

WASTE

by Harley Granville Barker



PROJECTS PACK

compiled by
Samantha Lane, Natalie Mitchell and Charlie Payne

ALMEIDA
PROJECTS



Will Keen
Photo: Johan Persson

Welcome to the Almeida Theatre's production of *Waste* by Harley Granville Barker.

The story of *Waste* is at once epic and singular: a faltering love affair crashing through a time of political upheaval; a drawing room comedy turned Greek tragedy; universal human suffering and love (or lack of) colliding with personal ambition.

But perhaps the best introduction to this play comes from its director, Samuel West.: "The events in *Waste* could have happened this morning; in fact they probably did". Indeed on the day of the first preview, the front page of *The Guardian* printed a story about Disestablishment. And we are in the 'age of the celebrity', where public figures - politicians included - are constantly in the headlines, blurring the public and the personal, whether it's because they're dating a Cheeky Girl or an old affair has been brought to light.

This makes *Waste* a fantastic play to explore with young people, who can see straight through the political debate to the scandal's current tabloid resonances. It is a great springboard for discussion: about man versus woman, mother versus father, the woman's right to choose, morality, and truth and lies.

The Almeida Projects Team are really excited about exploring some of the key ideas and questions posed in *Waste*. 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 very much hope that you and your students are able to draw energy both from its ideas and the skill with which they are presented. For information about some of the residency work we have been doing around *Waste*, please visit our website, www.almeida.co.uk/projects

You can also follow the process of the *Waste* Project on our blog: www.almeidawasteproject.blogspot.com, which is a forum for discussion and place for students to share ideas.

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

**Samantha Lane, Natalie Mitchell and
Charlie Payne**
Almeida Projects



Photos: Bridget Jones

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 theatre going.

PROJECTS 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.

GROUP 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, and to share your thoughts and opinions about the play with us.

PROJECTS PACK CONTENTS

| | |
|-------------------------------|----|
| Introduction | 2 |
| Contents | 3 |
| Production Credits | 4 |
| Introduction to the Play | 5 |
| Plot Summary | 6 |
| Characters | 10 |
| Harley Granville Barker | 12 |
| Timeline | 13 |
| From the Director | 14 |
| Design | 15 |
| In the Rehearsal Room | 17 |
| Political Context: Then & Now | 20 |
| Theatre Censorship | 21 |
| Abortion, Women & the Law | 22 |
| Practical Exercises | 23 |
| Almeida Projects | 25 |



Giles Taylor
Photo: Johan Persson

Waste By Harley Granville Barker

Cast:

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| Walter Kent | Max Bennett |
| Countess Mortimer | Helen Lindsay |
| Lady Julia Farrant | Jessica Turner |
| Frances Trebell | Phoebe Nicholls |
| Lucy Davenport | Jeany Spark |
| Amy O'Connell | Nancy Carroll |
| George Farrant | Michael Thomas |
| Russell Blackborough | Richard Cordery |
| Butler | Giles Taylor |
| Henry Trebell | Will Keen |
| Gilbert Wedgecroft | Bruce Alexander |
| Lord Charles Cantilupe | Peter Eyre |
| Cyril Horsham | Hugh Ross |
| Vivian Saumarez | Giles Taylor |
| Justin O'Connell | Patrick Drury |
| Bertha | Helen Lindsay |

Creative team:

| | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Director | Samuel West |
| Design | Peter McKintosh |
| Lighting | Guy Hoare |
| Sound | John Leonard |
| Casting Director | Joyce Nettles |
| Assistant Director | Henry Bell |
| Production Manager | Igor |
| Company Manager | Rupert Carlile |
| Stage Manager | Laura Flowers |
| Deputy Stage Manager | Nicole Keighley |
| Assistant Stage Manager | Laura Draper |
| Costume Supervisor | Lynette Mauro |
| Wardrobe Supervisor | Catrina Richardson |
| Wardrobe Deputy | Eleanor Dolan |
| Hair & Make-up Supervisor | Jo Tuplin |
| Wigs by | Linda McKnight |
| Dresser | Charlie Damigos |
| Chief Technician | Jason Wescombe |
| Lighting Technician | Robin Fisher |
| Sound Technician | Howard Wood |
| Theatre Technician | Adriano Agostino |
| Stage Crew | Patrick Birch |
| | Caitlin Crosby |
| Production Carpenters | Craig Emerson |
| | Eddie King |
| Set built & painted by | All Scene All Props |
| Casting Assistant | Vivienne Storry |
| Production Photography | Johan Persson |

For Almeida Projects:

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Director, Almeida Projects | Samantha Lane |
| Projects Co-ordinator | Natalie Mitchell |
| Projects Administrator | Charlie Payne |



Will Keen and Nancy Carroll
Photo: Johan Persson

***Waste* was written in 1907 but banned by the Lord Chamberlain and only performed in private until its first full public production in 1936, for which Harley Granville Barker did a complete rewrite. It was adapted for the BBC in 1977, then revived in 1985 in a re-worked version by John Barton. It was most recently seen at the Old Vic, directed by Peter Hall in 1997.**

Opening in the country home of Conservative MP George Farrant, we find that the Conservatives are soon to regain power and they are seeking to woo independent politician Henry Trebell into their Cabinet. He is to tackle the Disestablishment Bill, separating Church from State. As Trebell is seduced by the Conservative party so we see him seduce Amy O'Connell, a married woman separated from her husband. Act Two sees Trebell setting up his offices six weeks later and soliciting the support of other MPs whose help he needs for his Bill. Trebell receives a visit from Amy to tell him that she is pregnant. He refuses to help her procure the illegal abortion that she needs, insisting she must have the child in hiding. In Act Three we join a private meeting in Prime Minister Horsham's apartments and discover that Amy has died following a backstreet abortion. The Cabinet attempt to cover up Trebell's involvement so that he can still join them and push through the Bill. Despite the fact that Amy's estranged husband is eventually convinced to keep quiet, it is ultimately agreed that Henry must be ousted from the Cabinet for the scandal. Horsham sends Henry a letter informing him that he will not be needed in the Cabinet, and that his Bill will not go through. He shoots himself offstage.

Both Disestablishment and abortion were urgent and provocative issues in 1907, and continue to be debated today. But beyond the specifics of the central dilemmas, *Waste* explores the tension between the political and the private. It is about the destruction of a public servant by a private scandal, and the machinations that take place in the political arena. That Amy's death causes no grief is only made more obvious by Trebell's enemies using it to destroy him. But the tragedy for Trebell himself is that he is a political idealist and a great hope for the future; yet he is emotionally inadequate. He commits suicide because his life has no purpose without politics; tragically divorced from his own humanity, his ideals and emotions segregated.

The Almeida Theatre's production of *Waste* is set in 1924, both in London and Buckinghamshire. A detailed plot summary follows.



