# National Theatre

# As You Like It

# **Learning Guide**

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### **About**

This learning guide supports the National Theatre's production of **As You Like It**, directed by **Polly Findlay**, which opened on **3 November 2015** at the **National Theatre**.

Our packs are designed to support viewing the recording on the **National Theatre Collection**. This pack provides links to the UK school curriculum and other productions in the Collection. It also has a plot synopsis with timecodes to allow you to jump to specific sections of the play.

Here you'll find all the information you need to enable you to study the production and write about it in detail. This includes notes about all the key elements from performance style to design. You'll also find pointers for further research.

# **Background Information**

Recording Date – 25 February 2016 Location – Olivier Theatre, National Theatre Age Recommendation – 12+

#### **Cast:**

Orlando	Joe Bannister
Adam	Patrick Godfrey
Oliver	Philip Arditti
Dennis	Jonathan Dryden Taylor
Charles	Leon Annor
Celia	Patsy Ferran
Rosalind	Rosalie Craig
Touchstone	Mark Benton
Le Beau	Jay Saighal
Duke Frederick:	Leo Wringer
Hesperia	Hazel Gardner
Duke Senior	John Ramm
Amiens	Fra Fee
Corin	Alan Williams
Silvus	Ken Nwosu
Jaques	Paul Chahidi

#### **CHOIR**

Rebecca Askew

Jeremy Avis

Lea Cornthwaite

Jonathan Glew

Hazel Holder

Sterre Maier

Catherine May

Elaine Mitchener

Simon Praa

Osnat Schmool

Belinda Sykes

Rebecca Thorn

#### **Creative Team:**

### As You Like It - Learning Guide

Lighting Designer	Jon Clark
Music	Orlando Gough
Movement Director	
Sound Designer	Carolyn Downing
Fight Director	Kate Waters
Artistic Collaborator	Clive Mendus

# **Teaching Information**

### This production is particularly suitable for:

- Drama students studying the play as part of an A Level course.
- English literature students studying the play as part of an A Level course.
- Drama students who are studying Polly Findlay as a contemporary theatre practitioner.
- Anyone with an interest in Shakespeare.

### In particular you might like to explore:

- The portrayal of the two central female characters of Rosalind and Celia.
- How the production's set, costume, lighting, and sound design evoke the forest setting and aid storytelling.
- This production alongside some other Shakespeare plays which explore themes of disguise, love, and gender. You can find a number of these on the NT Collection including *Twelfth Night* and *Much Ado About Nothing*.

The following notes have been compiled to help guide you through the significant design and performance aspects as you watch the production, or to remind you of them after you have watched it. You may also want to make your own notes and form your own opinions on the effectiveness of these aspects as you explore the production.

#### **Contextual Information:**

- The play was first performed in 1599 and at that time the female parts would have been played by young men, so when Rosalind disguises herself as Ganymede audiences saw a young man playing a girl pretending to be a young man. Theatre company Cheek by Jowl presented an all-male production of the play in 1991.
- There were 3 National Theatre productions of the play before this one, in 1967, 1979 and 2000. An adaptation of the play was also performed by a large community company in 2022 as part of the large-scale national community performance programme, Public Acts.

### Key design Elements: Set

There are two key sets for the production:

- The first is a corporate office set, which we see in place of the traditional court scene at the opening of the play. This features a brightly coloured, square-patterned carpet and dark office furniture. The creative team researched Korean offices as part of the design process as these often feature bright and artificial colours. If you look closely, you will notice that the upcoming forest is referenced in this scene by screensavers on computer screens which feature pictures of nature and bonsai trees on desks.
- As we move away from this scene and into the forest, there is a spectacular scene change. All the office furniture begins to rise from the floor and is pulled up on wires until it is dangling above the stage. This furniture then becomes the trees and branches of the forest.
- The colours of the forest are darker and much more muted than the colours used in the opening office scene. There are huge contrasts in the design of the two locations – artificial vs natural and order vs chaos.
- Designer Lizzie Clachan is a fan of visual art and sculpture and likes to incorporate elements of them into her designs. For this production she looked at the work of artist Cornelia Parker and her interaction between light fragments.

#### Key design Elements: Costume

As with the set, there are significant changes in costume between the opening scenes in the office and the rest of the play in the forest.

In the office scene, most of the actors wear smart, structured corporate office clothing, including plain, dark-coloured suits, shirts and formal shoes. When they move to the forest the style of clothing becomes less structured and more practical. Fabrics are softer and more natural and a lot of patterns, colour and texture comes in.

