

When the Rain Stops Falling

by Andrew Bovell



PROJECTS PACK

compiled by
Charlie Payne

ALMEIDA
PROJECTS



Jonathan Cullen, Phoebe Nicholls and Lisa Dillon
Photo: John Haynes

Welcome to the Almeida Theatre's production of *When the Rain Stops Falling* by Andrew Bovell.

"Terrible weather. Still, there are people drowning in Bangladesh so we shouldn't complain."

"Are there?"

"Are there...?"

"People drowning...in Bangladesh?"

"No. It's just a figure of speech. It's something my mother says. Though they often do. Each monsoon. But they're not at the moment. At least I hope not."

This is an extract from Andrew Bovell's *When the Rain Stops Falling*, a casual expression, an invented version of 'it's not the end of the world'. It reappears as a leitmotif through that play, echoed in the mouths of characters in three generations. By the final generation, in 2039, people are drowning, and Bangladesh is, in fact, flooding.

The play poses at its core, the very fundamental the question of nature versus nurture: are our actions, like the weather, sometimes driven by forces out of our control? One unnatural act, committed by Henry Law in 1959 upsets the balance of nature: successive generations of one family are torn apart, spread between two continents with pieces of their history missing from their lives. And so too the weather: is not snow in Adelaide just as unnatural as the murder of a child, a father leaving a son or parents committing suicide?

Director Michael Attenborough describes this play as "purely theatrical", in that he believes it could not be written for any medium other than theatre. Where else, he asks, can so much be 'said', but not actually spoken? On the Almeida stage this production draws the audience into a unique and intimate world, and offers just that, a truly *theatrical* experience.

We very much hope that you and your students are also able to draw energy both from the play's ideas and the power and skill with which they are presented. For more information about Almeida Projects please visit our website:

www.almeida.co.uk/projects

We look forward to welcoming you to the Almeida Theatre soon.

Charlie, Natalie, and Anne
Almeida Projects

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RESOURCE PACK

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About Almeida Projects

Under the artistic directorship of Michael Attenborough, the Almeida Theatre presents an eclectic programme, ranging from redefined major classics to the cutting edge of brand new work.

ALMEIDA PROJECTS

Almeida Projects is the Almeida Theatre's community and learning programme. Inspired by the main-house productions, Projects deliver 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. By opening up its doors to local young people, Almeida Projects aims to demystify the craft of theatre making and the act of theatregoing.

RESOURCE PACK

This pack aims to provide an insight into our process in 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.

INTRODUCTORY WORKSHOPS

Before you see the production, one of our Projects Team may be visiting you for a workshop, bringing you insight into 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, ready to work and wearing appropriate clothes and shoes.



When the Rain Stops Falling By Andrew Bovell

Cast:

Gabriel York	Richard Hope
Elizabeth Law (older)	Phoebe Nicholls
Gabriel Law	Tom Mison
Elizabeth Law (younger)	Lisa Dillon
Henry Law	Jonathan Cullen
Joe Ryan	Simon Burke
Gabrielle York (older)	Leah Purcell
Gabrielle York (younger)	Naomi Bentley
Andrew Price	Sargon Yelda

Creative team:

Director	Michael Attenborough
Design	Miriam Buether
Lighting	Colin Grenfell
Video and Projection	Lorna Heavey
Music	Stephen Warbeck
Sound	Paul Arditti
Movement	Imogen Knight
Casting	Julia Horan
Dialect Coach	Catherine Weate
Assistant Director	Imogen Knight
Assistant Designer	Alicia Farrow

Production Manager	Igor
Company Manager	Rupert Carlile
Stage Manager	Laura Flowers
Deputy Stage Manager	Lorna Seymour
Assistant Stage Manager	Claire Jowett
Costume Supervisor	Chris Cahill
Wardrobe Supervisor	Catrina Richardson
Wardrobe Deputy	Eleanor Dolan
Chief Technician	Jason Wescombe
Lighting Technician	Robin Fisher
Sound Technician	Howard Wood
Theatre Technician	Adriano Agostino
Stage Crew	Ben Lee
Production Carpenter	Andrew Ainsworth

Set built & painted by	All Scene All Props
Video Production	Headfirst Productions
Stage Management Placement	Victoria Loye
Wardrobe Work Placement	Fiona Trump
Production Photography	John Haynes
Rehearsal Photography	Bridget Jones

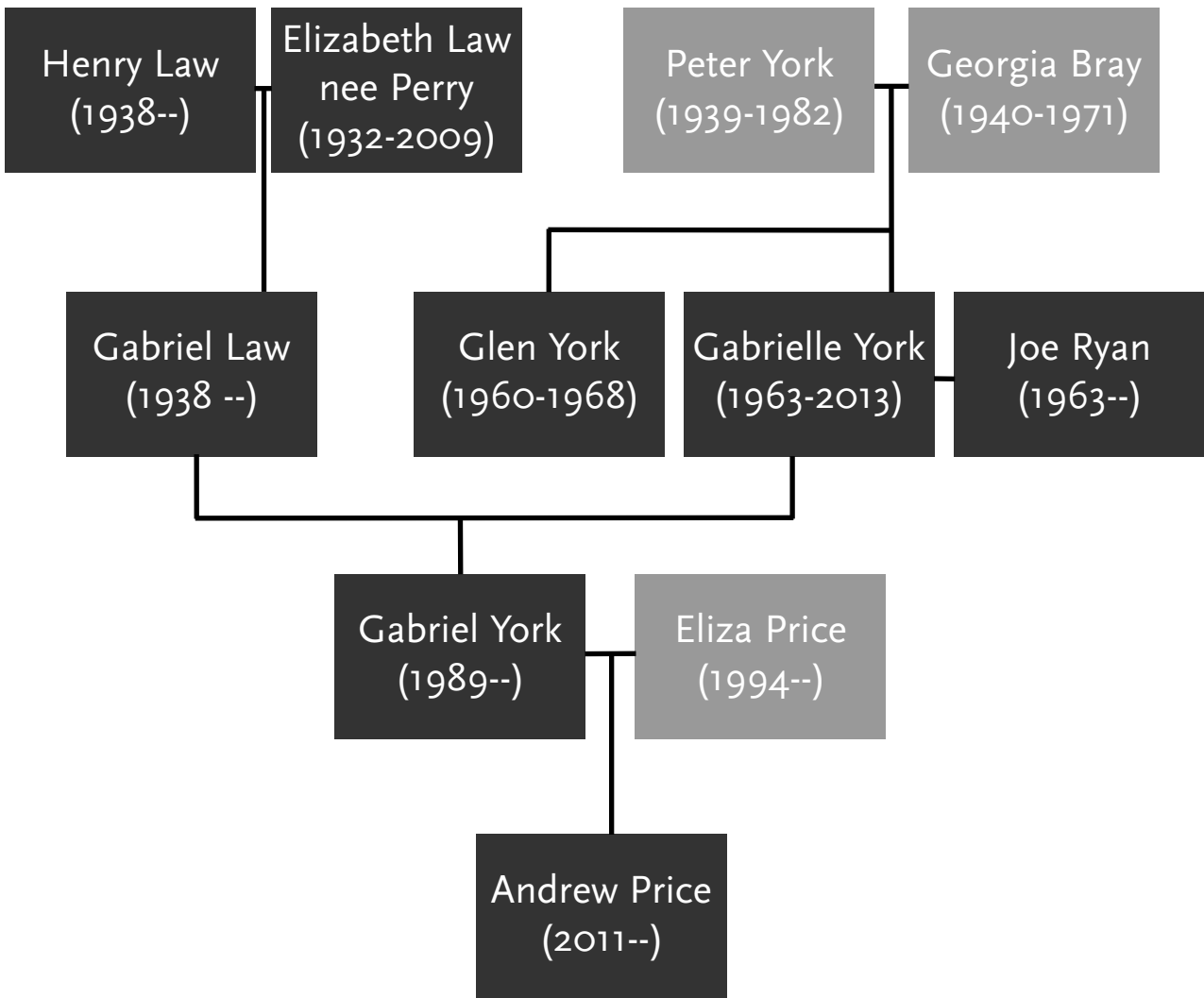
For Almeida Projects:

Director, Almeida Projects (Maternity Cover)	Anne Langford
Director, Almeida Projects	Samantha Lane
Projects Co-ordinator	Natalie Mitchell
Projects Administrator	Charlie Payne



Leah Purcell and Naomi Bentley
Photo: John Haynes

Family Tree / Settings



Settings

The play takes place between 1959 and 2039.

1960s

A small flat in London

Henry Law
Elizabeth Law (younger)

1988

The same flat in London

Elizabeth Law (older)
Gabriel Law

1988

The Coorong and Uluru

Gabrielle York (younger)
Gabriel Law

2013

A small flat in Adelaide and a nearby park

Gabrielle York (older)
Joe Ryan

2039

A small flat in Alice Springs

Gabriel York
Andrew Price



Richard Hope
Photo: John Haynes

I do not believe in God. I don't believe in miracles. I cannot explain how a fish can fall from the sky in a town surrounded by desert... But it is truly the most wonderful thing that has ever happened to me.