Jessica Turner
Photo: Johan Persson

Act One

Shapters, the country residence of George and Julia Farrant. Sunday 20 July. Lady Mortimer, Frances Trebell, Amy O'Connell, Lucy Davenport and Walter Kent are gathered in Lady Julia Farrant's living room. She entertains her guests by playing Chopin on the piano. They discuss Bach and Bagehot and Amy O'Connell is open about how she was orphaned and brought up by her uncle, who was both a parson and an atheist. She moved to Ireland, married Justin O'Connell at the age of 17, and returned to England, separating from him when he joined the Sinn Fein political party.

"I was orphaned at two and bequeathed to a great-uncle, who was a parson and an atheist and too clever for his job and too conceited to ask for a better one. And he thought the whole duty of woman was to be pretty . . ."

Amy O'Connell, Act One

George Farrant and Russell Blackborough, both Conservative politicians, arrive. The party discuss politics and it is revealed that it is likely the Conservatives are soon to regain power and they are seeking to woo Independent politician Henry Trebell, the brother of Frances Trebell, into their Cabinet. Henry Trebell will be responsible for bringing the Disestablishment Bill to parliament - a specific Act to disestablish the Church of England (separating Church from State and depriving it of its financial privileges). Blackborough asserts that although it is important to have ideas, it is more vital to be able to accommodate 'stubborn fact to shifting circumstance'. He leaves, and everyone is visibly relieved, saying that although he is an important member of the party, he is not pleasant company: a 'hog of a man'! To break the tension, Farrant suggests a game of pool. Amy dismisses herself, saying she has a headache and goes for a walk in the garden. However, she forgets her lace scarf and Lady Julia asks Lucy to go and give it to her, in case she catches cold. Walter, Lucy and George exit, leaving Lady Julia, Lady Mortimer and Frances Trebell to talk.

They discuss Lucy and Walter's relationship and imminent engagement. It is revealed that Henry Trebell



Nancy Carroll
Photo: Johan Persson

“It’s a simple secret, Gilbert. I found I’d fallen in love. No... not with a woman, you old sentimentalist! With this job. I am in love with a Bill for the Disestablishment of the Church of England...”

Trebell, Act Two

is also in the house, although has not joined the evening party yet. Lady Julia, who is revealing herself to be a key political thinker within the group, makes it clear she wants Henry Trebell to take charge of the Disestablishment Bill. Julia believes strongly that if Cyril Horsham (soon to be Prime Minister) forms a Cabinet, Henry Trebell should be in it. Frances believes that he would probably turn it down. She also states that she finds him a man seemingly indifferent to women. The women make moves to go to bed whilst discussing Amy O’Connell and why she does not go back to her husband.

An hour later, Amy and Henry Trebell reappear. They are alone together. They flirt and he kisses her, apparently for the first time. They discuss past relationships and affairs and Amy brings up the subject of love, and she asks him if he is in love with her. He does not directly answer, instead he kisses her again and they are nearly caught by the Butler, but Amy hides just in time. Trebell asks where her room is and although Amy makes an uncertain attempt to put him off, he says he will come and find her in half an hour. The Butler returns; Amy disappears and Trebell follows, leaving the Butler to close up the room.

Act Two

Henry Trebell’s study, Berkeley Street, London. An autumn morning, Thursday 9 October. Henry is working at his desk in his new study in his house, working at his desk, after having just returned from six weeks in Italy. Frances enters to tell him she is going out. Walter Kent, who works as Trebell’s secretary, enters and informs Trebell that Dr Wedgecroft is there to see him, and that Lord Charles wants a meeting at eleven thirty. Dr Wedgecroft questions Trebell as to why he didn’t tell him about accepting Horsham’s proposal of taking charge of the Bill for the Disestablishment of the Church of England. They talk about the party, and about how Trebell’s arrival may ruffle some feathers, particularly Blackborough’s. Trebell says he is strong enough and passionate enough to deal with any opposition.

Walter re-enters to inform him that Amy O’Connell has arrived in the hope of seeing Frances. While they continue talking, Amy quietly enters the room. Wedgecroft leaves and it becomes clear that it is Henry that Amy is actually keen to see. Reluctant to speak, Amy writes a note on a piece of paper for Trebell to read, after which she tears it into little pieces. Nervous and anxious, Amy tells Trebell that she is expecting a child – his child - in April. Because she has not seen her husband in over a year, there is no way of covering this up. She pleads with him to tell her what to do. Trebell calmly and rationally talks through her options, but she is horrified that he expects her to keep the baby and says she would rather kill herself than have the child. She becomes more emotional and asserts the woman’s right to choose. He refuses to support her desire for an illegal abortion. She gradually realises that he never loved her at



Peter Eyre, Michael Thomas and Patrick Drury
Photo: Johan Persson

“I want you with me because you believe in your Church. And though I’ve to disestablish I’m not out to destroy. I hate all destruction.”

Trebell, Act Two

all, and that, although she thought she loved him, she actually didn’t either. Their conversation is interrupted by the telephone ringing to signal Sir Charles Cantilupe’s arrival. Trebell tries to offer Amy comfort and she turns on him, saying that he has degraded her. Cantilupe enters and Amy is forced to quickly regain composure.

Walter enters to inform Trebell that Wedgecroft is going to call on him again. Walter and Amy leave and Cantilupe asks Trebell about his holiday. Cantilupe is Cyril Horsham’s cousin and is a firm believer in the Church. He has come to talk to Trebell about his proposed Disestablishment Bill and assert why he wants Trebell on the Front Bench. It is up to Trebell to convince the ardent churchman why the Bill would be beneficial and to gain his support. It is clear how passionate Trebell is about his cause and Cantilupe is influenced by this, but remains unconvinced. They agree to meet later in the week. Wedgecroft enters briefly and Cantilupe leaves. Trebell seems distracted. He sets down to work and is interrupted by Lucy Davenport, who is looking for her beau, Walter. Trebell teases them by saying he wishes they would marry and they joke about their relationship. They leave Trebell alone, his mind still occupied.

Act Three

Cyril Horsham’s house, Queen Anne’s Gate, London, Monday 20 October. Wedgecroft, Farrant and Charles Cantilupe are gathered in Prime Minister Horsham’s drawing room. They are waiting for the arrival of Justin O’Connell, Amy’s estranged husband. They are gathered to discuss the news that Amy has died following a backstreet abortion, and are concerned with how best to cover up Trebells’ involvement so that he may continue to take a seat on the Front Bench and push through the Disestablishment Bill. O’Connell arrives and the men attempt to convince him to keep quiet about Amy’s affair with Trebell. O’Connell is unconvinced and hostile towards their attempts of persuasion. They are interrupted by the unexpected arrival



Will Keen and Phoebe Nicholls
Photo: Johan Persson

“My wife is dead. For Mr Trebell... I do not know the man... in the statesman I am uninterested. But I am to cover their sin tomorrow... am I... with a lie?”