### **Key Characters**

- Rosalind begins the play in a formal, business-like black shift dress and black high-heeled shoes. She then changes into casual pyjamas with a hoody over the top. When she becomes Ganymede and enters the forest, she wears a blue anorak over a checked shirt, gilet, jeans and hiking boots. At the end of the play, when she transforms back into Rosalind, her costume is very feminine. She wears a green, strapless 1950s-style dress with voluminous petticoats and has flowers in her hair.
- Celia's costumes are quite "cute" and "girly" throughout the production. She begins in a burgundy dress and tights, with flat, black, patent-leather Mary Janes. Her pyjamas in the following scene feature cartoon cats. When she travels to the forest with Rosalind she wears a short kilt, a coat, and a bobble hat. At the end of the play her pink 1950s-style dress reflects the style of Rosalind and the other female characters.
- Orlando begins the play dressed as a cleaner in overalls. He then changes into
  red Nike sportswear and trainers for the wrestling match. He later wears
  combat trousers, a checked shirt, a striped woolen jumper (with holes in it) and
  Converse trainers. For the final scene he changes his jumper for a waistcoat with
  a flower buttonhole.

- Touchstone wears an odd combination of clothing throughout. We see him in grey jogging bottoms, with a dirty, old, frilly dress shirt, a rust-coloured scarf and a long black self-patterned coat. When he goes to the forest, he also wears a fur hat.
- Audrey wears fun and feminine costumes, usually 1950s-style dresses. One of these is a polka dot dress and another is a blue halter-neck dress.
- Jacques remains in his grey suit and shirt throughout the play.



### Key design Elements: Lighting

- In the first (office) scene the lighting is bright and unnatural. It includes officestyle strip lighting. This harsh lighting contrasts with the much softer lighting in the forest.
- In the forest, all the design elements come together to create the mood and atmosphere of the forest. Soft lighting comes from above the hanging furniture, shining thorough in fragments and creating the effect of light coming through trees.



### Key design Elements: Sound

Sound and music are key to creating the different locations in the play.

- In the office scene sound effects are recorded, unnatural and unpleasant to listen to.
- In the forest, there are no recorded sound effects. All the sounds you hear were created by actors using their voices. If you listen carefully, you can hear the actors making the sounds of weather (wind and rain), animals and birds.
- There is a live band, and an original score was created for the production by composer Orlando Gough.



### Performance Style

- The comedy is important in this production and the company took part in workshops exploring physical comedy including a clowning workshop and a Commedia dell'arte workshop.
- The company said that they embraced the "overtly theatricality" of the play, one where the audience's acceptance of Rosalind's disguise is very important.



#### **Key Moments**

- Watch as the office set is lifted into the air at 00:36:16, accompanied by a vocal soundscape and dark lighting.
- Rosalind enters the forest disguised as Ganymede for the first time at 00:41:15
- Listen to the song and watch Jacques' reaction at 00:48:13. Another good example of an original piece of music performed live is at 01:05:00.
- Jacques' famous "All the world's a stage..." seven ages of man speech can be found at 01:01:42.
- Note the change of sound and lighting at 01:08:29 to denote a much lighter mood as Orlando enters to hang his poems in the "trees."
- Note the comedy created at 01:09:27 as members of the company crawl onstage on their hands and knees wearing cream woolen jumpers to represent sheep.
- The full company perform a song and dance ("jubilation") at the end of the play at 02:15:00 and Rosalind's epilogue follows at 02:19:00.



# Plot Synopsis with Timecodes

#### 00:25:40

A worker's bell tolls in a modern office. The workers pack up their belongings and leave swiftly. Orlando, dressed as the office cleaner, tells another older servant, Adam, of how on his deathbed, his father instructed his eldest brother, Oliver, to look after him well, but instead keeps him in poverty and treats him like a servant.

Orlando protests his treatment directly to Oliver, and they brawl. Orlando, though younger, is stronger and overpowers Oliver, and tells him of the unfair treatment he has suffered. Orlando challenges the court wrestler, Charles, to a fight. Oliver dismisses Orlando and Adam from his sight.

Oliver meets with Charles, who has agreed to wrestle with Orlando tomorrow morning. Charles implores for Oliver to stop Orlando from wrestling with Charles and save him from the embarrassment of losing. Oliver convinces Charles that he needs to win, for he describes Orlando to be villainous, and will stop at nothing to kill him, and so he asks Charles to purposefully injure him. Oliver laments how he is glad that Orlando will be harmed in the fight tomorrow. Even though he has kept his brother from schooling, he is noble and wise, and loved by all, unlike himself. Tomorrow, it ends.

#### 00:33:50

A chaotic, busy office with repetitive, mechanical computer sounds. Enter Rosalind and Celia, among the chaos.

Rosalind is sad and distracted, for her father, Duke Senior, has been banished by her uncle, Duke Frederik. Celia, Rosalind's cousin, wishes that she could swap her father, Duke Frederik, for Rosalind's. Touchstone, the court jester, has been asked by Celia's father to be summoned to him. Monsieur le Beau enters and tells them of the wrestling match between Orlando and Charles, of which Celia and Rosalind are excited to watch.