Gabriel York

The past is a mystery. And yet, perhaps it will be easier to explain than the fish.

Gabriel York

The action of the play moves fluidly from one time to the next, with locations and time periods overlapping. The scene titles are taken from the script.

A STEADY FALL OF RAIN

Gabriel York stands in the rain. People pass him by, back and forth, carrying umbrellas and wearing raincoats. Suddenly everyone stops. Gabriel lets out a scream and woman falls to her knees. A large fish falls from the sky and lands at Gabriel's feet.

GABRIEL YORK'S ROOM

Alice Springs, 2039. Gabriel is holding the fish as he talks to the audience. He tells us he is fascinated by the past; in his lifetime, fish have been extinct for many years – he has not seen one since he was a boy. He tells us that fish are now a rare delicacy, caught and served secretly, for large sums of money in exclusive restaurants – something he could never afford. He begins to recount a story of receiving an unexpected phone call from his estranged son, Andrew. Gabriel has not seen Andrew for many years, having left the family when Andrew was very young. He never believed he was the fathering type, and felt his son would be better off without him there. But still, he sent back money for his son, and the occasional card. Andrew called to say that he is in Alice Springs and would like to see Gabriel. Gabriel does not know what to say and struggles to come to terms with the reality of hearing his grown son's voice on the telephone. He hangs up and returns to reading his history book, but he cannot concentrate and realises that he is crying. He calls Andrew back and apologises for hanging up, inviting his son round for lunch the following day. After the phone call has ended, Gabriel tells us he instantly regretted the invitation to lunch, for what will he serve a son he hasn't seen for twenty years? He worries what his son will think of him, and of his filthy apartment, which hasn't been cleaned for some time. So he begins to clean and repaint the apartment ("off white. Pure white being too stark"), but when he has finished, it looks just the same. He suddenly realises that the night has passed: his son will arrive shortly, and he has no time to shop for food. He tells us it has been raining outside for days, the rivers are swollen and the bridges are closed: the conditions outside are dangerous, and he may not even make it to the shops. All he has to cook is the fish. He puts it in the oven to cook and awaits his son's arrival. He finishes by supposing what his son wants: to find out what all sons, he says, want from their fathers: to know who he is, where he comes from, where he belongs. Gabriel does not yet know what he can tell his son: the past is a mystery.

ROOMS

Characters in turn enter their own rooms, in the same space and layout but in different times, and hang up their coat and umbrellas; each is lost in thought. First Elizabeth Law, in her fifties, enters and shakes water from her umbrella – she is the woman who fell in the first scene. She hangs up her umbrella and raincoat and crosses to look out of the window. There follows the young Gabrielle York, Joe Ryan, the older Gabrielle York, the younger Elizabeth Law, Gabriel Law and finally Henry Law. Each character repeats the same action: hanging up their coat and umbrella, looking out of the window, before moving to the table, filling their bowl with soup and sitting down to eat. All seven finish sat at the table, eating their soup in silence, in a shared rhythm. The older Elizabeth breaks the silence, and we are in...

ELIZABETH LAW'S ROOM

London, England, 1988

Gabriel Law and Elizabeth Law. Elizabeth asks Gabriel how his soup is, as she was not sure what to make him when he called to suggest



Lisa Dillon and Jonathan Cullen
Photo: John Haynes

It wasn't meant to happen, was it? Perhaps ten years ago. When I was ready. But not now Henry. Because I've got on. I've made a life without it and to be frank, to be perfectly honest I'm just not sure I want it.

Elizabeth Law (younger)

I hate nights like this. When I was kid they would frighten me. Still do... On nights like this ships are lost at sea.

Gabrielle York (older)

coming for lunch. The atmosphere is uncomfortable and their conversation terse. Gabriel notices that something in the room has changed, and Elizabeth tells him she has painted it. Gabriel is surprised: he could have helped his mother, if she had asked. The younger Elizabeth Law enters; as in the previous scene, she hangs up her coat and umbrella, and looks, lost in thought, out of the window. The older Elizabeth and Gabriel continue their scene. Elizabeth talks about Gabriel's fussy eating habits as a child, and how she came to buy the fish for the soup they are eating – from a new fishmonger on the high street. The younger Elizabeth sits and eats soup. Gabriel asks (older) Elizabeth how she is – Elizabeth tells him she has had a fall.

ELIZABETH LAW'S ROOM, THE SAME ROOM

London, England, 1959

Henry Law enters from the rain, hangs up his coat and umbrella. Elizabeth, the younger, sat at the table with soup, offers him some. Henry talks about the extreme weather outside, comparing it to 1816, 'The Year Without A Summer'. They discuss history and Henry marvels at Elizabeth's mind, her intelligence. Henry then recounts a story of a woman following him home all the way from the station. She was calling him, with a hat she supposed was his – although he does not have a hat. Finally when she has caught up with him, he is too embarrassed to tell her that the hat was not his, so he accepts it. Henry tries the hat on for size. Elizabeth tells Henry that she is pregnant. It is unexpected, and she does not seem to want the child, not now. Henry assures her that they will manage.

JOE RYAN'S AND GABRIELLE YORK'S ROOM

Adelaide, Australia, 2013

The older Gabrielle York enters, and hangs up her coat and umbrella. Her husband Joe Ryan is there. He tells Gabrielle that he has lost his hat. Gabrielle has been out for a walk in the rain. Joe offers her some fish soup. He pours a bowl and she sits to eat, asking if her son has called. Gabrielle asks Joe what is happening to her – he gently reassures her that she is ok, but her mind is just wandering a bit, and it is: she repeats herself and seems detached. Joe leaves to try and find his hat. We move to...

A ROADHOUSE

The Coorong, Australia, 1988

The younger Gabrielle York is staring out of the window. Gabriel Law enters and sees her standing there. She is startled and surprised – there are not many tourists visiting at this time of year, when the weather is bad. Gabrielle asks if he wants food, she has fish soup. He does not like fish soup – the last time he ate it at his mother's, he was violently ill. Gabriel asks for a toasted sandwich – with no ham. Gabrielle is intrigued by Gabriel. He asks if there is a room free: he would like to stay for a couple of days. Gabrielle doesn't know why – she thinks the Coorong is the ugliest place in the world. Gabriel disagrees – he thinks London is the ugliest place in the world. They discover they share the same name, and tell each other how they were given it. Gabrielle tells him that her parents are both dead – they killed themselves. Gabriel takes a seat and we are back in...

ELIZABETH LAW'S ROOM

London, England, 1988

Elizabeth tells Gabriel that she fell in the street, getting the fish for the soup. Gabriel says he is sorry that she fell. Elizabeth rebuts his apology, as he didn't push her; Gabriel tells her it feels like he did. Elizabeth talks of the fear of falling, as she gets older, and she is alone. She asks Gabriel if he likes the colour of the walls ("off white. Pure white being too stark"). Gabriel starts to bring up the past but



Tom Mison and Naomi Bentley
Photo: John Haynes

I don't know what happened to your father. He left. Presumably because he was unhappy. But ultimately it was not something I could prevent.

Elizabeth Law (older)

Diderot also said "Only passions, great passions can elevate the soul to great things". But a woman without passion in her life, has nothing to do but wait. This last being said not by Diderot but by me.

Elizabeth Law (younger)

Elizabeth sharply stops him still – this is her home and he is not to judge her. Gabriel tells her that he simply cares for her. Gabriel presses on, asking about his father. It is clear that he has tried to have this conversation before, but Elizabeth is unmoveable. She will not tell him about his father. But Gabriel has been looking through some old boxes recently, containing relics from his childhood – cards, toys and photos. He tells his mother about finding a newspaper article about a man's disappearance at Ayres Rock, as a child he tucked into the back of his stamp album; he still cannot stop thinking about who this man was, and what happened to him. Henry Law enters and we are in...

ELIZABETH LAW'S ROOM, THE SAME ROOM

London, England, 1962

The younger Elizabeth is folding nappies, lost in thought. Henry enters from the rain – he has lost his umbrella, left it on the train. Elizabeth offers him some fish soup. Henry tells Elizabeth about an incident that just happened: on the crowded train, lost in his own thoughts, he suddenly realised that he had his hand down his trousers and was masturbating. At first he thought nobody had seen him, but then a woman alighted from the train and told him he should be ashamed of himself – "there are children on this train." He was appalled – he was not trying to be offensive. Elizabeth dismisses it as unintentional. She is desperate for company and conversation, having been stuck indoors all day. She asks him what he was thinking about on the train, when he was masturbating; he replies, the weather, specifically, the Hurricane Callixtus which tore apart the Caribbean in 1780. Elizabeth talks with knowledge about Diderot, writing at the same time; she expresses great passion about the Enlightenment, this evolution of the human mind, the ability of man to save himself. She tells the story of Diderot being given a beautiful dressing gown, and the effect of the gift making his other worldly possessions feel inferior – a critique of capitalism before capitalism existed. She finishes. Henry asks her what is the worst she thinks, when waiting for him to return home; she worries that he has been with another woman. Henry denies this, he leaves. Elizabeth quotes Diderot and tells us that without passion in her life, all she can do is wait. It begins to rain. Elizabeth appears to be standing in a park in the rain on a dark night. Joe Ryan enters, Elizabeth leaves, and we are in...