Justin O’Connell, Act Three

of Trebell himself. With some surprise, Trebell succeeds in compelling O’Connell to keep silent. However, Trebell senses that the Cabinet are still worried about the ongoing repercussions of his actions; Blackborough comments that ‘there is no such thing as a secret these days’. In light of this, Cantilupe goes on to reveal that he will not, on principle, sit in a Cabinet with Trebell. O’Connell leaves and Trebell appeals to Horsham, by telling him how much he cares about the Bill and the importance of pushing it through parliament. Trebell departs, leaving it up to Horsham to decide his future with the party. The men continue to argue about what is the right course of action. Blackborough leaves, after loudly voicing his opinion that Trebell should be dropped from the Cabinet. Horsham reveals that he has no choice but to drop Trebell, and writes a letter to Trebell informing him of his decision. The Cabinet are clearly still divided as to whether this is the right thing to do. Decided, Horsham asks Farrant to post the letter and the meeting disperses.

Act Four

Trebell’s study, London. Tuesday 21 October. Trebell and Wedgecroft enter, discussing Justin O’Connell. Wedgecroft is worried about Trebell’s insomnia and gives him some sleeping pills. Wedgecroft asks if Frances knows about his affair with Amy; she does not. Trebell says that he might have to tell her because he suspects that Horsham might drop him: she will want to know Horsham’s reasons. Frances enters, highly distressed, having just heard the news of Amy’s death. Wedgecroft leaves them alone. Frances suspects that Henry is troubled and presses him to confide in her. He denies any trouble and she questions his reluctance to confide in her personally, if not politically. Their distance is apparent, though it is a natural trait in both of them as people, and not deliberate or cold. Frances leaves Henry alone and we move to the following morning. Frances re-enters and finds Henry unmoved - he sat in the same chair all night. Henry goes to collect the post and Frances demands the truth about Amy. As he opens the letter from Horsham saying they no longer want him in the Cabinet, he tells her that it was his child. Henry confides in his sister for the first time, saying that he feels his life has no meaning and implying that he should go the way his unborn child went. Frances tries desperately to comfort him but quickly realises that her words are having no effect. She urges him to get some sleep. He agrees to try. She leaves and the housemaid Bertha enters to tidy the room.

One hour later. Trebell is now absent. Wedgecroft sits writing a letter. Frances enters, quiet and cold, and reveals that Henry has shot himself. Lady Julia Farrant enters to offer her friend genuine sympathy, but Frances rejects it. She is stunned and shocked, but speaks frankly of her brother’s death and the nature of their relationship; Lady Julia’s words of comfort are of no consequence. Walter enters, grief-stricken and angry, and expresses disgust at this total waste of a life.

“Characters far from admirable, or even ordinarily likeable, most of them...”

Stage Directions from *Waste*



Henry Trebell *Will Keen*

Forty-five. Independent MP for Ellesmere. Was a barrister before becoming a politician. An atheist with a holy devotion to social reform, particularly education. The first book he read was *Don Quixote*. Seems to dislike women; at the very least, he is indifferent to them.



Dr Gilbert Wedgecroft *Bruce Alexander*

Late 40s but looks older. Lives in London. A physician. Makes home visits and has his own practice. In perfect health himself. Pragmatic and rational, good-natured, with an intellectual ruthlessness. Friend of Trebell, and informal political and personal adviser. No children of his own.



Sir Cyril Horsham *Hugh Ross*

65 years old. Cantilupe's cousin. Conservative politician, expected soon to be Prime Minister, and occupied with forming the Cabinet and setting out his impending political agenda. Not strictly an intellectual, but has a sharp sense of people-politics. Has a reputation for sympathy which he is careful to protect.



Justin O'Connell *Patrick Drury*

An Irish gentleman and scholar (specialising in history of the early 13th Century). Was at Balliol College, Oxford, with Wedgecroft. A man capable of devotion and suffering; not of happiness – maintains a formal politeness. A member of the Irish independence movement, and of political party Sinn Fein.



Charles Cantilupe *Peter Eyre*

About 60. Horsham's cousin. An aristocrat, with high church interests, concerned with appearances and power. Uneasy with the Disestablishment Bill, and has a lot of influence in church circles – a key player in Horsham and Trebell's political game.



Russell Blackborough *Richard Cordery*

A wealthy Tory politician - a self-made man. Grew up in Leeds. Hopes to work in the Treasury in the new Cabinet. Considered by the others as a bit of a bore – he has a habit of making long political speeches to anyone in earshot – albeit a dangerous one: with his party-political pragmatism and ability to raise large sums of money, he is a key figure to keep on side.



Walter Kent *Max Bennett*

Read classics at Cambridge. Beau of Lucy Davenport, with whom he was a childhood friend. Works for Trebell, as his assistant and secretary. Keen to please him and to learn the 'trade' of politics. Urged by Lucy to follow a 'career' rather than take a City job. Well-liked by all who know him.



George Farrant *Michael Thomas*

Late 40s. Husband of Julia. A ranking Tory MP and Privy Councillor: has a safe seat in parliament. Educated at Eton and Oxford. Not intellectual and not greatly qualified to hold high office, but bred to it (his great-grandfather was a copper magnate). Takes political advice from his wife, Julia. They live at Shapters, a large country house in Hertfordshire.



Lady Julia Farrant *Jessica Turner*

50 years old. A power behind the throne in her way – has a good relationship with the Tory politicians, and they respect her opinions. Certainly a political muse to Horsham. Happily married to George. Advises her husband on all affairs political.



Amy O'Connell *Nancy Carroll*

40s. Married to Justin O'Connell at 17, but separated from him and returned from Ireland once he joined Sinn Fein; he did not treat her well. Pretty, charming and likes to amuse men, although she does not really like them. Not at all an intellectual but educated in the duties of being a woman. Orphaned at two, brought up by her uncle, a parson who disbelieved in his church.



Lucy Davenport *Jeany Spark*

In her 20s. Lady Julia's niece; a graduate of Newnham College, Cambridge. Intellectual, and interested in politics. She is the brains behind Walter, but looks forward to being married and having children – wants two boys and a girl. Would like Walter to start for a career, not go into the City.



Frances Trebell *Phoebe Nicholls*

In her 50s. Sister of Henry Trebell. Trained as a school mistress, with mathematics her forte. Has chosen to remain unmarried and celibate. Devoted to her brother and his greatest supporter. Left her teaching post to become Henry's housekeeper. Fond of Amy O'Connell.



Countess Mortimer *Helen Lindsay*

Mother to Julia Farrant, in her 70s. As mother and grandmother, she has brought into the world and nourished not merely life but character. A keen eye for politics and a wry wit to match.



Butler *Giles Taylor*

Has worked for Julia and George Farrant at Shapters for many years.

Saumarez *Giles Taylor*

40. Horsham's secretary.

*“Not a ‘pretty’ play. A powerful aristocracy;
Britain governed by a country-house oligarchy...”*

Stage Directions from *Waste*

Harley Granville Barker worked extensively as a writer, actor and director. Born in 1877, he made his acting debut at 14. Over the course of his life, he wrote ten plays, numerous influential prefaces to Shakespeare, ran the Court Theatre (now Royal Court) where he directed all 37 plays presented, and sat on the original committee for the creation of a National Theatre. Here is a selected timeline of his life. Significant dates in society are marked in green.

