
What else can you learn?
What is there left we can
give you?”

Rose

timeline 1840 - 1921

DATE	ENGLAND	WORLD	FIRSTS	PLAY
1840s - 50s	Victoria is Queen, Great Exhibition Liberal Party founded.	Famine in Ireland Napoleonic Wars. Indian mutiny.		CHARLES born JANES born
1860s - 1870s	Trades Union Congress. Wars in Ireland, Africa, Afghanistan	Emancipation serfs, Russia. German state founded. Paris commune.	ORIGIN OF SPECIES, Darwin Remington Typewriter	ROSE born JANES joins army aged 10
1880s-90s	Boer War, invasion of Egypt; Independent Labour Party founded.		HEDDA GABLER, Ibsen Brecht born	JANES leaves army. TOM and VIV born LOUISE and MAURICE born
1901-8	Victoria dies Edward VII King Edward VII dies George V King	Marconi radio signal	Blue Period, Picasso MAN AND SUPERMAN, Shaw Hoover/vacuum cleaner	VIV reaches puberty. MAURICE to school. VIV leaves school.
1914	World War I		Wyndham Lewis and Ezra Pound - BLAST The Bra is patented - USA	VIV engagement cancelled.
1915-17	Russell campaigns against war	Garvey campaigns for Black rights, USA; Russian Revolution	Bell's transatlantic call. Einstein - Relativity Jazz recording	TOM to Oxford. TOM meets VIV. They marry. TODD born in USA
1918-19	Votes for women over 30. Irish War of Independence	Flu pandemic - 20 million die	Flight across the Atlantic Pop-up toaster	VIV affair with Russell
1920-21	S. Irish virtual independence	Indian non-violent action against Britain.	SIX CHARACTERS IN SEARCH OF AN AUTHOR- Pirandello	CHARLES finds TOM job at bank.

timeline 1922 - 1947

DATE	ENGLAND	WORLD	FIRSTS	PLAY
1922 - 25	First Labour Government	Stalin takes over Russia. Turkey becomes a republic	ULYSSES - Joyce MANIFESTO OF SURREALISM The Zip invented.	Maurice to Kenya - he loses £1000. The Wasteland by Eliot is published.
1926-8	General Strike. Vote for all women Television demonstration. BBC founded. Penicillin discovered.	Stalin's first 5-year plan. Wall St Crash followed by Great Depression Jewish refugees arrive in Palestine from across Europe.	TO THE LIGHTHOUSE - Woolf; LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER- Lawrence; THE THRU'PENNY OPERA - Brecht; MICKEY MOUSE- Disney	CHARLES dies. TOM baptized. LOUISE joins Women for Socialism. TOM becomes editor of The Criterion. VIV publishes her work under a pseudonym.
1932-4	British Union of Fascists	Spanish republic founded. Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany	FRANKENSTEIN (film) BRAVE NEW WORLD, Huxley Brecht exile KING KONG (film) BLOOD WEDDING, Lorca	VIV evades attempts to have her committed. TOM to Harvard. VIV committed. Her bank accounts closed. LOUISE becomes a nurse.
1936-8	George V dies, Abdication crisis George VI	Spanish Civil War Stalin show trials. Nazis create degenerate Art list.	BBC - black & white TV. Steriod hormone progesterone discovered. Penguin paperbacks, Nylon, Biro, Nestlé instant coffee.	VIV escapes asylum attends a lecture by TOM. MAURICE leaves for second career in Africa
1939 - 41	WWII IRA bombing	Hitler invades Poland. Franco declares victory in Spain Future of Palestine Conference fails. US enters war.	Whoopie cushion FINNEGAN'S WAKE, Joyce GONE WITH THE WIND THE GREAT DICTATOR CITIZEN KANE	Rose dies
1942-6	WWII ends		CASABLANCA (film) L'ETRANGER- Camus ANIMAL FARM, Orwell Eliot wins Nobel Prize for Literature. Arts Council founded.	MAURICE appointed Chief of Police, Lagos. MAURICE returns to England. Visits VIV. TOM visits VIV.
1947	Severe Winter			VIV dies of pneumonia aged 58. LOUISE, MAURICE and TOM attend the funeral.