A PARK

Adelaide, Australia, 2013

Joe finds his hat on a park bench beneath a tree. He picks it up, and recites a letter that he is writing in his head. He is writing to his son, telling him of his mother's deteriorating condition, and asking him to visit. Joe places the hat on his head.

The younger Gabrielle York enters, staring out over the waters of the Coorong. She has an unlit cigarette in her hand. Gabriel Law enters to find her.

Joe recounts his memory from 1988, when he was driving from home to the Coorong after spending a time in Sydney. He was overtaken by a speeding car, and then shortly afterwards he finds the car crashed into a tree. He pulls over and sees the devastation – the driver is dead and the passenger badly injured. He tries to rouse her, to keep her alive, holding her hand tight. He asks her name. She tells him it's Gabrielle. He tells us he's still holding on to her. And we shift to...

A BEACH

The Coorong, Australia, 1988



Leah Purcell
Photo: John Haynes

So that's what I'm doing here. Trying to see what my father saw. Trying to think what he thought. Trying to understand why he went away.

Gabriel Law

Henry: I have such a yearning... to be more than I am.

Elizabeth: But you're everything. To me you're everything. What more could you be?

Night, waves on the shore and a storm on the horizon. Younger Gabrielle and Gabriel Law again. Gabrielle says she does not smoke, but likes to hold a cigarette – it reminds her of her mother. They have just had sex – it was Gabrielle's first time. She was glad to get rid of her virginity, and tells him that's all she was after. Gabriel asks her why her parents killed themselves. Gabrielle tells him about her brother, who was taken as a child – they found his shoe on the beach. She is uncomfortable talking about this and changes the subject, asking Gabriel what he is doing in the Coorong. Gabriel tells her his father once sent a postcard from here and wanted to see it for himself, to try and make sense of his estranged father. He tells Gabrielle that his father left the family when he was seven, and sent the odd postcard, but that his mother will not talk about him. He is in the Coorong to try and understand why his father went away. Gabriel gives Gabrielle a piece of driftwood, a keepsake to remember her first time.

ELIZABETH LAW'S ROOM

London, England, 1988

Gabriel offers to help his mother clear the table after the meal. Elizabeth asks him if he needs to leave. Gabriel asks if this is because she wants a drink; he interrogates her about her drinking habit. He then tells her he is going away, to visit Australia, inspired by the newspaper clipping he had found. Elizabeth is still and silent. He moves to her, she rebukes his offer of contact. He leaves. Elizabeth remains standing there in the presence of her younger self as we are in...

HENRY & ELIZABETH'S ROOM

London, England, 1965

Henry enters, his face bloodied and his clothes wet. Elizabeth is shocked and moves to clean the blood from his face. Henry says there has been an accident and his wallet has been stolen. Elizabeth suggests calling the police, but Henry refuses to get them involved; Elizabeth cannot understand this. Henry suggests that they go away, to Australia, to start a new life: he has a yearning for more. He is frightened of losing his son; again, Elizabeth does not understand and she exits as we see the older Elizabeth pour and drink a glass of wine.

A GRAVEYARD

The Coorong, Australia, 1988

The younger Gabrielle stands before three headstones. The older Gabrielle stands some distance apart in a nightgown, watching her younger self, lost somewhere in her memory.

Gabriel Law enters and joins the younger Gabrielle at the graves. He reads the headstones of Gabrielle's family. He notes that he was born in the same year as her brother and asks what happened to him. Gabrielle tells him he was murdered, and that is what sent her mother over the edge. They found his clothes separate to the body. She talks of the cruelty of parents. She was not sure she could trust Gabriel, but now realises that she is not alone. He asks her to come away with her. She is unsure. He says he will wait in the, play one song, and leave when it is over. She can join him, or not. He leaves. Gabrielle stands there, undecided, as older Gabrielle recounts the memory of making that life-changing decision to leave, and the younger Gabrielle runs after Gabriel. Joe enters in his underpants, and we are in...

JOE & GABRIELLE'S ROOM

Adelaide, Australia, 2013

Joe asks Gabrielle to come back to bed. She does not seem to know him. She tells Joe to leave. He tells her that they are married and that



Phoebe Nicholls and Lisa Dillon
Photo: John Haynes

Joe: *You're not yourself.*

Gabrielle: *Then who am I?... Who am I Joe?...*

Isn't it sad Henry? Isn't it sad that we have drifted so far from one another that we have nothing left to talk about other than the colour of the walls?

Elizabeth Law

they are in their shared home. Gabrielle does not understand. Lost in her memories, she says this is not what she wanted. Again she tells Joe to leave. He does.

THE CAMPSITE

Uluru, Australia, 1988

Gabriel and the younger Gabrielle are sat by a fire at night. Gabriel is writing a letter to his mother. The older Elizabeth Law is still sat at the table with the glass of wine. The younger Elizabeth sits opposite and also drinks. The older Elizabeth reads aloud a letter from Gabriel. Gabrielle asks Gabriel why his father left. He does not know an answer. Gabriel is planning to climb to the top of Uluru, as the man in the newspaper article had done. Gabrielle does not want him to and fears for his safety: "let the dead take care of the dead". She asks him to choose, and he chooses the missing man. Both Elizabeths drink.

HENRY & ELIZABETH'S ROOM

London, England, 1968

Henry enters from the rain. He remarks on Elizabeth's drinking as unusual, and notices a change in the room. Elizabeth tells him she has painted the walls. She suddenly and furiously throws her glass of wine in Henry's face. She reveals that two policeman came to the flat today, having accused Henry of molesting a seven-year-old boy in the park. Henry denies this as a misunderstanding. This is also what Elizabeth told the police, that he would not harm a young boy, as he has a son of his own. So after they had left, Elizabeth tells of how she scrubbed the house clean, and painted the walls, but it still looked the same. It was when she was putting the furniture back into position that a leather satchel fell from the top of the wardrobe and landed at her feet. Inside were a number of obscene and pornographic images of young boys, including pictures of their son. Elizabeth asks if Henry has touched their son. He has not, but is frightened he might. He says he did not choose this. Elizabeth tells him to leave the country, to go to Australia, to get out of their lives forever: Elizabeth will not tell the police about his disappearance but in return every trace of him will be removed from Gabriel's life and he can never see his son again.

ON TOP OF ULURU

Australia, 1972 / 1988

It is night. Henry Law reads aloud the postcards he is writing to his son from the different points in time of his journey in Australia. Gabriel Law enters shortly followed by Gabrielle, who warns him to stay away from the edge. Through the dark, through time, Henry asks his son to come with him, and to forgive him. It begins to snow and we move to...

A PARK

Adelaide, Australia, 2013

It is snowing. Joe Ryan sits on a park bench with his raincoat over his pyjamas. Older Gabrielle enters, she finds him. Joe remarks that the weather is turning against them – it should not be snowing in Adelaide. Gabrielle thinks it is beautiful. Joe tells Gabrielle he has waited 25 years for her to love him – he believes he stole her when he found her in the car crash. Gabrielle says she has always loved him, but he returns that it's not the way he loved her. He is angry at himself for not being able to make Gabrielle happy. She also made her son's life hell, which is why he left, and hasn't called for seven years. Gabrielle remarks on the cruelty of children. Gabrielle says she has had enough, she wants Joe to let her go, to help her die – she has pills. Joe asks what will become



Leah Purcell and Simon Burke
Photo: John Haynes

The weather is turning against us Gabrielle. It should not be snowing in Adelaide.

Joe Ryan

Sometimes I feel like I'm getting smaller. Sometimes I feel like I'm just nothing at all. But then I catch a glimpse of myself in the mirror and I see that I am still here.

I am still here.

I am still here.

Elizabeth Law

of him, without her? She advises him to go back to the Coorong, to find a woman who will truly love him.

A CAR

The Hay Plain, Australia, 1988

The younger Gabrielle and Gabriel are sat in a car, moving down the highway at 140 kilometres per hour. Inside the car, it is very still. Gabriel tells Gabrielle he loves her. She says it has to mean something, forever, not just for now. He repeats again that he loves her. Gabrielle asks a question she has to know: what year was Gabriel's father in the Coorong. He answers, 1968, the same year that her brother was taken. Gabriel looks at her as the weight of this tragic possibility dawns on him. Gabrielle shouts at him to watch the road.