- 1861 [Offences Against the Person Act, outlawing abortion.](#)
- 1877 Harley Granville Barker born 25 November in Kensington; the first and only son of a young surveyor and his wife who earned her living with recitals.
- 1887 [Queen Victoria's Jubilee.](#)
- 1889 [Great London Dock Strike begins.](#)
- 1891 Following years of performing with his mother in recital, Granville Barker appears in his first stage production in an adaptation of Anstey's *Vice Versa* at Harrogate Spa Rooms.
For six months he trains for stage with Sarah Thornton at the Theatre Royal, Margate.
- 1892 First London stage appearance in a musical by Charles Brookfield.
- 1894 A general understudy during Florence Farr's season at the Royalty Theatre.
- 1895-6 Tours with Ben Greet's Company playing Romeo opposite his future wife Lillah McCarthy.
Writes *The Family of the Oldroyds*; the first in a series of unpublished plays, in collaboration with fellow-actor Berte Thomas.
- 1897 Plays the role of Hastings in *She Stoops to Conquer* at Kingston-upon-Thames, alongside Gordon Craig as Young Marlow.
- 1899 Production of *The Weather-Hen* by Granville Barker and Berte Thomas at Terry's Theatre: their only collaboration to be produced. Transfer to the Comedy Theatre well received.
Is by now an established leading actor.
Plays the lead in *Richard II* for the Elizabethan Stage Society.
Joins committee working for a National Theatre.
[Beginning of the Boer War \(1899-1902\)](#)
- 1900 Joins the Council of Management for the newly-established Stage Society
Directs short plays by Maeterlinck and Yeats.
- 1901 Plays Napoleon in his own production of Shaw's *The Man of Destiny*.
Joins the Fabian Society.
- 1902 First major production of own play *The Marrying of Ann Leete* for the Stage Society.
Plays Frank in the Society's presentation of Shaw's banned *Mrs. Warren's Profession*.
Plays Osric in *Hamlet* for Forbes-Robertson at the Lyric Theatre.
- 1903 Several major acting roles, including the lead in Marlowe's *Edward II*.
- 1904 *A Scheme and Estimates for a National Theatre*, co-written with William Archer, is privately printed and circulated.
His first repertory season at the Court Theatre, Sloane Square, with productions of Shakespeare's *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and Euripides' *Hippolytus*.
- 1904-7 Co-manages the Court Theatre, where he produces and directs all plays including eleven by Shaw and his own *The Voyage Inheritance*.
- 1906 Marries Lillah McCarthy, leading actress in the Court Theatre Company.
[Liberal Majority in Britain.](#)
[Movement for Woman's suffrage becomes active.](#)
- 1907 Elected to Executive of the Fabian Society (serves until 1912).
The Vedrenne-Barker management closes at the Court Theatre in May, re-opening at the Savoy Theatre in autumn.
Waste, scheduled for November, is banned by the Lord Chamberlain, leading to Barker becoming heavily involved in a campaign against theatrical censorship.
- 1909 Writes *The Madras House*
Testifies to Parliamentary Committee on Censorship.
- 1910 Principal Director of plays for Charles Frohman's Repertory Theatre at the Duke of York's Theatre.
The Madras House produced, alongside Shaw's *Misalliance*.
[Death of King Edward VII.](#)

- 1911 [A Parliament Act reduces the power of the House of Lords.](#)
Lillah McCarthy-Granville Barker Management opens at the Little Theatre.
- 1912 Revolutionary productions of *The Winter's Tale* and *Twelfth Night* at the Savoy Theatre:
Barker uses an uncut text and does away with the 'star' system, concentrating instead on excellence in the entire ensemble.
- 1913 Manages the St. James Theatre, until money runs out. Programme includes Moliere, Ibsen, Shaw and Maeterlinck and *The Harlequinade* by Barker and D C Calthrop.
Takes a 25 year lease of the Kingsway Theatre with Lillah, and produces Arnold Bennett's *The Great Adventure*, which runs for twenty months.
- 1914 [World War One breaks out after assassination of Archduke Ferdinand.](#)
Notable production of *A Midsummer's Night Dream* at the Savoy Theatre.
Visits Russia to observe Stanislavsky's Moscow Art Theatre at work.
Presents Masefield's *Philip the King*, at Covent Garden, and Hardy's *The Dynasts* at the Kingsway in aid of a war charity.
Writes *Vote by Ballot*.
- 1915 Tours America on invitation from Stage Society of America.
Notable outdoor productions of Greek tragedies.
Meets and falls in love with the wealthy Helen Huntingdon, who is also married.
- 1916 Writes *Farewell to the Theatre*.
Enlists in the Royal Horse Artillery, later transferring to Intelligence.
Writes *The Red Cross in France*, a book based on a visit to the Front.
- 1918 Divorces Lillah McCarthy and marries Helen Huntingdon.
[The Representation of the People Act of 1918 enfranchises all women over the age of 30.](#)
- 1919 Becomes first Chairman of the British Drama League.
- 1920 Directs G M Sierra's *The Romantic Young Lady* (first of the translations of Spanish plays produced collaboratively with Helen) at the Royalty Theatre.
[Degrees open to women at Oxford for the first time.](#)
- 1921 Directs Maeterlinck's *The Betrothal* at the Gaiety Theatre.
- 1922 Writes *The Exemplary Theatre*.
- 1923 Publishes *The Secret Life*, and long Prefaces to the first three volumes of *The Players'* Shakespeare.
With Helen, publishes *The Collected Plays* of Gregorio Martinez Sierra in English.
- 1925 Produces a revised version of *The Madras House* at the Ambassador's Theatre.
Gives British Academy lecture: *From Henry V to Hamlet*.
- 1926 Re-writes *Waste* for a production which does not transpire.
- 1927 Publication of first collected volume of revised *Prefaces to Shakespeare*.
Translates *Six Gentlemen in a Row* by Jules Romains and *Four Plays* by Serafin and Joaquin Alvarez Quintero
- 1928 Publication of last play, *His Majesty*.
[Women receive the vote on equal terms with men.](#)
- 1929 Elected President of the Royal Society of Literature.
- 1930 Published *A National Theatre* and the second series of *Prefaces to Shakespeare*.
Moves to Paris.
- 1932 Translates *Four Comedies* by Serafin and Joaquin Alvarez Quintero, with Helen.
- 1934 Co-directs *The Voyage Inheritance* for the Old Vic Company, staged at Sadler's Wells
Co-edits *A Companion to Shakespeare Studies* with G B Harrison.
- 1936 Co-directs the first public production of *Waste* at the Westminster Theatre.
- 1937 Appointed Director of the British Institute in Paris.
- 1939 [World War Two is declared.](#)
- 1940 Directs *King Lear* at The Old Vic with Lewis Casson and Sir John Gielgud.
[German invasion of France.](#)
Escapes with Helen from France to the United States.
- 1941-2 Works for British Information Services in New York.
- 1945 [World War II ends.](#)
Granville Barker returns to England.
- 1946 Returns to Paris.
Dies 31 August.