TS Eliot and Vivienne Haigh-Wood in Sussex 1919
PHOTO CREDIT

TOM AND VIV is a fictional account of the story of TS Eliot and Vivien Haigh Eliot. In this pack, when talking about the characters we call them **TOM** and **VIV** respectively and when we mention the real people we refer to **Eliot** and **Vivien**.

Thomas Stearns Eliot 1888 - 1965

TS Eliot became known in his lifetime as the greatest living poet in the English Language. His reputation was hard won after many years working to support himself and Vivien with his literary work having to be completed at night.

Born and brought up in America, a member of a well-connected Boston family, Eliot idealized European culture and civilisation and wanted to make a place for himself in it. Naturally reticent, he appeared quite of his depth at first in England but gradually adopted its manners as his own, becoming to some degree more English than the English. Despite his apparent coldness, he had a wide circle of friends. He and his first wife, Vivien, enjoyed parties, dances and attending music hall, separately as well as together.

Vivien's illness has often been cited as the source of many of Eliot's difficulties but he was also an invalid, prone to infection and also to nervous collapse. It is impossible to prove whether or not this was caused by the strain of working, writing and looking after Vivien, or whether he was predisposed to illness.

Vivien Haigh Wood - 1888 - 1947

Although Vivien's married life has been recorded anecdotally by the members of her social circle, much less is known about her private life with TS Eliot and her own literary works.

Michael Hastings did a lot of research into the Haigh-Wood family and his researcher uncovered the existence of her diaries in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. To date, none of her works have been published.

Louise Purdon 1894-1968

The character of Louise is based on the real-life friend and confidante, Louise Purdon a chemist's assistant at Allen & Hanbury's Chemist.

"I've
no idea
who I am" *Viv*



Will Keen and Director Lindsay Posner in rehearsal
Photo: Hugo Glendinning

The majority of the action in TOM AND VIV takes place in London between 1915- 1932. This was a period of great social upheaval due to the First World War and the depression in 1930s.

Michael Hastings set out to write the story of a family in decay. Each of the episodes reveals not just another element in the story of the central characters. It also shows how early 20th century society functions and at the same time the corruption and disintegration of the values which hold it up.

The trick of successfully presenting such a personal and a universal story simultaneously, lies in research and discovery through rehearsals.

Michael undertook a lot of research into the Haigh-Wood family when writing the play and the creative team have worked in rehearsal to identify each of the character's world view.

FAMILY

“You see in our family you learn to say nothing at all.”

Vivien's parents are born in the golden era of the still strong British Empire, with investments in trade and property, they belong to a generation that take pride in a 'stiff upper lip' and a no nonsense attitude to life.

Vivien's declining mental health and the unsuitability of her marriage to TOM, are issues that were traditionally dealt with by a cup of tea and a pat on the back.

TOM: I believe family unity is the root of all culture. Vivie is my life. I'll care for her always.

CHARLES: Ah ...

ROSE: (To TOM.) Much too serious. Let's keep life on a social level.

WAR AND A CHANGING SOCIETY

“Laughter in the Coral Kingdom”

The end of World War I prompts the gradual demise of the traditional European monarchies and the system of privilege associated with them. Eliot fears this demise but is also appalled by the moral corruption he finds in the remnants of the class system.

Many of the returning troops question the right of the aristocracy to make decisions about their lives. They join the Labour movement. Abroad, the British Empire begins to show the first signs of disintegration. At home women finally receive the vote in 1918.

“I look towards America and it is barren. Europe is ancient like a coral bed. I live to be a European but I discover corruption.

... Oh, I can hear laughter in the coral kingdom. I know they sniff in their patent socks about this rather dull Yankee. But you can have no idea what a privilege it is to become a European.” **Tom**

Whilst the working and middle-classes become increasingly more vocal about their demands for workers' and citizens' rights, many members of the traditional ruling-classes continue to live for the day, never imagining that their traditional income streams can ever dry up. The Haigh-Woods are one such family.