FOUR ROOMS

England / Australia, 1968 / 1988 / 1988 / 2013

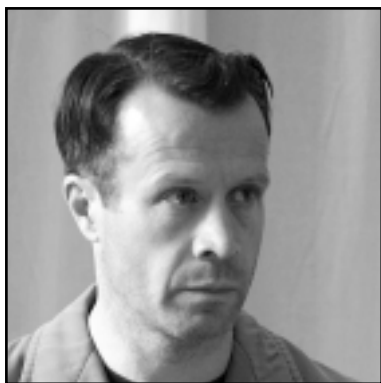
Each room is superimposed on the other. A telephone is ringing. Older Elizabeth is sat at the table with her wine, as before. The younger Elizabeth sets the table for two, as the older Elizabeth answers the telephone. It is Gabrielle, calling from Australia. She tells Elizabeth of the news of Gabriel's death in the car crash. Elizabeth asks Gabrielle to arrange the funeral and have him cremated. The ashes can stay in Australia. Gabrielle tells Elizabeth that she is pregnant. Elizabeth offers to send money to take care of it, but Gabrielle wants to keep the child: if it's a boy she will call him Gabriel, after his father.

The older Gabrielle takes the ashes and pours them into her bowl of fish soup. Slowly and deliberately she eats. The other three women place their hands on their bellies. Joe enters. He has made the bed and prepared the bedroom. Gabrielle cannot remember who he is. Joe recites a letter he is writing to his son, telling of Gabrielle's death. After a moment's silence, he screams.

GABRIEL YORK'S ROOM

Alice Springs, Australia, 2039

Gabriel York is sat at the table still set for two. There is a knock at the door and his son, Andrew Price enters. After an awkward introduction they sit down to eat – it's fish, the one that fell from the sky. Andrew has never eaten fish before. Andrew has bought Gabriel a gift, of a new dressing gown. Gabriel likes the gift very much but remarks that it makes the rest of his possessions in the flat look old. Andrew asks his father why he left when he was so young, he is not angry any more but he wants some answers. Gabriel brings on a suitcase, containing his gifts for Andrew, as the older and younger Elizabeth Law and the older and younger Gabrielle York and Joe Ryan and Gabriel York enter, take a plate and a seat at the table. Gabriel opens the suitcase and takes out items in turn, passing them down the table, through the hands of the seated ancestors to Andrew. First, the driftwood that Gabriel Law gave Gabrielle York; next a boy's show; the urn that contained Gabriel Law's ashes; a book sent to him by his grandmother, Diderot; Joe Ryan's hat; the letters Joe Ryan wrote to tell Gabriel that his mother was dying; and finally the postcards written by Henry Law to his son. He reads aloud the last postcard and in turn asks for his son's forgiveness. Gabriel brings in the fish and they all admire its beauty. They all look up, noticing that the rain has stopped falling.



HENRY LAW

Jonathan Cullen

Henry works in the City. He is married to Elizabeth Law. He is a loving husband and father. He dreams of a new life in Australia, but Elizabeth is happy in London. He is involved in a number of scandalous incidents, and then his wife discovers his collection of images of young children. He is exiled from the family home to Australia, from where he sends postcards to his son, before he disappears, never to be seen again.



ELIZABETH LAW

Lisa Dillon / Phoebe Nicholls

Elizabeth was a teacher and academic before she had a child, with an interest in the literature of the Enlightenment period. She fell pregnant unexpectedly and after having the child, did not return to work. She did not take naturally to being a mother and 'never liked mothers'. She has an uncomfortable relationship with her son Gabriel, whom she brought up single-handed after she threw her husband out of the home, upon finding obscene images of young children in amongst his possessions.



GABRIEL LAW

Tom Mison

Gabriel is the son of Henry and Elizabeth Law. His father left when he was seven years old and he has had a difficult relationship with his mother: she will not tell him anything about his father. Gabriel holds on to postcards sent to him by his father from Australia, and he decides to visit the Coorong, where the last postcard was sent from. He meets Gabrielle York in a roadhouse, and falls in love with her. They leave together but he dies in a car crash shortly afterwards.



GABRIELLE YORK

Naomi Bentley / Leah Purcell

In 1988, lives and works at a roadhouse in the Coorong, in Southern Australia. She is an orphan: her parents committed suicide and her brother was abducted as a small child. She plays netball on Tuesdays and visits her family's graves every weekend. She leaves the Coorong with Gabriel York in 1988, and is rescued from the car crash by Joe Ryan, who she later marries. By 2013 she is suffering from the early signs of dementia.



JOE RYAN

Simon Burke

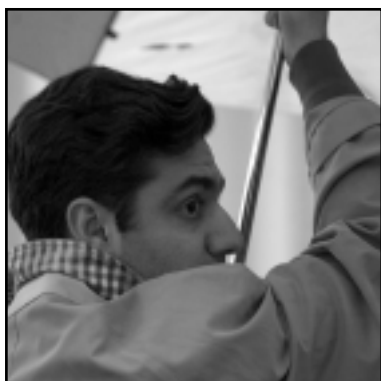
Joe was born on the Coorong. His family own a farm. He spent some time in Sydney but did not enjoy the city lifestyle - he wanted a simple life and to make his living from the land. He rescued Gabrielle York from the car crash in 1988 and they later married. He is quietly accepting that Gabrielle will never love him, but he is devoted to her. He is a calm man and never swears or shouts.



GABRIEL YORK

Richard Hope

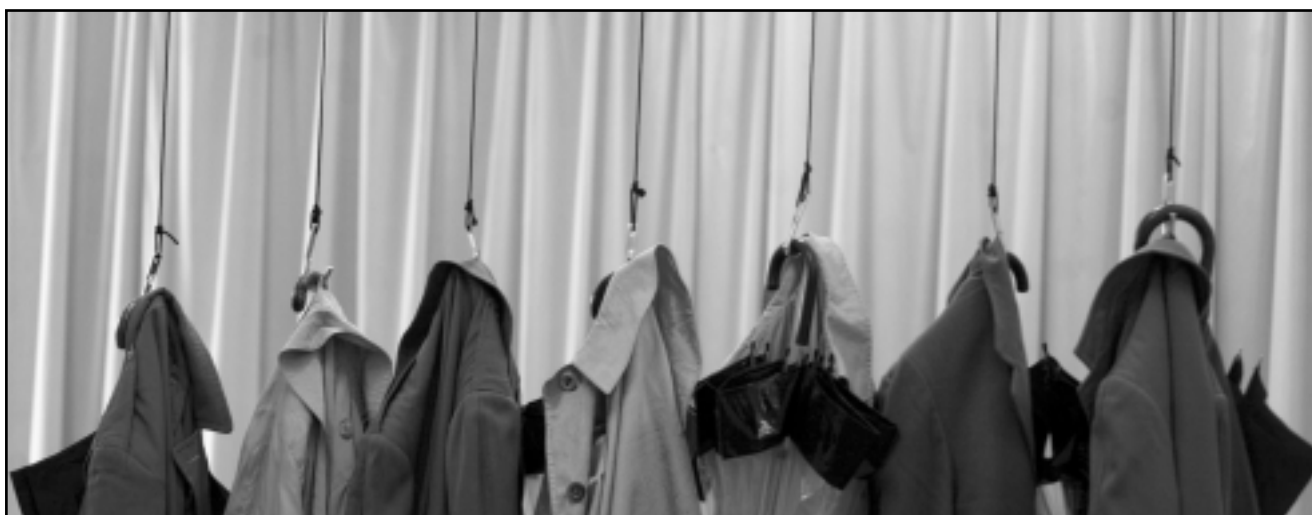
Gabriel's father, Gabriel Law, died in a car crash before he was born. Whilst he got on well with his step-father, Joe, he had an uncomfortable relationship with his mother, who could barely speak his name. When he left home, he broke all contact with his mother and step-father, refusing to return calls or letters. He eventually married a woman called Eliza, with whom he had a son, but left his family home when his son was seven. He lives alone, is not very wealthy, and leads an isolated life.



ANDREW PRICE

Sargon Yelda

He grew up with his mother after his father, Gabriel York, left. Years later he gets in touch with his father, looking to find answers to some questions about his identity.





The Almeida Theatre - empty space
Photo: Lara Platman

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 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. When the play is over and the actors have left the stage, the empty space remains visible to the audience, often still lit.

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 theatres: a flytower, orchestra pit, wings, offstage area (indeed our “back stage” is actually “sub-stage” in an 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.



The model box - set for *When the Rain Stops Falling*
Designer: Miriam Buether

The design for *When the Rain Stops Falling* needs to create a world spanning 80 years across five different locations in two continents. It includes rain, projection and many lighting effects, but very little furniture and scenery. Here Designer Miriam Buether and Director Michael Attenborough speak about the unique design they agreed upon and its rationale.

Miriam Buether: The play has so many different locations and jumps back and forth in time, so we thought there's really no point being literal about it. We have come up with one place that is really quite simple. It has two curved walls at the back, which cross over with entrances for the actors in the centre at the back. There are two side walls and a swing door in each. A table and a bench come in from the sides.