Samuel West
Photo: Johan Persson

Director of *Waste*, Samuel West, gives his unique view of the play, and what inspired him to direct it at the Almeida Theatre:

The events of *Waste* could have happened this morning. In fact, they probably did. Politicians are still being brought down by sex scandals; the Establishment still connives to cover up its elected representatives' misdeeds. And plays are still banned – the enforced closure of *Bezhti* at Birmingham Rep just three years ago represented de facto censorship. It is only since 1968 that we have not had a Lord Chamberlain officially empowered to ban plays.

Harley Granville Barker found himself a target of the Lord Chamberlain's disapproval in 1907. *Waste* was refused a license, and it knocked Barker sideways. The official reason was mention of 'a criminal operation' (abortion), but since HGB had the previous year directed a trouble-free production of Elizabeth Robins' *Votes for Women!*, which contains several references to abortion, there are grounds for believing that the real reason for the ban was the play's merciless revelation of Tory politics.

Waste was given a couple of private performances in 1907 but remained unseen in public for another thirty years, by which time Granville Barker had rewritten it. He described the 1926 version, the one we're doing for you, as, "a thing I had to say twenty years ago, said as I'd say it now. But now I'd say something different." The combination of HGB the firebrand youth and HGB the seasoned craftsman is a thrilling one – *Waste* is strikingly modern in style as well as subject. It's full of sex and humour and it still has the power to shock.

The story is sensational: Henry Trebell, a radical Independent MP, wants to see a New England. He intends to use the money released by disestablishing the Church of England to fund new colleges, and pay teachers properly. At a weekend house party, his momentary alliance with a married woman leaves her pregnant. She announces that she would rather die than have his child.

I'm delighted to be directing *Waste* as my first show at the Almeida. Although it's my local theatre, I've never worked here. I find myself following gratefully in Granville Barker's footsteps - he too was an actor, director and artistic director. The Court Theatre became under Barker's direction a flagship for the new British stage. His company overturned London's tired theatrical habits of long runs with overpaid stars: the Court did new plays at an incredible rate, with committed ensembles that set the standard in acting. The Almeida is a worthy inheritor of that tradition. We have a cast of which Barker would be proud, and a brilliant production team.

Granville Barker's work is inspiring, intriguing and insufficiently performed. A play of this scale (fourteen actors, three big sets) is rarely attempted by any theatre. I hope you enjoy it.

Samuel West



The Almeida Theatre - empty space
Photo: Lara Platman

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.

The Almeida Theatre is a “found space”, and was not originally built as a theatre. Designing for our theatre requires great ingenuity because there is no conventional backstage space (wings), nor is there a fly tower to allow us to lower and raise big pieces of scenery. This means each designer has to choose whether to reveal the building as it was, or to transform it into a conventional theatre space.

The set for *Waste* is designed by Peter McKintosh. He and Director, Samuel West, spent a good deal of time discussing how the play should look in the Almeida theatre space.

Samuel West believed the set should be ‘invisible’ – so naturalistic we don’t even notice it – thus bringing the audience’s focus onto Granville Barker’s text: its language, politics and characters’ relationships. With *Waste*’s moral dialectic, a director might perhaps be tempted to use an abstract set; but Sam West believes that this would not work, and so the set for his production is designed with both a historical and geographical realism.

Waste also places huge demand on a Designer, as it requires three distinct geographical locations over its four acts. These locations are crucial to conveying the atmosphere of each scene, needing three rooms with three very different feelings. At the Almeida Theatre this is rather ambitious – with no wings or fly-tower to store large pieces of set, the decision was made to use a revolve, so that the set could be rotated by 180 degrees.

This also avoids what the Almeida Theatre’s Artistic Director Mike Attenborough calls ‘burglars’ Theatre’ (i.e. lengthy scene changes in blackout, where stage crew ‘steal’ furniture from the set and replace it with new). Sam West preferred instead to dramatise the scene changes as much as possible.

The result of the revolve set is a concave versus convex set. For Acts One and Three, located in the Farrants’ drawing room and Horsham’s study respectively, the set is concave: a large square room, giving the impression of wealth, luxury and space. These expansive rooms automatically become part of even larger houses, indicating social status and wealth. For Acts Two and Four, the set is rotated 180 degrees to become convex – the back corner now protrudes out towards the audience. Henry Trebell’s private office is cast in sharp contrast to the other scenes: a space to work, not to relax. A huge desk dominates and there is little in the room not given to a useful function.



Act One



Act Two



Act Three



Act Four

The model box - set for *Waste*
Designer: Peter McKintosh

The walls of the set are painted neutral grey, which is very impressionable to lighting. Lighting is used to suggest different atmospheres – e.g. the intimacy of moonlight in the ‘seduction’ scene; the warmth of the parlour light in the opening scene; and the harder, natural light in Trebell’s office.

Act One is set in Shapters, the country home of George and Julia Farrant. As an evening of entertainment, the focus is on the piano: all chairs in the room are facing it. There are eight people in this scene, so, practically, lots of seats needed. Peter McKintosh has therefore designed window seats to provide ample seating without cluttering the stage with excess furniture. Some pictures hang on the wall, giving a sense of family history: there is the impression that the house has been there for 500 years, but was only decorated 50 years ago.

Act Two is set in Trebell’s office. It is sparsely decorated and it is clear that the room hasn’t quite been moved into yet. When we return in Act Four, the passage of time is indicated by the completed furnishing of the room.

Act Three takes place at Cyril Horsham’s London House in Queen Anne’s Gate. Harley Granville Barker had a fear about his actors moving freely around the set so he deliberately put large chairs and other obstacles in front of doors. Samuel West pays homage to the 1907 design by having back-to-back sofas designed to get in the way of the actors – and taking up some of the best positions in the room. The colour scheme contrasts with the first act. Again it is grey and statesmanlike, but this time it is warmer. It is lit quite brightly and the furnishing is newer and more fashionable than Shapters.

Theatrically, the concave versus convex sets reflect the course of *Waste*’s dramatic action. Henry Trebell is at the centre of this play. His abode, the convex office literally ‘pushes’ the action out into the audience – Acts Two and Four are where key actions in the play take place before our eyes. Trebell is making a mark, looking forward, bringing change and a radical new Bill. By contrast, Acts One and Three are largely conversational, where action is discussed and reported on before decisions are made. Consequently, the concave set ‘pulls’ the audience into the linguistic drama unfolding in those scenes.



Nancy Carroll in rehearsal
Photo: Johan Persson

“You are not, I hope, going to tell me that the fellow drops from the skies, ready-made, at the moment you walk on the stage?”

Harley Granville Barker

Assistant Director on *Waste*, Henry Bell, writes about the first five weeks’ work in the rehearsal room.

Week One

The first week has been a fascinating process of establishing the facts of the play. Day one started with the read-through which then led to the erection of a huge roll of paper over one side of the rehearsal room. “This”, said Sam, “is for establishing the facts of the play.” And so we did. Many hours of filling what happens in the bits that we don’t see on stage followed. What happens during the months between Act One and Act Two? When exactly did Amy and Justin O’Connell get married? Who is related to whom? What is the exact make-up of the Cabinet in the play? I could create a list pages long of the amount of questions that were answered - and occasionally not answered - over this first week. It has been fantastic to see the enormous level of detail that Sam and the cast have gone into in order to make *Waste*, as Sam said on day one, “a new play”.