The 1920s and 1930s see the depression and the general strike in which thousands of workers demonstrate their dissatisfaction by marching on Parliament.

In mainland Europe, the spread of Communism is countered in Germany, Spain and Italy by Nationalist movements. The rise of Hitler's National Socialists finds sympathizers in England.

Anti-semitism and racism are quite fashionable attitudes and not considered offensive until after World War II.

THE ARTS

"After the war, there was a need to be silly again"

In the arts, writers, painters, musicians and dancers are inventing new forms for their work and experimenting with new codes of behaviour, including sexual freedom, in response to the legacy of destruction left by the War. Their work and their social lives attract a lot of attention and are not acceptable to everyone.

One such group is 'The Bloomsbury Group', which begins as an informal social gathering of Cambridge graduates. They grow in notoriety as the group speaks out for Pacifism and Feminism.

The Eliots become part of this crowd, centred on the Bloomsbury area of London, thanks to Vivien's social standing and Eliot's growing reputation as a modernist poet. Much of their life is lived in public and they attend many parties. Eliot also becomes friends with and editor of other modernist poets, championing their work.

Notice how Vivien's financial independence is gradually eroded throughout the course of the action, in contrast to Louise whose status grows over the course of the play.

WOMEN AND THEIR STATUS

"Women, too, must be allowed to speak"

The death toll of millions of young men in the First World War leaves a generation of women without husbands and an immediate need for a changing workforce.

WOMEN AND SOCIALISM

"I gave up women for socialism. Dead loss that"

In the first quarter of the 20th Century, the emancipation of women is still in its infancy. The Suffragette Movement has achieved a great deal to advance the cause of Feminism, including winning the right to vote.

VIV: *You and me, my love –*
 TOM: *Yes –*
 VIV: *Taking on the whole world.*
 TOM: *I wouldn't quite go so far as that.*
 VIV: *Taking the world by surprise then?*
 TOM: *(Brightening) That is the truth.*
 VIV: *Through thick and thin?*
 TOM: *Certainly, mam.*
 VIV: *But together.*
 TOM: *Yes.*
 VIV: *And boring things.*
 TOM: *Many as you like.*

She finishes dressing. Shoes.

VIV: *Boring things ... and there's love, honour ... and ...*
 TOM: *And?*
 VIV: *Oh things ...*
 TOM: *I'm all ears?*
 VIV: *Oh just things and ... and sickness and health ...*
 TOM: *Through all of those. No stopping.*

It is not until the advent of the Second World War, that women and their roles are drastically redefined. The character of Louise represents a rising tide of women who place their hopes in Socialism, joining the Women's Labour Group in 1927. Louise Purdon works up to night nurse and eventually owns her own chemist shop in 1950. However, she never marries. Had she done so, she would have had to give up her job.

MARRIAGE

"I'm not even allowed to publish my own poems under my own name"

Vivien's misdiagnosis and ill health aren't the only things that inhibit her. As a married woman, Vivien surrenders all her legal rights to own property. This means that the property a woman takes into marriage or acquires afterwards, is legally owned by her husband.

WOMEN AND MENTAL HEALTH

"Each day of my life has been a frightful battle to stay sane"

Female literary figures through the ages have often been diagnosed as having lost their wits and have been prey to decisions made on their behalf by husbands and doctors.

The script mentions doctors' bills frequently. At this time, there is no National Health Service. All Viv's treatments are paid for privately, a considerable strain on the Haigh-Woods' and later Eliot's funds.

Vivien's genuine struggle with her mental health leaves her vulnerable and dependent throughout her life. Vivien lives in a time dominated by the legacy of Victorian attitudes as regards women's health. The diagnosis "moral insanity" was invented during the Victorian era and is not one that would be given any credence today. However in 1935, The Lunacy Act of 1890 (www.mind.org.uk) is still in force, giving TOM and MAURICE the power to commit VIV.