Michael Attenborough: Essentially the starting point was 'let's not put anything on here that we don't need, and make sure that everything's as fluid as possible. People really can walk from one world to another, from one time to another, one place to another. So there's no stove, no second table, the soup will be set on the table with a pile of plates, so you just come down and help yourself, so again, as fluid as possible. There is not any more furniture, so the bench is used as the park bench, and the car seats. Other effects and locations will be done with lighting gobos. I couldn't bear it if people had to come lugging things on and off – it would spoil it for you. I don't think we should see anybody but the nine actors.

MB: The biggest challenge that we've faced is working with rain, through almost the entire play. There are seven rain pipes, above the stage and they give out 'rain' throughout the play in different rain configurations. The rain is very fine. We did a rain test, and it will be very fine; we used the rain to project on; it will help the audience to understand, because for every specific location, whether it's London, Adelaide or the Coorong, there is a specific rain configuration. And we are also planning to project the time and date onto the rain. And hopefully the rain is very silent.

MA: The actors are not going to be saturated all the time, the rain is used to delineate the space, because most of the play is actually interior. There are two prime concerns with water on stage: one is safety – that it doesn't become slippery; and two, noise. But we've gone into this in quite some depth, initially in a sound stage in the East End with paddling pools, to measure just how fine we could get it, and how projection works. For both the noise factors and projecting, the finer you can get the rain, the better. Obviously hard pouring would just be way too noisy. It's so fine it's like mist really, by the time it hits the deck.

MB: The floor is duck board, so there are lots of little gaps, so the rain will fall through, and underneath there's a sub floor, with gravel or something that actually helps us to make the rain silent.

MA: A huge contribution to this will be Lorna Heavey's video, and Colin Grenfell's lighting, because apart from anything else, there's no point having a rain curtain if you can't see it, and the seeing of it depends on the light, you have to actually pick it out, so Colin's going to have to be very ingenious to find these curtains of rain to bring them to us.

I think it helps the play if there's a guide as to where we are and when we are. So at the end of a scene, we go to a sort of mid-way state, where everything can be at its most beautiful and its most evocative and during that, just gently, on the rain surface, we project the location and the date, and as the lights come up on the scene, that will fade away. I don't want to make it sound like a history lesson.

The colour is a very rich, dark, midnight blue, with a lot of texture – it's not just flat, and it's quite velvety, as a contrast to the rain, because the stage had to be both interior and exterior. And you should see it more as a mental space, it's really not a literal design. And of course there's this extraordinary moment at the base of Uluru, when everything goes a colour, of this amazing landscapes, the like of which we just don't see in this country. Here, we just fill the stage with a really rich, orangey-red, which is already evoked in the image for the show. The projection can help us with the moments of night sky and snow. We need to resist naturalism and above all find the right atmosphere for the actors to play the scenes in – the story's about the characters, not about a series of images – the images merely support the human story.



Andrew Bovell

Andrew Bovell wrote this article for us, just before the Almeida Theatre's production of *When the Rain Stops Falling* opened, in May 2009. Here he talks about the play and the vast physical and emotional landscapes it explores.

As I write this it has just begun to rain, which is a little ironic given the title of the play. It's falling in a great heavy pour. The whole valley below my window is shrouded in grey. And it's beautiful.

This may seem unremarkable and not worth commenting on except that we have been in a period of drought and this is the first decent rain we have seen for a long time. Soon the brown and dusty hills I'm looking at will turn green and it never ceases to strike me with wonder how nature has the capacity to renew itself like that. The idea of renewal sits at the heart of this play.

The Australian landscape and the sense of loneliness and isolation it evokes resonates in our collective conscience and often finds expression in our literature and art, as it does in this play. Most of us live in cities of course, and yet the sense of distance and space that surrounds us continues to play on our minds. I grew up in the isolation of the Western Australian wheat belt, a long way from the nearest city, Perth, which in itself is the most geographically isolated city in the world. There was space and time to fill out there. It is a strikingly beautiful landscape if you know how to see it and if you know how to be alone. But from there the rest of the world was a distant notion and London a mysterious place that belonged to history and television drama. Between me and the rest of the world lay a vast expanse of desert on one side and a vast expanse of ocean on the other. As a child I sought to bridge the distance with the only thing I had; my imagination, and in that lay the beginnings of my journey as a writer. Not much has changed. I am still drawn to the space that separates us.

Perhaps the best way to understand the familiar is to attempt to see it through the eyes of a stranger. In the play *Gabriel Law*, a young Englishman, travels to Australia in 1988 hoping to discover something about his father's mysterious disappearance in the 'outback' twenty years before. The only clues he has are seven postcards his father sent to him when he was a boy. Each postcard provides a glimpse into the Australian landscape and the young Gabriel's imagination was captured by these strange accounts of unfamiliar places so different to the world he knew growing up in London. And so, as a young man he comes to Australia in order to follow in his father's footsteps, "to stand where he stood, to see what he saw and to think what he thought" so that he might finally discover what happened to him and perhaps come to know himself a little more in the process.

Gabriel's journey takes him to the windswept southern coast of Australia, a place known as the Coorong. Here our largest and most significant river, the Murray, meets the southern ocean in a series of fragile wetlands bordered by ninety miles of beach pounded day and night by waves driven by the winds known as the Roaring Forties. It is a wild and beautiful place. I have always been drawn to estuarine landscapes. They occupy a space between land and sea, belonging to neither. It is uncertain ground where the very earth beneath you can quickly turn to water. The very nature of the place provides a rich metaphor for Gabriel's journey. Here he meets a young woman who bears the feminine version of his own name. Gabrielle York is as fragile as the landscape she occupies and as haunted by her past as Gabriel Law.

Well there are a lot of things you don't know. A lot of things about me. Parts of me that you don't know.

Gabrielle York (older)



Leah Purcell and Naomi Bentley in rehearsal against a background of photographs taken by director Michael Attenborough of the Coorong.
Photo: Bridget Jones

Such ambivalent landscapes are also the first to show the signs of climate change. They are the canary in the coal mine. The once great Murray River no longer reaches the sea and the ecologically significant wetlands are in danger of drying up or being inundated by salt water. It is as though there is a struggle taking place between land and sea, and the sea is winning.

From the Coorong, Gabriel and Gabrielle move literally and metaphorically toward solid ground. The last postcard Gabriel received from his father was sent from Ayres Rock or Uluru, as its traditional owners, the Pitjantjatjara and Yankuntjatjara people have named it. Uluru is located almost at the geographical centre of the continent. It is a gracious and immense stone monolith which rises majestically from the flat desert plains below. It retains its spiritual significance to its aboriginal owners whilst simultaneously resonating as a place of cultural significance for white Australians. For me it stands as a potent reminder that this land is ancient and that our place here, as people of European descent is tenuous and our history just a fragment of an immense story. On the two occasions I have been there I have felt humbled and yet more deeply connected to the country.

The play moves across time, back and forth between London and Australia, between 1959 and 2039 as the secrets of four generations of one family are revealed. Only on the stage can the past, the present and the future be revealed in the same moment. It is a wonderful medium in which to play with time and to shed a little light on the human condition. Wonderful theatre is being made all over the world but London remains an important focus, especially for plays written in the English language. Coming here it feels like the whole city is engaged in a political and social conversation and that playwrights not only play an important role in this conversation, it is demanded of them that they do so.

London is no longer a mystery to me as it was in my childhood. Now it is a city that I love and which, at least on the surface, feels familiar to me. There are many and obvious similarities between us. We share the same language and political system and still, I am embarrassed to say, head of state. And we both like cricket. Many of us are descended from the same people; the English, the Scots, the Welsh and the Irish. But our ancestors are, for some, those whom you sent away or those who sought to escape the constraints of British society. We are a nation of exiles. And like all exiles we yearn for the place we have been sent from whilst regarding it with a degree of suspicion because on some deep level we know that it has rejected us. We are similar to you but we are not the same people. I suspect that our differences arise from the vastly different landscapes we occupy.

Whilst these physical landscapes have shaped us in their own way, it is above all the emotional landscape of the play that I hope draws us together as human beings. In the end the play must speak for itself of course and be responded to accordingly by its audience... without whom there is no theatre.

Gabriel: *I've never seen anything like it.*

Gabrielle: *I think it's the ugliest place in the world.*

Gabriel: *Did you grow up here?*

Gabrielle: *Yes.*

Gabriel: *Then that's why. You have to look at it through the eyes of an outsider and you'll see what I see.*



Imogen Knight and Michael Attenborough in rehearsal
Photo: Bridget Jones

Almeida Theatre Artistic Director, Michael Attenborough, fell in love with this play when he first read writes here about his love of the play and what it means to be directing this production for the Almeida.

What an extraordinary odyssey it's been to get here. It started with an International Shakespeare Workshop, nearly two years ago, in Australia, I had to keep pinching myself that I was being paid to go to Australia, to work on Shakespeare, with four English actors and six Australian actors in the most staggeringly beautiful surroundings. And in that week I asked the Sydney Theatre Company if they could fix up for me to meet as many writers and directors and a few agents as I could; I also saw lots of shows.