We also got a huge treat on day one when renowned politician Tony Benn came in to talk about disestablishment (separating the Church of England from the Crown and the State). He, like Henry Trebell in the play, had prepared a Disestablishment Bill in the 1970s and 1980s but it didn’t even reach the discussion process. We spent a couple of hours going through exactly what it meant and got wonderfully side-tracked by Tony’s amazing ability to tell stories. It was also a very useful way of getting the politics of the play alive and authentic.

Sam quoted the quote on the left to the actors early on in rehearsal, and for me it sums up exactly what we have done this week. Granville Barker was a director obsessed with biography and back-story and he passionately wanted the actors to create well-rounded, fully formed people. This is an idea Sam has grabbed; all the cast are making their four lists, where you have to write out everything that the author says about your character, what your character says about him/herself, what your character says about other people and what other people say about your character. This is to avoid woolly and incorrect character choices early on in the rehearsal process.

It was satisfying to see the difference between the first read-through and the second which came a few days after we had gone through the play with a fine-toothed comb. If this level of detail and commitment is maintained I feel this play could cause just as much of a stir as it did in 1907 when it was first banned from the English stage.

Week Two

This week we have been steadily going through the play chronologically and we have reached the end of Act Three. The mantra from Sam this week has been “Don’t play the mood of the scene, play the action”. Before the rehearsal process Sam goes through the whole play and ‘actions’ it for himself, to make sure that he has a response to every part of the text.

It has also been a great week for getting underneath the skin of the play. Peter Hall once described *Waste* as “The best play written about politicians since Shakespeare”; I think he has a point. The battle between the public and the private lives that politicians lead is always something we read about but rarely see dramatised.



Peter Eyre, Sam West and Patrick Drury in rehearsal
Photo: Johan Persson

Amy: *But you've been dodging me this whole weekend . . . publicly.*

Trebell: *I have been dodging you . . . privately . . . for these last six months.*

Act One

It is typical of Granville Barker to present such a well-rounded and fascinating study of people – I have worked on a Granville Barker play before and it never fails to amaze just how long you can spend dissecting a scene and discovering new things. Luckily there is a bell in rehearsal that anyone can ring when they feel we have been talking too long. Sam contributes a pound for each ring.

Week Three

I always think that one of the great things about working in the theatre is that each project teaches you something new and, three weeks into rehearsal, I feel a lot more enlightened on topics I never thought I'd know anything about

Disestablishment is at the heart of *Waste* – the main character, Trebell is trying to get a bill through Parliament that will disestablish the church and it is amazing to find out the exact position of the church at the moment. Any change to the structure of ideology of the church has to be passed by the House of Commons, bishops are appointed by politicians and they swear total allegiance to the Queen. What is even more incredible is that it has been this way since the 17th Century.

The actors met as a full company to have a round-table discussion about their characters. I myself think it is very useful on a variety of levels: firstly it brings the company together a few weeks in, and with a big cast like this is a rarity; and secondly this is a political play and it is important that the company are actively engaged in discussing its politics.

We also had another visitor – Martin Bell, the former independent politician. He spoke with great passion and wit and pointed out how important independent politicians can be (Trebell in *Waste* is an independent MP) – they act as a vital thorn in the side of the establishment. He also pointed out the various cynicisms and corruptions of modern politics; it is interesting to note that these are also found in some of the characters in *Waste* written in 1926 - it's amazing how some things haven't changed.



Richard Cordery in rehearsal
Photo: Johan Persson

“What has made you so afraid of women? Did some selfish creature try to marry you? I wonder any man gets married. Why should he?”

Amy O’Connell, Act One

Week Four

A great deal of this week’s work has been spent creating the scenes that happen offstage in the play. In *Waste* there are several crucial moments and events that are reported on but we never see. For one moment, at the beginning of the second half of the play, Sam found a section from the 1907 text which covers the exact ground of the conversation taking place before the lights come up. It is important for the actors to be able to come in at the right level of intensity.

On Monday Sam decided to run the whole of Act Two. This was because the act is a series of duologues featuring Trebell and he felt it was good for Will Keen to get a sense of the arch of the progression of his character.

In my experience, the Director usually deals with the big stuff and the interesting stuff, leaving the Assistant Director to look out for the fiddly stuff and the boring stuff. But it’s actually a really fun thing to do – I make notes on sight-lines, whether I can hear certain lines, to slam a door or not to slam a door; it’s important to have something of the idiot about you when working out the clarity of the scene.

The rest of the week was spent working through the play at a more rapid rate than we have done, before we get to next week when we shall run an act a day and then start running the whole play.

Week Five

After going through the play twice in considerable detail, this week was about going back to basics: the primary principles of intention, given circumstances, listening and ‘being’, not ‘acting’. As the actors started to see the bigger picture, the week followed a peculiar paradox: I could see them relaxing into their characters but also see them tense up at the prospect of opening the show in just over a week.

This paradox creates an electric atmosphere in rehearsals. Phoebe Nicholls and Will Keen have been working through Act Four, constantly beating themselves up, despite making some spectacular theatre. It’s fantastic to see such high standards and, when we ran the play, I think it was no coincidence that the fourth act, which is a really tricky piece of text, was the most exciting.

After running the play Sam gathers the whole company together to give notes. I think that your ability to give notes is the litmus test of a Director: get them wrong and you get the company unnecessarily anxious and disillusioned with their work; get them right and you manage to create the piece of theatre you’ve been working towards for the past four to five months. Sam’s work as an actor prepares him ably for the task since not only does he understand the needs of the cast – sometimes it’s good just to get technical notes about your performance – but he also brings his ideas across in a way that makes each note seem like a performance in itself!

So we are nearly there. Next week is tech week, which is when all the technical elements of the play come together. It is infamous for long hours, short tempers and occasionally moments of danger and excitement. However everyone is really well organised at the Almeida and the whole thing should go very well indeed.

Here, we will see how the political context of this production of *Waste*, set in 1924, relates to an audience of 2008.

"A scandal half-stifled is worse than a scandal"

Henry Trebell, Act Four

"I am bound to say not all the information possibly is out yet and we are still looking at it."

John Prescott to the BBC on the cash for honours scandal, 2006

"The difficulty of doing anything definite by party politics . . . is what keeps us sane and lets us get on with our business."

Blackborough, Act One

"I want to see us over the next two elections break the two-party system for good, establish three-party politics for good."

Nick Clegg, Lib Dem leader, talking to the BBC, 2008

"Two governments have shirked the thing . . . though it has been plain these ten years that something drastic must be done."

Henry Trebell, Act Two

"The Church is the enemy of Socialism."

Tony Benn, talking to the cast on day one of rehearsal for *Waste* 2008

Political Scandal

1924

Lloyd George publishes the July 1922 Honours list. The Conservative Party blow the whistle on what becomes known as the 'Cash for Peerages' scandal. Lloyd George is forced to concede a parliamentary debate on the issue and the 1925 Honours (Prevention of Abuses) Act makes the sale of peerages illegal.