Today, the understanding and acknowledgement of mental illnesses has developed considerably. We would now recognize Vivien's problem as 'manic depression', which has a long history of misdiagnosis but is easily treatable. Were she alive today, it is likely that Vivien would never have been committed.

DIVORCE

Many people wonder why and how Eliot and Vivien became so estranged. Did Vivien alienate Eliot by tricking him into marrying her? Many people wonder why and how they stayed together so long.

In the 1920s and 30s, divorce is not as easy to come by as it is now. Divorcing couples find themselves the subject of gossip, headlines in the newspaper. Scandal and controversy always follow. For women who do divorce, financial security is not guaranteed. Divorced women are reliant on their ex-husbands or own family for money and often find that their social circle is closed to them.

For Eliot, a deep religious conviction may play a part. Indeed, he does not remarry until well-after Vivien's death. Perhaps, despite everything, they continued to loved each other.

Character exercise

Using the notes here, the timeline and the character sketches, discuss how each character might feel about:

Family
Money
Work
Religion
Marriage
Fashion
The Arts
The Bloomsbury Group
The War

What other aspects of life might they have strong feelings about which affect the way they behave ?



Laura Elphinstone as Louise
Photo: Hugo Glendinning

Once the world of the play has been decided upon, the rehearsal time is used to bring that world to life for an audience.

The characters in TOM AND VIV are seen to age through the course of the play. The youngest member of the cast is Laura Elphinstone (23), who plays LOUISE.

Curtis Jordan, one of the Almeida Projects team, spoke to Laura after the first two weeks of rehearsals, to see how the production was progressing.

Laura, how did you arrive at this point, working for the Almeida Theatre?

I trained at drama school and I graduated two years ago. At college I did a BTEC diploma in Performing Arts, from there I auditioned for drama schools in London, got a place at Guildhall School of Music and Drama, trained there for three years.

Then you have to try and find an agent or get yourself work. I got an agent and from there got a job at the Royal Court and then auditioned at the Almeida. I live in Islington and have seen quite a lot of stuff at the Almeida. Maggie Lunn (the Almeida's casting director) saw me in *The Crucible* and brought me into audition. The character is working class and in the original 1984 production, she was a Londoner. Now, we've made her from the same area of the UK as myself, the North East.

What part do you play and how does she impact on the story as a whole?

My part is Louise Purdon, who is the pharmacist Vivien gets her prescriptions from. She starts off quite young and throughout the play I age from 19 to 51, as you see our relationship grow. I become friends with Vivien. My character shows how unfair the treatment of Vivien was and disagrees with how she was medicated. At the time, if the trustees, Thomas Eliot and Maurice Haigh-Wood, didn't release her, she couldn't leave the hospital. My character joins the Society for Lunacy Law Reform to understand more and try and find a way of getting her out. I find a loop in the law, that if she escapes and stays out for 30 days, she won't have to go back. Each time she leaves, I hide her, but she is always discovered and sent back.

Do you have a sense of responsibility playing a real person?

There's a lot of information on TS Eliot, and Michael Hastings, who wrote the play, got a lot of information from his Eliot's brother-in-law, Maurice, about the family. Louise is an outsider and a lot of Michael's research is drawn from Vivien's diaries and filtered information from the family. There's not so many facts about her as

“... you can’t let your imagination run too wild, you always have to go back to the facts and the truth of the character.”

the other characters, so I have more scope to play around.

A sense of play is very important when actors are rehearsing, how are the Company approaching the play in rehearsal?

Before rehearsals started I researched certain things that my character needed to know about, such as the role of women in pharmacy. When we started rehearsal we did a read through, with no discussion before hand but with the writer present. Once we’d read it through, we started at the beginning again and went through line by line and shared our collective and individual knowledge, what we’d individually found out. Michael Hastings had done an incredible amount of research and we didn’t have to speculate about what the lines meant, he was able to tell us first hand. When we’d finished that, working out the time scale of the play and what happens between the years, we put it up on its feet and began to concentrate on relationships.

Is rehearsing a play about real people different from one that comes from the writer’s imagination?