And two key things happened: I met Andrew Bovell's charming agent and we talked about Andrew's work; and I also had the wonderful experience of seeing Leah [Purcell] in a show. Andrew's agent sent me *When the Rain Stops Falling* and I finished it and rather ungenerously decided that I was quite prepared to murder anyone who got in my way of directing it! And then, about a year after the first visit, I went out to Australia again, and spent four lovely days with Andrew in his farm, with his wife and son, and we did wonderful things like drive round the Coorong, and it was then that I decided that Leah Purcell be a wonderful older Gabrielle.

What's this play about? I think it asks a very, very fundamental question, which is: how do we find out who we are? What is our identity? Where have we come from? And as with a lot of people's lives, actually understanding our past enables us to read our present and even begin to sense our future. And it also questions how the things that we can't see, the things that maybe we've been prevented from seeing, the things that have been stopped, denied us, accidentally or very deliberately, contribute to who we are.

At the risk of playing on the fluidity of the title of the play, I think that that sense of a stream, the emotional 'flow' inside us, as we go out every day and live our lives, and our personalities change and develop, as they have from being a little tiny baby. That flow, for almost everybody in the play, has either been stopped or broken, rendered dysfunctional, or actually blocked. And one by one, each one of these characters either chooses to, or determinedly seeks to, complete that flow, literally unblock the emotional plug. And therefore the story of the play is one of repair. I found myself writing lots of words like 'repair', 'regeneration', 'redemption', and even 'reverberation', as these people's lives bounce off each other, rub up against each other, and indeed find out more and more how they interlock.

I don't think this play, this story, could've been written in any other medium but theatre: it's truly theatrical. If you use the word 'theatrical', people tend to think that you mean rather 'larger than life, loud and flamboyant'; but in fact I think the word 'theatrical', in relation to Andrew's play implies the reverse: it allows you to understate, to suggest things, for a picture or an image or a thread, or a repetition to reverberate and resonate through the evening. Characters playing the

...and I find myself thinking about this man again, this fair-skinned Englishman and wondering who he was... and what happened to him.

Gabriel Law



Michael Attenborough and the cast in rehearsal
Photo: Bridget Jones

Dear Son, in the desert, on a clear night, if you know where to look, you can see the planet Saturn. The word planet derives from the Greek and means wanderer. Saturn is named after the Roman god who devoured his own son. Forgive me. Your loving Father, Henry Law

Henry Law

ordinary key moments in their lives, and the older version of themselves watching from a completely different era, you'd find jolly difficult to do on film. But the theatre does that and says so much without 'saying it'.

There are seven characters in this play, and you will find links between the seven popping up quite frequently in this play. It's interesting how the longevity of the life story of two people in particular, necessitates two actresses to tell us that story. The women, Elizabeth and Gabrielle, are the two big arcs in the play and for various reasons the men are either stopped or denied that scale of arc. Possibly Joe is the one exception. I think through those two women's stories, we also find something else which is very very key, I think, to Andrew's play: they both start with a huge optimism and an amazing sense of the possibilities of life, a richness of endeavour, a richness of aspiration. And so what we watch is the struggle of people who don't set out to find tragedy in their lives; so we watch seven people fight for, wish for and aspire to their lives to be beautiful and fulfilling and really to be loved. But the conditions of their lives mitigate against this.

The moment that fractures all this is Elizabeth's discovery of Henry's sexual deviance, for want of a better term. And what I think we find in the play is that this very unnatural act of paedophilia breaks something and that is expressed through the metaphor of the rain falling and of nature being upset: this unnatural act upset something in the natural order as well. It's really not until the closing scene when Andrew arrives and breaks the cycle of separation, denial, and distance, that Henry's fracturing becomes arguably 'healed'. Up until that point, I think the future itself has become corrupted.

The final quality of the play is the fact that it creates a unique world: it's not a documentary, it's not realistic (in the 'naturalistic' sense of the word at least) so my task, with the help of all the creative team, is to create a world that develops its own imagery and its own completeness. So as we go through, the audience will begin to know how to read visual signals, that tell them so much, that actually embody a paragraph or a page of prose, that in the theatre can just be a moment.



Michael Attenborough and Phoebe Nicholls in rehearsal
Photo: Bridget Jones

There's a photo of us. On the beach. He's holding my hand. But I don't remember him. It's like your father. I remember him because he wasn't there.

Gabrielle Law (younger)

Assistant Director on *When the Rain Stops Falling*, Imogen Knight, gives us an insight into the rehearsal process, from read-through to opening night.

Week One

This is the week that director Michael Attenborough calls 'the coffee and chocolate biscuits week'. The first day of rehearsals, there was a meet and greet in the rehearsal room with all the staff from every department of the Almeida along with the cast and writer, Andrew Bovell. Andrew had flown in from Australia to spend the week with us as we sat around the table and worked our way through the play. The motto of the week was 'no question is too stupid!' This meant that any member of the cast could feel free to ask Andrew anything they perhaps felt unsure about in terms of the plot, or back story of any character. We worked methodically through the play until the end of the week. On Friday, after a week of discovery, the cast did another read through, and it seemed as if each character had become fuller and more complex, and each scene and revelation in the play had even greater significance.

Week Two

Putting the play on its feet is what this week was about. Mike decided that he would simply start from the beginning of the play and work right through until the end, even though, the play jumps around in terms of dates, and does not follow a straight chronological line.

Mike had also blocked the scenes beforehand so he knew where he wanted the actors to stand or move. There was an excited air in the rehearsal room as the actors made more discoveries about their characters and how each character affects the outcome of the plot.

The actors also found it bizarre to not see their fellow actors for almost the entire week as most scenes only ever involved one or two people at a time so the whole company was never working at the same time.

Pictures Mike had taken when he visited Australia had been put up on the main wall in the rehearsal room as well as a map of Australia, postcards of Ayers Rock, similar to the postcards described in the play, and other photos or pictures that would help the actors visualize particular places mentioned in the play. Mike also had a bar mat from the Coorong, given to him by a member of the cast in Australia who were currently also in rehearsal for the play, and this bar mat stayed on Mike's desk until the last day of rehearsal!

By the end of this week, we had worked our way through the play from beginning to end, and we were beginning to have a rough idea of how things worked and how they might look.

Each week there was a production meeting, and in this first production meeting, the main topic was the rain. We had a test rain curtain put up in the theatre to see how affective the rain looked and how noisy it was. The result of this first meeting was that the rain was proving to be noisier than expected and Mike was concerned that the actors would have to work very hard to be heard over the top of it. The production team set out to find quieter rain...

Week Three

This week was a more detailed version of the week before. It was also the week where I began to set the opening rain sequence with the umbrellas and 'Rooms' which was a detailed movement sequence in which each character is introduced.



Leah Purcell, Lisa Dillon, Tom Mison and Jonathan Cullen in rehearsal
Photo: Bridget Jones

I didn't know what to get you... I asked in the shop. I said what do you give a father you haven't seen since you were seven years old.

Andrew Price

For the opening umbrella sequence I had made a floor plan of where I wanted each character to walk and in what direction. Our first rehearsal involved each actor learning their own floor pattern and then walking it, trying not to collide with everybody else. Then to complicate matters further, umbrellas and raincoats were added which made it even harder for the actors to see where they were going or who was in their way! However, despite these difficulties, they did a great job and there were no major collisions!

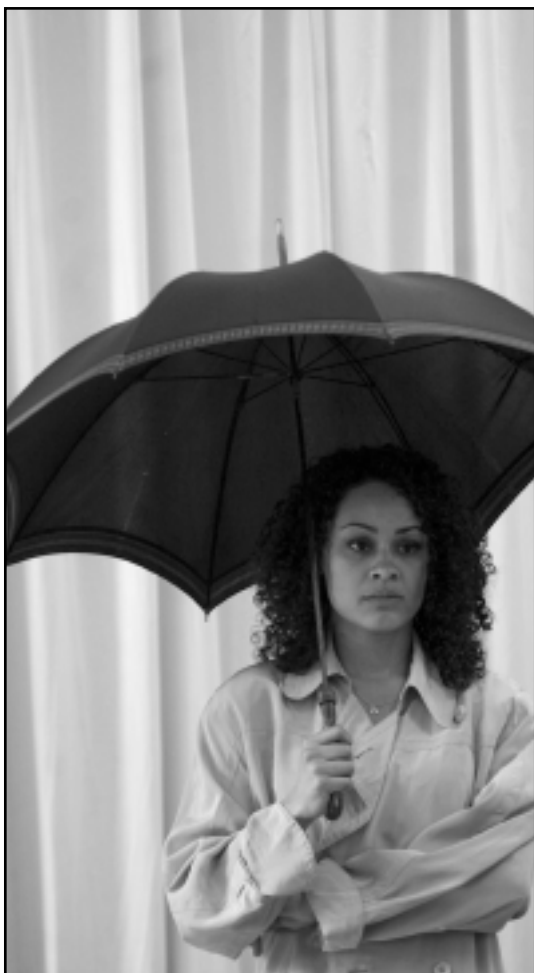
Then it was 'Rooms'. Andrew Bovell had written very precise stage directions for each actor, so my job was made a lot easier and it meant that there was more time to focus on the details, tempo and intention of each characters journey in this silent introduction scene. During this scene we also had rehearsal photographs being taken for the program, which explains why many of the photos involve umbrellas, soup spoons, and laughter!