2008

Two years ago, Scotland Yard confirms that it is investigating complaints made about the Labour Party's abuse of the honours system. The investigation focuses on whether the 1925 Honours (Prevention of Abuses) Act has been followed, or if honours have been given by Labour in return for loans or donations. A 16-month investigation questions 136 people, including Tony Blair three times; he becomes the first British serving Prime Minister to be interviewed by police as part of a criminal investigation. Despite four arrests, no charges have been brought.

Parliamentary Politics

1924

Britain has three governments during 1924. At the beginning of year Ramsay MacDonald becomes Britain's first Labour Prime Minister, leading a minority government following Stanley Baldwin's resignation. Soon after, Baldwin establishes the Conservative Consultative Committee - the first organised Shadow Cabinet. Another General Election takes place on 29th October. It is won by the Conservative Party and Baldwin returns as Prime Minister.

2008

Britain is in its second year of a Gordon Brown premiership and has been under Labour rule since 1997. This year Labour has suffered defeats in the London mayoral election, local elections and the Crewe and Nantwich, Henley and Glasgow East by-elections. In May, Labour recorded its worst ever opinion poll rating since records began in 1943, of 23%.

Disestablishment

1924

The British Monarch has the constitutional title 'Supreme Governor of the Church of England'. The Canons of the Church of England have to swear an oath of loyalty to the Monarch which states that the Monarch 'has supreme authority over all persons in all causes, as well ecclesiastical as civil.' The Church of England Assembly (Powers) Act of 1919 means the Church Assembly must have any changes to the Church examined by a joint committee of both Houses of Parliament and then approved by a vote of each House, before being submitted to the Queen for Royal Assent.

2008

The British Monarch has the constitutional title 'Supreme Governor of the Church of England'. The Canons of the Church of England have to swear an oath of loyalty to the Monarch which states that the Monarch 'has supreme authority over all persons in all causes, as well ecclesiastical as civil.' The Church of England has a legislative body, the General Synod. Synod can create two types of legislation, Measures and Canons. Measures have to be approved but cannot be amended by the UK Parliament before receiving the Royal Assent and becoming part of the law of England.



Michael Thomas and Hugh Ross
Photo: Johan Persson

“The salvation of this country so far has been its imperviousness to abstract ideas. The difficulty of doing anything definite by party politics . . . strange as this sounds . . . is what keeps us sane and lets us get on with our business. I am a good enough democrat to wish to save democracy from itself.”

Blackborough, Act One

At its original time of writing in 1907, *Waste* was one of many plays to fall victim to The Licensing Act of 1737. This Act vested the Lord Chamberlain and his Examiner of Plays with the power to vet any script before a performance was allowed.

The Licensing Act was put in place by Prime Minister Robert Walpole who was concerned that political satire on the stage was undermining the authority of his government.

Over the next one hundred years the restrictions of the Licensing Act contributed to the popularity of certain styles of theatre. Non-patent theatres produced melodrama, ballad opera and burlesque which incorporated music between short scenes and thus were not classed as plays. In the 1930s, club theatres in London also managed to avoid censorship by admitting ‘members’ and presented new and controversial works, including many plays by foreign writers.

There were many different reasons why a play would be censored, ranging from onstage nudity to perceived references to homosexuality. The Lord Chamberlain's official objection to *Waste* was cited as "extremely outspoken reference to sexual relations," and, "a criminal operation". The play was finally licensed in 1920 but never performed. In 1926 Granville Barker completely rewrote the play, and this version was finally played in public in 1937.

By the 1950s, the increasing permissiveness of British society led to calls for theatre censorship to be lifted. The critic Kenneth Tynan and playwright John Osborne were key figures in the movement, presenting evidence to the House of Lords on the issue on a number of occasions.

Following the Wolfenden Report, published in 1957, the Lord Chamberlain admitted that changes must be made in the attitude to how homosexuality was depicted on stage. In a memorandum from 1958 to his officials he wrote: "For some time the subject of homosexuality has been so widely debated, written about, that it is no longer justifiable to continue the strict exclusion of this subject from the Stage." However, embraces would still be forbidden and: "We would not pass a play which was violently pro-homosexuality." Finally: "We will allow the word 'pansy' but not the word 'bugger'," the report decreed.

The Theatres Act of 1968 removed the censor from the British stage. The following day after the Act was passed, the American musical *Hair* with its onstage nudity and sexual language was performed for the first time. However, the abolishment of the Licensing Act does not mean that anything can be performed, and since 1968 several plays have either been cancelled or closed early. Notorious cases include *Perdition* by Jim Allen at the Royal Court in 1987 and *Behzti* by Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti at Birmingham Rep in 2004, both prompted by public outcry.

In 2005 the Labour party took the Racial and Religious Hatred Act through the House of Commons, whereby any play, book or action liable to incite racial or religious hatred became a criminal offence.

Presently, if a public performance of a play is given which involves the use of threatening words or behaviour, any person who presents or directs the performance is guilty of an offence if he intends thereby to stir up religious hatred.



Nancy Carroll
Photo: Johan Persson

“There’s no child . . . and there’s not to be . . . if I say so. And it’s my right . . . no one else’s to say so.”

Amy O’Connell, Act Two

Waste was banned in 1907 for its reference to ‘a criminal operation’ - that is, Amy O’Connell’s backstreet abortion. In this play, drawing on the incursion of the intimately personal into the radically political, it is no coincidence that Harley Granville Barker chose to include this controversial issue. Women’s rights were being debated by parliament and the press, while the suffrage movement was gaining momentum as women became increasingly politically active.

By the end of the 19th Century, a number of campaign groups had been formed to lobby Members of Parliament and were gaining in popular support. The National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), formed in 1897, held public meetings, petitioned parliament and published influential texts. In 1907, the same year that Granville Barker wrote the original version of *Waste*, the NUWSS organised its first large procession, known as the Mud March.

Whilst the British suffrage movement centred on women’s right to vote, at its core was the freedom of women to make choices about their lives and to have equal rights to men. Meanwhile, in the latter half of the 19th century abortion became increasingly criminalised. This does not mean that abortion did not happen: women were forced to seek dangerous alternatives as access to medical abortions diminished. Known as ‘back street abortions’, these procedures were carried out by unqualified persons, or occasionally by the woman herself, and were often lethal. Whilst the operation itself may not have directly killed the patient, many women died due to infections and complications thereafter, being afraid to seek professional help as they were likely to be arrested if the source of their malaise was uncovered.

Nowadays, abortion has been legalised in most parts of the world, including Britain. Legalisation led to regulation of the procedure, safeguarding women’s health and the social effects of unsafe ‘backstreet’ practice. Abortion is still forbidden for those of the Roman Catholic faith and the majority of Sikhs. In 2008, abortion is completely banned in Chile, Malta, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Vatican City and Ireland, where it may only be carried out as an urgent medical procedure to save a woman’s life.