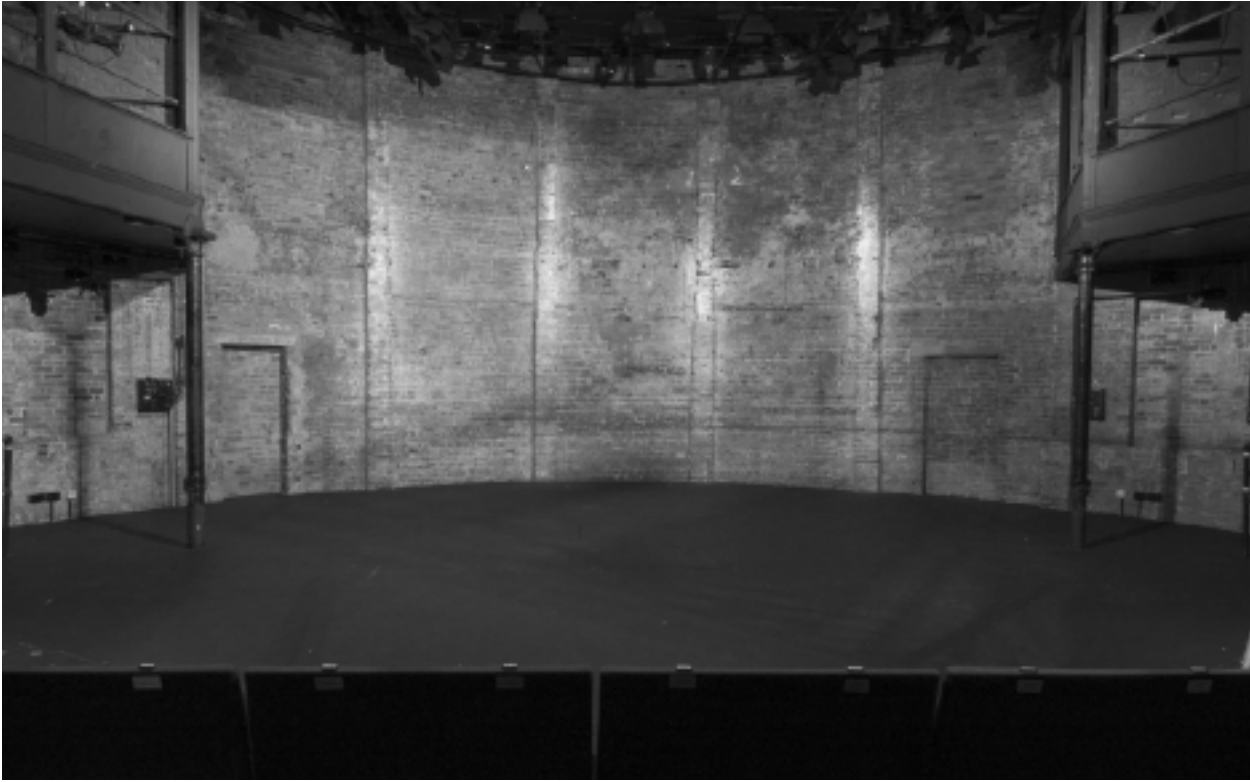
It is. In a sense it’s easier, because you don’t have to make up a lot and you can find out how your character might have felt, because there are hard facts about them. Louise and Vivien were actually friends, so we don’t have to question that. On the other hand, it’s harder because, you can’t let your imagination run too wild, you always have to go back to the facts and the truth of the character. The truth is very important in this play.

What are you gaining personally from your experience of the play?

I’m playing a character with medical knowledge that I don’t have, so I have something new to look into and something new to learn. I’m working with very established actors and it’s a privilege to learn from their experience.

What are the advantages of being a young actor at the Almeida?

I’m very changeable as a young actor, I’m not stuck in my ways as to what I think will and wont work. My ideas and preconceptions haven’t been formed yet, so coming to work in a place like this, where new ideas are encouraged is good. I can learn from the experience of other actors. If you start rehearsing the play and you’ve made decisions about the way your character is, you may not allow things to change and develop. It’s theatre and every night’s different.