The wrestling match is soon due to start. Duke Frederik opens the match. It is apparent that physically, Orlando is no match for Charles, but he will not be dissuaded. Rosalind and Celia try to persuade him against fighting Charles, but Charles speaks so eloquently of his purpose, that they let him fight. Against all physical odds, and cheered on by Rosalind, Orlando wins the fight.

In triumph, Orlando names himself as the youngest son of Sir Rowland de Bois, an enemy of Duke Frederik's. Duke Frederik spares him, voices his wishes that Orlando was descended from another house. Rosalind reflects that her banished father loved Sir Rowland and gives Orlando a necklace as a winner's prize and a token of her affection. In turn, Orlando is overcome by love. Le Beau enters and warns Orlando that he must leave immediately, for the tyrannical Duke Frederik is not happy that he is still there. Le Beau tells him about Rosalind and Celia's sisterly bond, and of their treatment by Duke Frederik.

#### 00:49:40

Rosalind and Celia debate Rosalind's affections for Orlando, and Celia how Rosalind could fall in love with him so quickly. Duke Frederik appears, and without warning, banishes Rosalind from the court, for he suspects her to be a traitor, like her father. Rosalind argues that her father was not a traitor, and Celia also defends her, and swears that if he banishes Rosalind, then he banishes her, his daughter, too. Duke Frederik hears none of this, and orders that if Rosalind stays any longer, she will be killed.

Rosalind and Celia conjure a plan together to escape, in disguise, to the Forest of Arden to seek help from the banished Duke Senior. Rosalind decides that she will dress as a man, "Beauty provoketh thieves sooner than gold", named Ganymede, and Celia as his shepherdess sister, Aliena. They propose to take the court fool, Touchstone, with them to accompany their journey. They prepare to leave in excitement, gathering their belongings and devise a plan to escape Duke Frederik quickly and without suspicion. "Now go we in content, to liberty and not to banishment."

#### 00:56:05

Orlando returns to his home where he finds his old friend Adam has packed his bags. Adam has overheard Orlando's jealous brother Oliver plotting to burn his lodgings in the night to kill Orlando while he sleeps. Orlando asks his loyal servant and friend to accompany him as he escapes from his brother.

#### 01:00:40

Alarm bells and sirens wail in the court. Duke Frederik learns that his daughter, along with Rosalind and Touchstone, are missing. Celia's gentlewoman confesses that she overheard Celia and Rosalind talking about their admiration for Orlando. Duke Frederik sends his men to hunt for Orlando, assuming that they will be with him, and instructs his team to bring back the runaways.

#### 01:0:41

A moment of transformation. We are transported from the urbanite court to under the leafy canopies of the Forest of Arden.

Enter Duke Senior, Amiens and other loyal Lords to Duke Senior. He talks of how this simple life in exile is far superior to that of the pomp of the court.

#### 01:06:20

Enter Rosalind (disguised as Ganymede), Celia (as Aliena), and Touchstone. They are tired from all their travelling, though Rosalind is still excited to have reached the forest. They come across a love-sick shepherd, Silvius, who yearns for his lover, Phoebe, and their elderly companion, Corin. Rosalind and Celia purchase a small shepherd's cottage from Corin, where they will now live. Enter Phoebe, pursued by Silvius, who exasperatedly tells him that she likes him not, and tries to send him away. He follows.

#### 01:12:00

Amiens sings of their new life as willing exiles in the forest. The melancholy Monsieur Jacques, who has been avoiding the duke all day, implores him to sing more to lift his spirits, and has even written his own comedic verse. Jacques exits to find a nook to sleep, and Amiens seeks to find the duke.

Enter Touchstone, exploring the forest. He is spotted by Jacques, recognising him as a fool from the courts. He pursues him.

Enter simple William, calling for Audrey, a goatherder from the forest. She gently rebukes his advances.

#### 01:18:15

Elderly Adam is exhausted from his travels to the forest with Orlando. He is starving and he cannot go much further. He lies down to die. Orlando refuses to accept this, and carries Adam away to find food and shelter.

Enter Phoebe, pursued by Silvius. He ignores her exasperated rejections, and she runs again into the forest. He follows.

#### 01:20:30

The duke grows frustrated that Jacques ventures off on his own and cannot be found by the others. On that same note, Jacques runs into the camp and tells them all that he has seen a court fool in the forest. The duke and the other Lords do not believe him, to Jacques frustration.

Enter Orlando, driven to extreme measures from hunger and exhaustion, threatens the Duke and the Lords with a dagger, should they eat before he has taken what he needs. The duke calms him, and welcomes him to sit down with them at their table. Orlando apologises for his behaviour and asks that he takes food for his elderly companion before he returns.