A selected timeline of abortion:

- c.1395 The Lollards, an English proto-Protestant group, denounce the practice of abortion in The Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards.
- 1588 Pope Sixtus V aligned Church policy with St. Thomas Aquinas’ belief that contraception and abortion were crimes against nature and sins against marriage.
- 1861 The British Parliament passes the Offences Against The Person Act which outlaws abortion.
- 1920 Lenin legalized all abortions in the Soviet Union.
- 1920 *Waste* given a licence by the Lord Chamberlain
- 1928 Representation of the People Act is passed: women given the right to vote.
- 1932 Poland was first country in Europe outside Soviet Union to legalise abortion in cases of rape and threat to maternal health.
- 1935 Nazi Germany amended its eugenics law, to promote abortion for for purposes of so-called racial hygiene.
- 1936 *Waste* first performed on the London stage
- 1938 In Britain, Dr. Aleck Bourne performed an abortion on a young girl who had been raped by soldiers. Bourne turned himself in to the authorities and was acquitted of the crime. The legal precedent of allowing abortion to avoid mental or physical damage was noted by the Commonwealth of Nations.
- 1967 The Abortion Act (1968) legalised abortion in the United Kingdom (except Northern Ireland).
- 1983 Ireland, by popular referendum, added an amendment to its Constitution recognising ‘the right to life of the unborn’.
- 1990 The Abortion Act in the UK was amended so that abortion is legal only up to 24 weeks, rather than 28, except in unusual cases.



Sam West in rehearsal
Photo: Johan Persson

What makes *Waste* so resonant for a contemporary audience is the simple fact that the events of the play could have happened this morning, in fact as Sam West says, “they probably did.”

Indeed, it is important for any director to see what is going on in the press/media/society in order to understand what makes the play relevant to be put on at this point in time.

On the first day of rehearsals, there were a number of articles in the press that had particular significance. For example, Lionel Shriver, in *The Observer*, wrote an article entitled: ‘Give me a randy politician any time – as long as he cuts inflation’, and Michael Billington, in *The Guardian*, wrote an article about how theatre today fulfils an urgent need by offering a sustained commentary on the historic past or contemporary politics.

Exercise 1 – It’s all in the papers

In groups arrange the following headlines in chronological order:

RISING STAR IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS
PROPOSES RADICAL NEW BILL!

WOMANISING POLITICIAN GETS MARRIED WOMAN
UP THE DUFF!

DODGY DOC KILLS CHEATING WIFE

LEAKED MEMO: HORNY POLITICIAN’S CAREER ON
THE LINE!

WHAT A WASTE! TRAGIC SUICIDE OF THE MAN WHO
LOST EVERYTHING.

- **When do you think these events might have happened?**
- **Can you invent the story that surrounds them?**

These events actually took place in 1924. The rising star in the House of Commons is an independent politician called Henry Trebell. He is so impressive a politician, that he is asked to join the Conservative party to help push through a radical bill to disestablish the church. In the meantime, he has a brief, loveless fling with a married woman, Amy O’Connell, and subsequently gets her pregnant. Amy does not want to have the child – she has never wanted children – and so she asks Henry to help her have an abortion (which is illegal in 1924). He refuses to help, preferring her to go ahead with the pregnancy in hiding; and so she seeks help from a dodgy back-street abortionist. The procedure doesn’t go to plan and Amy dies. The Conservative party initially try to cover up the scandal – Amy’s husband even agrees to keep silent – but eventually they decide to throw Henry out of the party. Henry’s political beliefs mean everything to him, and he consequently commits suicide.

- **Can you think of any recent political scandals in the press?**



Helen Lindsay and Jessica Turner in rehearsal
Photo: Johan Persson

“I think I have never really known what Henry believed in. We all disbelieve in so much . . . and believe in so little nowadays.”

Frances Trebell, Act One

Harley Granville Barker & Konstantin Stanislavski

Exercise 2 – Back Story

Harley Granville Barker, as a director, believed that the building up of biographical information was fundamental to every role. Every character must have a believable past and credible off-stage truth; and inner truth is essential. He believed all of this, yet he didn't meet Konstantin Stanislavski until 1916.

One of the first activities that Samuel West set his actors in the rehearsal room was to get as many facts from the play on the wall as possible – within a timeline. He said: “Every question needs an answer. Every character must know how old they are; who they are related to; what their favourite colour is... Actors should do as much research as possible early on in the rehearsal process... There is no such thing as a stupid question at this point in rehearsal.”

Read Act 1 of the play.

Now create your own fact sheet for the wall. What do you learn about the location, setting, time and characters so far? Look at what they say about themselves; at what other characters say about them; and the stage directions.

Now that you have this information, take one of the characters and decide on what other things you can conclude about them. What do they like to do in their spare time? What is their favourite colour? What is their average day like? What are their ambitions?

Now try playing those characters and hot-seating one another. Talk us through your day, or what you like to do in your spare time. The rest of the group should help by asking questions.

You could even try some of Stanislavski's methods:

Given Circumstances: The actors imagine events and circumstances that occur offstage. E.g. improvise the conversation that the 4 men have been having in the other room; or the game of pool between Lucy and Walter.

The Magic “If”: Improvise events that do not happen in the script. Try to keep the characters consistent with what you know. E.g. another social occasion where Henry has deliberately ignored Amy.

Emotional Memory: Search your own memory for experiences that caused you to feel emotions that are similar to what the actor is probably experiencing. E.g. Henry is very forward with Amy – he knows what he wants. Can you think of a time when you have done anything and everything in your power to get what you want?

LINKS:

Waste by Harley Granville Barker - online text:

<http://www.bookrags.com/ebooks/15788/>

Lionel Shriver on John Edwards:

http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2008/aug/17/johne_dwards.uselections2008

Michael Billington on Theatre and Politics:

http://blogs.guardian.co.uk/theatre/2008/08/theatres_move_from_the_private.html



Waste Projects Pack

Compiled by Samantha Lane, Natalie Mitchell and Charlie Payne, with thanks to Kate Budgen and Emily Nairn.

Waste by Harley Granville Barker was produced at the Almeida Theatre from 25 September - 15 November 2008.

The information in this Projects Pack is correct at the time of going to Press. All rights reserved. © Almeida Theatre, Published September 2008.

The Almeida Theatre is a Registered Charity No. 282167. The Almeida Theatre Company Limited, Almeida Street, London N1 1TA

Use of this Projects Pack is authorised in connection with the Projects work at the Almeida Theatre. Any further use in any form must be approved by the creators. The copyright of all original material remains with the creators.

Quotes from *Waste* by Harley Granville Barker.

Design images by Stage Management
Production Photography by Johan Persson
Almeida Projects photography by Bridget Jones.

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.

Almeida Projects is supported by:

Principal Supporter: The Lehman Brothers Foundation Europe

Raymond Cazalet Charitable Trust
The Worshipful Company of Grocers
The Paul Hamlyn Foundation
The Kreitman Foundation
The Wates Foundation
The Peter Harrison Foundation
Kyte Broking

www.almeida.co.uk/projects