The bare Almeida stage
Photo: Lara Platman

STAGING THE EPIC, CAPTURING THE INTIMATE

Designing for the Almeida Theatre always presents an unusual set of challenges for the Designer because the Almeida is not a purpose-built theatre. It is what is known as a “found space”: a venue which was built for another purpose but which theatre-makers have decided to make plays in. This means that there are no curtains, no proscenium arch, no wing space and no fly-tower.

At the Almeida, the stage picture is the first and last thing the audience sees. The visual relationship which the creative team greets and leaves us with has a subtle psychological impact on the audience. The audience is very close to the stage, so the details on the set, props and costume have to be very precise to ensure that the visual language does not become confused or cluttered.

TOM AND VIV spans the period between 1915 and 1947, encompassing two World Wars, the Great Depression, the last days of the British Empire and the formation of the current governing political party of this country. The action takes place in a variety of different locations and the script calls for a number of very specific costumes.

What might be the problems facing the designer, Giles Cadle, and the director, Lindsay Posner, in terms of set and costume - in order to tell the story of TOM AND VIV as clearly and fluidly as possible on the Almeida stage?

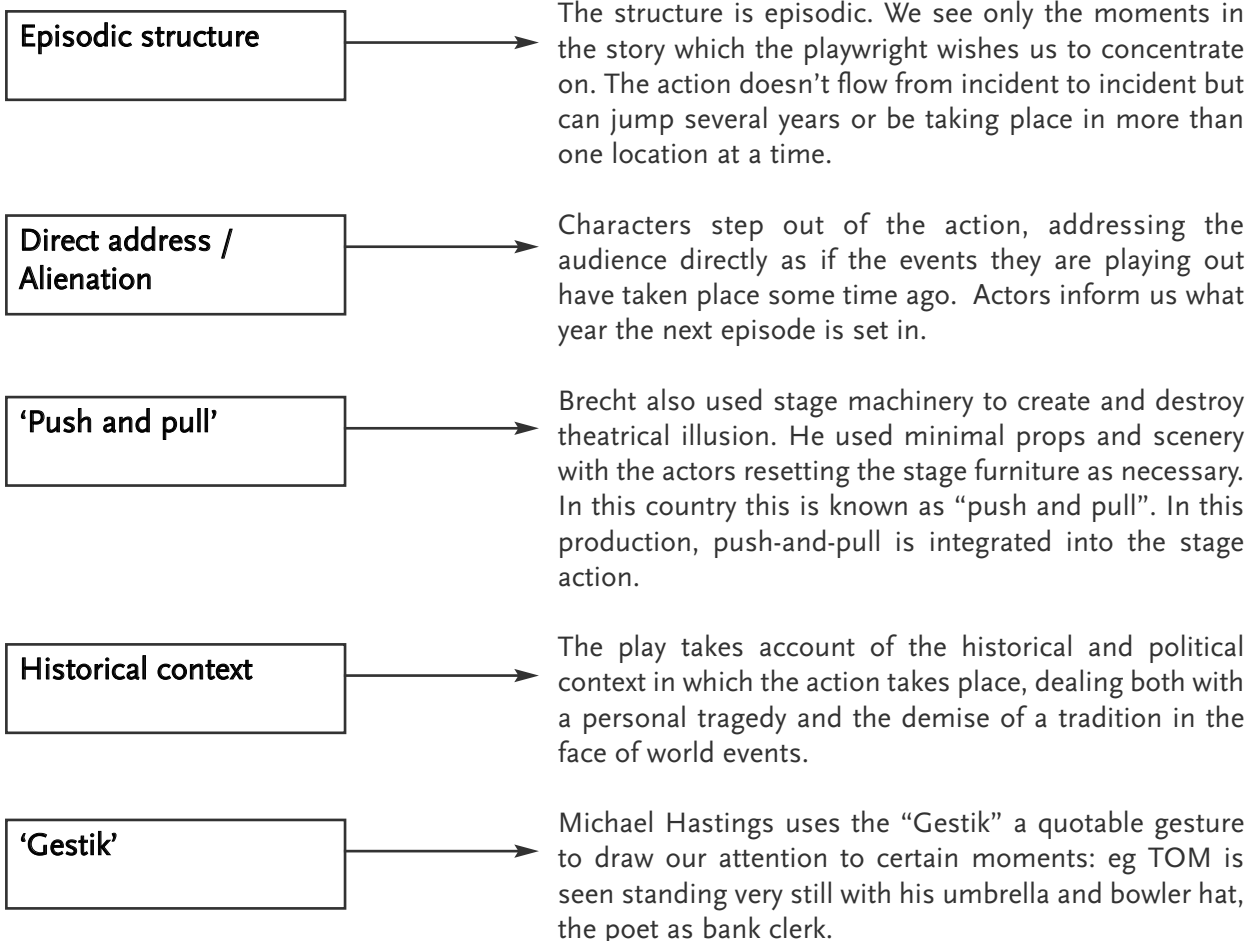
When you have seen the production, take a moment to consider how light, music and sound play a role in telling the story.