Mike also had brought in some DVDs of documentaries made about children who were searching for their parents after being adopted. One afternoon, the cast sat down to watch these documentaries as some of the subjects and relationships covered were closely linked to some of the characters own experiences in the play. It proved to be a highly moving afternoon and it touched a number of the cast profoundly. Further rain discussions were had this week, and the constant factor was the noise. Quieter rain was proving hard to find...

Week Four

This was the week where we were going to start linking the scenes. This also meant that the actors would see what their colleagues had been up to over the last two weeks. Some scenes in the play run as one whole scene but are then separated by other scenes, similar to a film that jump-cuts. It was especially useful for some of the actors to be able to run their whole scene as one so as they could feel the emotional journey of it even through in the play it is divided up into smaller sections. The more we learnt about how each scene affected the next the more exciting and complex the play became.

I did some more work on the opening umbrella scene and Rooms and set the soup eating sequence, which involved all the actors eating soup and then falling into a joint rhythm, which was harder than it sounds!



Naomi Bentley in rehearsal
Photo: Bridget Jones

*Dear Son, in the desert I saw
a vision of the end. A fish fell
from the sky and the earth
became sea. I miss you.*

Henry Law

This week there was also the soup tasting! As they were going to actually eat real soup on stage night after night, it was important that it was something they all liked, and also liked cold! The winner was a vegetarian organic broth.

It was decided that the rain would only fall at the very start, in between certain scenes and at the end. Although the look and idea of rain falling constantly throughout the show sounded fantastic, in reality it was too noisy and meant that the actors would be working twice as hard to be heard, especially in the most delicate scenes.

Week Five

This week the Mike put his script aside and was concerned only with taking notes. By this time all the actors were off book and only needed the occasional prompt, which allowed them to feel more free physically as they didn't have to act with a script in one hand. This is when the play started to really come alive and the actors could try things out and get to work on making every intention, stress or pause affective and informative.

This week the actors were also put into the scenes where they didn't speak but were present, almost like a ghost. It took a little getting used to for the actors who were in the middle of a scene to suddenly have another actor walk past them or bring on nappies to fold but after a few rehearsals it looked utterly convincing and rather magical.

By Thursday, we did our first run of the whole play. It can be a nerve racking experience but it went well and it gave the creative team a chance to see what they would have to work with during the technical the following week. On Friday, we did another run and Andrew Bovell, who had flown in the day before, turned up to watch. The last time he had seen everybody was after the first week so it was great for him to see the transformation.

Week Six

Technical week. This week you spend from early until late in a dark theatre plotting lights, video and sound, which can start off very slow and lots of coffee is usually consumed! Its the first time you see the actors, in costume, on stage with lights and props and suddenly the play that you have seen for five weeks in a rehearsal room looks totally different! We began the technical on Tuesday and finished Thursday afternoon with a dress rehearsal on Thursday evening. As the play has many different elements such as music, video and sound, we had an extra day of technical rehearsal. This proved essential as many of the queues for the sound would also correspond with a video projection and lights. During technical weeks, you often forget what daylight looks like! Friday was the first Preview so the theatre was buzzing with adrenaline. It went very well, the cast did a fantastic job and considering how technical it was there were very little mishaps. After each preview, the creative team get together to give notes about work that still needs to be done, at the same time as having a much needed beer!

We will preview the show until Wednesday, with the Press Night on Thursday. After Press Night, the show is handed over to the company and the work of the creative team is officially done. Working on this play has been absolutely wonderful and I don't think I'll ever walk down the street in the rain with an umbrella without being reminded of this very special journey!



Cyclical Structure: the same character (Elizabeth Law) appears onstage at two ages
Photo: Bridget Jones

Brecht in *When the Rain Stops Falling*

Direct address to the audience breaking fourth wall.

Cyclical structure – flashbacks not necessarily in chronological order

Surtitles – written into script and projected in this production.

Set – non-literal location, minimal props.

No clear resolution.

In its expansive scope and pure theatricality, Andrew Bovell's *When the Rain Stops Falling* contains strong elements of Bertolt Brecht's Epic Theatre.

Bertolt Brecht's career, through the early part of the 20th Century, marks the re-emergence of the playwright as theatre's creative centre. Brecht was strongly opposed to the theatrical conventions of his time, namely a strict adherence to linear narrative and a realistic/naturalistic style, as advocated by Stanislavski.

Brechtian theatre articulated popular themes with avant-garde experimentation of form. Standing in sharp contrast both to the psychological and actor-led theatre, as propagated by Stanislavski, Brecht's theatre explored the nature of the psyche in *society*, where personality is seen to be the product of social conditioning, and thus completely changeable.

Brecht's concept of Epic Theatre stems from his belief that a play should not cause the spectator to identify *emotionally* with the characters or action before him or her, but should instead provoke rational self-reflection and a critical view of the action on the stage. Audiences were encouraged to adopt a critical perspective in order to recognise social injustice and exploitation and to be moved to go forth from the theatre and effect change in the world outside. For this purpose, Brecht employed the use of techniques that remind the spectator that the play is a representation of reality and not reality itself.

One of Brecht's most important principles was what he called the *Verfremdungseffekt* (translated as 'the effect of de-familiarisation'). This involved stripping events on the stage of their familiar, obvious qualities, to create a sense of the un-literal. To this end, Brecht employed techniques such as the actor's direct address to the audience, harsh and bright stage lighting, the use of songs to interrupt the narrative action, explanatory placards and speaking the stage directions out loud. This is the antithesis to the Stanislavskian ideal, where effects are dictated by the emotional through-line of action within the text, and stage directions feed directly, and silently into the actors' true-to-life performances.

Brechtian Theatre Key Points:

- * Constructed representation of reality
- * Theatre as a model for political expression
- * Writer as creative core of theatre art
- * Verfremdungseffekt: distancing, de-familiarisation, direct address
- * Actor to 'represent' the character
- * Characters' behaviour dictated by social conditions
- * Find political 'truth' of the text
- * Cyclical narrative
- * Text as changeable, adaptable source material
- * Collective and collaborative working method; experiential research in rehearsal
- * Critical reflection and call to action for audience



The Coorong is a long narrow area of sand dunes and wilderness stretching 145 km along the south-eastern coast of South Australia.

The name 'Coorong' is thought to be a corruption of the Aboriginal word 'kurangh', meaning 'long neck' a reference to the shape of the lagoon system.

The area was designated as a National Park in 1966 as a sanctuary for many species of birds, animals and fish. Its long, shallow, salty lagoons are a haven for rare birdlife, whilst a narrow strip of sand hills protects the sheltered waters from the pounding tides of the Southern Ocean. It attracts many migratory species and is a refuge for these animals during some of Australia's regular droughts. The waters of the Coorong are a popular venue for recreational and commercial fishers. The popular 'Coorong Mullet' and 'School Mullaway' are the main species.

The essence of the area is beautifully captured by Colin Thiele, author of children's book *Storm Boy*, which immortalised the area: 'The Coorong... is an elemental region, a place of wind and water and vast skies, of sandhill and tussock, lagoon and waterweed, stone and scrub. It is a place of softened contours, muted colours and sea haze - and of glaring salt pans so intense that our brows pucker and our eyes wince. A place of winter storms and summer sunglades, of shorelines soft with sand and sibilant reeds, and of limestone outcrops sharper than teeth. A place to sense the universal in the particular, the infinite in the infinitesimal, the verities of life in blowing seeds and grains of sand.'

Geologically the Coorong is a set of complex and ancient sand dunes, the oldest probably formed about 120,000 years ago, with further formations dating back 80,000 years. Whilst some of that dune still remains, the modern day Coorong was formed between 6,000 and 20,000 years ago when the sea rose to form an island on top of the 80,000 year old dune, producing a lagoon behind. There were once probably many access points from the sea to the lagoon but over time the wind and the sands filled these in creating this unique neck of land.

Historically there were five Aboriginal tribal groupings living on the Coorong. They are still known as the Ngarrindjeri people, and they made bark and reed canoes, lived on the fish and molluscs in the area, and built shelters against the cold Southern Ocean winds.

Due to its geography the Coorong's commercial potential was always restricted. Over the last half of the 19th Century sheep farmers moved into the area but they were hampered by rabbit plagues and the mysterious 'coast disease'. There was an attempt at salt mining and, in 1892, an oil well was drilled (unsuccessfully) near Salt Creek.

As a destination, this area is largely only frequented by ecological tourists, keen to observe the vast array of birdlife, stunning scenery and flora and fauna in this unique and fragile ecosystem.