Michael Hastings compares the decline of the Haigh-Wood family with the epic story of the BUDDENBROOKS in the novel of the same name by Thomas Mann. He wanted to tell their story over time and has chosen the form of Epic Theatre – a form of theatre just finding its voice when the events in the play take place.

The Epic is a literary form which occurs in every civilisation – often as an oral poem- sometimes as a written text, such as Homer’s ODYSSEY. It deals with grand themes centring on the exploits of an heroic individual in pursuit of a cause.

The phrase Epic Theatre was first coined by Piscator in Germany in the early 20th century but its most famous exponent is Brecht. Influenced by the theatre of the Greeks, Shakespeare and his Marxist beliefs, Brecht created a form of theatre which provoked the audience into using its reason whilst watching his plays: empathising with the characters’ dilemmas rather than sympathising with them on a purely emotional level.

This production of TOM AND VIV isn’t a strict piece of Epic Theatre but the influences are clearly there:



Alienation techniques

EXERCISE

Discuss in your group: What makes a joke satire and what makes a joke racist?

Where do you draw the line?

How did the audience react at the performance you saw? Do you think different audiences would react differently?

Are there other elements of Epic Theatre which you notice in the playing style or the writing?

What other theatrical influences do you notice?

What do you think Michael is suggesting with this image each time we see it? What is the value of repetition? Michael has characters make fools of themselves by satirising their attitudes to servants, Black people, Jews and women. This can be a risky strategy as the characters use language we now find to be offensive but it is important to be reminded about times when such language and behaviour was commonplace. As often with satire, these sketches can be quite funny.

DOUBLING

Will Keen plays both TOM and TODD the American Doctor who appears at the end of the play. Benjamin Whitrow plays both CHARLES, VIV's father, JANES and a Bank Clerk.

Michael Hastings says it was instinct to have these roles doubled.

When you have seen the production, discuss what dramatic effect is created by casting the roles in this way. What would be lost if you cast different actors?

AGING UP - PLAYING TOM AND VIV

The actors have to age their characters considerably over the course of the play. Eg: Louise is 19 as the lights go up and 51 at the final black out.

It was decided in rehearsals not to use lots of make-up and special effects to show how the characters have aged, so the cast had to develop their skills in movement to change their postures and rhythms to those of older people. The voice of some of the characters evolves too. For example, TOM loses his American accent as the play progresses, as Eliot did in life, becoming more integrated into English society.

I'm, as sane as you are Maurice. Which may not amount to much, God knows.
Viv

TOM AND VIV, A TRAGI-COMEDY

Exercise

Consider how wearing different types of clothes might change your movement.

Think about how you move in different situations –

Meeting a boyfriend/girlfriend's parents for the first time, in a library, in a club, at a funeral, on your first day at work. What is influencing you?

Observe how your parents move. What is it about them that makes their movement different from yours? What factors in the aging process might influence the way the characters move at different moments in the play?

Find a characteristic gesture for a character and then see how they change in different situations.

I have tried to write a play about this family. For my sins, not withstanding the grief and sadness here, I have also tried to write a comedy in TOM AND VIV. I intended a comedy on the same terms as Chekov understood comedy. The laughter in Moscow of those first audiences at Three Sisters. Their innate awareness that this provincial army family and its three girls could never have survived in great Moscow. **Michael Hastings**

Michael writes that he wants TOM AND VIV to be Chekovian to the extent that no character is allowed to be taken too seriously. Even the most dreadful of situations is turned on its head e.g. ROSE thinks she has been stabbed but it is only a joke-shop knife.

One of the techniques Michael uses to achieve this affect is juxtaposition of moments:

MAURICE: Ah! ... I'm dying to meet the yank. Every family needs a wildcrazed sort of black sheep. Does he go in for polka dot ties? And sort of crashing coloured shirts?

TOM enters in a dark suit and tie. He brings a laundry basket. TOM looks sombre.

Set this scene up. How do you think the conversation might proceed? MAURICE wants to make friends, TOM has just returned from a very stressful honeymoon. How does VIV react in such a situation?

Projects packs can only scratch the surface of a production of a play. Your own research into the areas which particularly excite you will always go much deeper. Research is a necessary skill to acquire if you are considering any form of career in theatre-making. If you want to do more work, this list may help you get started:

Publisher: Oberon Books (1999)
ISBN: 1840021098

The playscript is available to buy from the Box Office and Kiosk at the Almeida Theatre.

***TOM AND VIV* by Michael Hastings**

TOM AND VIV: a film version directed by Brian Gilbert is available on DVD and Video from Amazon. Made in 1994, it stars Willem Dafoe and Miranda Richardson.

TOM AND VIV was first produced at the Royal Court, directed by the then Artistic Director, Max Stafford Clark. The play received criticism for its portrayal of TS Eliot. To read about the controversy that surrounded the production when it was first seen go to:

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9AoCE3DA1239F932A25750CoA962948260>

Two unofficial biographies have been written about the eponymous characters. Michael Hastings says he and the other writers shared their research but draw different conclusions.

Publisher: Simon & Schuster (Paper) (Sep 1985)
ISBN: 0671605720

***TS ELIOT – A LIFE* by Peter Ackroyd**

Publisher: Constable and Robinson (Sep 2002)
ISBN: 1841196363

***PAINTED SHADOW: A LIFE OF VIVIENNE ELIOT* by Carole Seymour-Jones**

When Eliot left Lloyds Bank, he joined a now-famous publishing house. To find out about the impact of his work at FABER AND FABER – visit:

http://www.faber.co.uk/about_faber.html

you can also download a free brief history of their work.

To find about the work of Modernist poets and the figures of the Bloomsbury Group:

<http://bloomsbury.denise-randle.co.uk/intro>

<http://www.tate.org.uk/archive/journeys/>

<http://www.channel4.com/history/microsites/H/history/guide20/partoga>

Publisher: Methuen Drama (Jul 1977)
ISBN: 041334360X

For more about Epic Theatre

***The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht* (Paperback) by John Willett**

For information about Michael Hastings and the creative team, start with the production programme and our website:

www.almeida.co.uk



Projections Project, August 2006 Photo: Phil Pepper

ALMEIDA PROJECTS

Tom and Viv Projects Pack

Written by Rebecca Manson Jones
and Curtis Jordan

Design and layout by Ned Glasier

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Platman.

Almeida Projects draws on the expertise of some of the best theatre artists in the UK and brings them together with our community partners, promoting innovative creative exchange between the Almeida and its local community.

Since our launch in 2003, we have worked with over 5,000 people from schools and other organisations across Islington on a diverse range of projects based on the Almeida's plays and operas.

We also run introductory workshops for students from across the UK visiting our unique theatre building.

For more information about Almeida Projects, please visit the Almeida's website, www.almeida.co.uk or contact us directly by emailing projects@almeida.co.uk or by calling 020 7288 4916.

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