The Coorong is a dangerous place. Caught between the land and the sea it belongs to neither.

Henry Law

Your father's right about the Coorong... You can be standing on solid ground then without even noticing, it turns to water beneath you. And if you don't move, you'll drown.

Gabrielle York

“I have not seen a fish like this for many years. Not since I was a boy. I mean I have seen pictures of them but not one in the flesh. They are, after all, or at least they are meant to be, extinct.”

Gabriel York, 2039



Richard Hope in rehearsal
Photo: Bridget Jones

In the 2039 of *When the Rain Stops Falling*, a fish falls from the sky and lands at the feet of Gabriel York. This ‘unnatural’ event opens the play and introduces us a near future world where fish no longer exist, in fact they have been extinct for many years. Yet as unnatural and bizarre as this short sequence may be, might there actually be an eerie and unsettling truth in it?

The Maritime Conservation Society is a charity dedicated to the care of our seas, coastlines and their wildlife. As part of their ongoing mission to protect sea life, they have undertaken a great deal of research into the effects of climate change on sea life, and the findings hint that the extinction of fish in the next 30 years is not as far-fetched a prediction as you might imagine. The following assessment of the impacts of climate change and what we can do to prevent it, is taken from their website www.mcsuk.org.

The Maritime Conservation Society believes that climate change is now one of the greatest threats to our seas and marine life. The findings of their research suggest that the impacts of climate change on our oceans include increased acidification and increased sea temperatures, leading to shifts in plankton and fish distribution and even changes in large-scale ocean currents. These changes will not only change the nature of our seas, but also have further impacts on human activities such as coastal developments, fisheries and recreational activities.

The Impacts

Climate change will change the nature of our seas, in addition to impacts of coastal flooding and sea level rise. These are some of the changes already witnessed, and predicted:

- * North Sea temperature has risen by 0.6 degrees C in the past 40 years.
- * North Sea fish have moved north in the past 25 years due to rising sea temperature.
- * Warm water plankton species have moved north by 10 degrees latitude since 1960.
- * Sea level around the UK has risen by about 10cm since 1900.
- * If global emissions continue to rise at current trends, ocean acidity will continue to rise and the pH of seawater could fall by 0.5 units by 2100.
- * Abnormally high sea surface temperatures in 1998 caused the death of more than 90% of shallow corals in the Indian Ocean.
- * Sea ice around the North Pole is thinning and could disappear in summer by 2100.

What you can do:

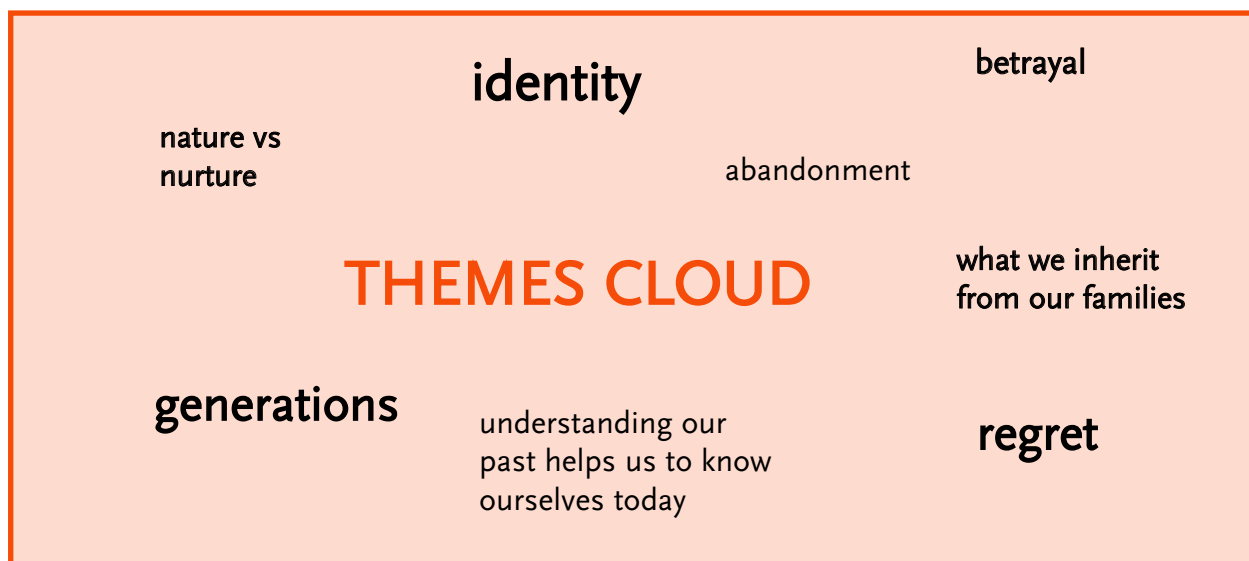
Reducing carbon dioxide emissions is one of the few environmental issues that each and every one of us can actively influence through our choices and daily behaviour. The average UK household produces approximately 6 metric tonnes of carbon dioxide each year - follow these points to reduce your emissions:

- * Turn off your monitor - overnight a PC monitor on standby wastes enough energy to microwave six dinners!
- * 8% of electricity consumed at home is from items we aren't using - so don't leave the TV and hi-fi on "standby" or charge your mobile phone overnight.
- * Switch to energy saving bulbs - they use 75% less electricity and save you money.
- * Switch lights off including fluorescent ones - a fluorescent tube uses 500 times more energy if left on for 15 minutes than the energy needed to restart it.
- * Fly less: emissions from airplanes are the only source of greenhouse gases that are on the increase in Europe and now represent 21% of total emissions.
- * Buy food grown locally wherever possible and buy British - this cuts down on the air miles.

Useful Links

www.climatecare.org calculate your carbon dioxide footprint and see if there are ways you can reduce it.
www.carbontrust.co.uk order a Carbon Trust pack to reduce energy in your school or workplace.

The play deals with a number of issues that are particularly interesting to explore in the classroom. Below are just a few pointers for discussion and some practical exercises.



Exercise 1: Inheritance (20 minutes)

Group sit in a circle. Go round the circle and member of the group in turn show, with a physical action, something they have inherited from their parents (this could be an object or a physical attribute).

Go round again, this time using an action to tell us something you would like to pass on to future generations (again this could be an object/physical attribute)

Relate this to the seven objects from the play:

- * piece of driftwood
- * boy's shoe
- * urn containing Gabriel Law's ashes
- * book by Diderot (*Encyclopedie au Dictionnaire Raisonne Des Sciences, Des Arts et Des Metiers*)
- * hat
- * letters
- * notebook
- * postcards

Discussion

Who do these objects belong to in the play? What is their significance to the giver? To the recipient? If you had to pass on one object of significance from your life, what would it be?

2: Improvisation on a Theme (20 minutes + sharing time)

Divide the class into groups of three or four. Continuing the idea that our present can only be explained by our past, ask groups to create a short scene where an object/attribute is passed on. The object could be one chosen by a member of each group from the previous exercise, one of the listed items from *When the Rain Stops Falling*, or something completely new. How is it passed on? Is it given to them in a ceremony (e.g. a house/your religion) is it positive/ negative (e.g. could be a disease that you've passed on) Is it a secret?

Share the improvisations back to the group.

Discussion

How does Gabriel York come to be in possession of the objects of his history? Look out for this during the performance. How do the objects in your improvisations get passed on and received? Are there any similarities?

3: Theatricality (20 minutes)

Whole group brainstorm: the play has characters from different time periods and geographical locations, often onstage at the same time. How could you make that clear to the audience? What techniques could you use?

Consider how you would show us different time periods on stage, with characters from different times and places and having them onstage at the same time. Do they communicate? If so, how do they communicate? What effect does that have?



When the Rain Stops Falling Projects Pack

Compiled by Charlie Payne, with assistance from Anne Langford, Natalie Mitchell and Louise Glover.

When the Rain Stops Falling by Andrew Bovell was produced at the Almeida Theatre from 14 May - 4 July 2009.

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Quotes from *When the Rain Stops Falling* by Andrew Bovell - may contain some strong language.

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Almeida Projects draws on all aspects of theatre, working with thousands of young people every year, and includes:

1. A subsidised ticket scheme for schools, including introductory workshops and resource materials;
2. Residencies and durational projects in partnership with local schools and community groups;
3. The Young Friend of the Almeida scheme, building sustainable, lasting relationships with the audience and artists of the future;
4. Regular Teachers' Evenings, building durable and sustainable relationships with teachers and youth-workers from local schools and community groups;
5. Other bespoke projects that engage young people in the craft of theatre making and the act of theatregoing.

We work primarily with young people aged 15 and above from secondary schools and community groups in the London Borough of Islington, but also in the neighbouring boroughs of Camden, Hackney, Haringey and Tower Hamlets. Through the subsidised ticket scheme, we can also work with any UK-based schools or colleges.

Our focus is on areas that are culturally diverse and socially and economically deprived, giving high quality arts experiences to those who would otherwise not have the opportunity.

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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