Jacques laments the many seven acts of life.

"All the world's a stage,

And all the men and women merely players; They have their exits and their entrances.

And one man in his time plays many parts,"

Orlando carries Adam into the camp, who is attended and nursed by the lords by the campfire. Aimen sings of the nature of life and friendship.

The duke learns that Orlando is the son of Sir Rowland, and as his father's dear friend, offers for Orlando and Adam to stay with them, and invites Orlando to tell him of what has come to pass since his father's death.

#### 01:32.10

Enter Duke Frederick, Lords, and Oliver, in handcuffs. Duke Frederik commands Oliver to find and bring Orlando to him, otherwise they will seize all that belongs to him, including his house, his goods, and his lands. Oliver cries that he has never loved his brother, yet Duke Frederik does not care.

#### 01:33:00

Orlando, wildly in love with Rosalind, writes love notes to her and pins these notes to the trees of the forest. Celia emerges from the trees, having listened, and watched Orlando. She leaves secretly in another direction.

#### 1:33:55

A field of sheep. Touchstone and Corin debate the morals of life of a shepherd, and a life at court.

Enter Rosalind, reading one of Orlando's many love notes. Touchstone mocks her. Celia runs in and bids he, Corin and the flock leave them. She teases Rosalind with the knowledge of who is writing the notes. Rosalind begs her to tell who the mysterious writer's identity. She reveals the mysterious writer as Orlando. Rosalind is beside

herself with joy. Celia tells the story of how she found him and the notes but has not yet spoken or revealed herself to him.

Enter Orlando and Jacques. Rosalind and Celia hide in the trees and observe. There is an awkwardness between Orlando and Jacques, for neither wish to be in the other's company. Jacques asks Orlando to write no more love notes, Orlando asks Jacques to stop reading them. Orlando tells Jacques of his love for Rosalind. They agree to disagree and to go their separate ways.

Rosalind, disguised still as Ganymede, approaches Orlando and attempts the same witty and intellectual banter as Orlando and Jacques had. Orlando is impressed and asks whereby Ganymede (Rosalind) comes from. Rosalind improvises her story as Ganymede and introduces Celia as Aliena. She pretends that Ganymede is a doctor of love and tells him that (s)he will counsel Orlando and cure him of his maddened love for Rosalind. Ganymede says that "he" will take Rosalind's place and that "he" and Orlando can act out their relationship. He agrees. Jacques stands and watches the exchange from afar.

#### ACT 2

#### 02:14:45

The Forest of Arden, the next day. More love notes are strewn throughout the forest.

Orlando has not arrived for his first lesson of love with Ganymede, and Rosalind is confused and frustrated. Celia questions whether Orlando is in fact in love, and Rosalind defends him, though Orlando has broken his oath.

Corin laments about the follies of love and tells them to follow him to witness the argument of Silvius and Phoebe.

#### 02:16:55

Enter Silvius and Phoebe. Silvius is still begging pardon from Phoebe to hear his vows of love. Phoebe wishes that her eyes could kill him, for she wishes that he does not come near her ever again.

Rosalind (disguised still as Ganymede) interrupts the quarrel. Phoebe immediately falls in love with Ganymede. Rosalind scolds and insults them both to put Phoebe off. She tells Phoebe that she is better off with Silvius, but it is too late, Phoebe is entranced with love at first sight.

#### 02:21:15

Touchstone and Audrey emerge together in the forest. Touchstone has dazzled her with his courtly manners. Touchstone vows that he will marry Audrey.

#### 02:23:05

Jacques confronts Rosalind and Aliena in the forest. He tells them of his melancholy of being a solo traveller, of which Rosalind describes as "to have seen much and to have nothing is to have rich eyes and poor hands." Orlando enters and Jacques leaves immediately.

Rosalind scolds Orlando for being an hour late, for being in love means that every minute feels like a thousand pieces. Orlando asks for forgiveness, they leave.

#### 02:25:40

Enter Phoebe and Silvius. Phoebe is still entranced by Ganymede, and she recalls to Silvius of Ganymede's features that she loves. However, she also remembers his chide remarks, and vows, with Silvius' help to write him a scathing letter back. Silvius says he will help her, with all his heart. They leave.

#### 02:28:22

Enter Rosalind, Celia and Orlando. Rosalind continues to berate Orlando but insists on still running the session. The two imagine their lives together as man and wife, and even perform a faux wedding, with Celia as the priest.

Rosalind continues to test Orlando's decision making and his suitability as a partner. Orlando must leave, and Rosalind threatens that should he be late again, his "Rosalind" will see him as unworthy. He leaves, and Rosalind is overcome in love with him. Celia remains sceptical.

#### 02:36:10

Enter Touchstone and Audrey. Touchstone has learned that William is claiming Audrey to be his lover. William enters and Touchstone attempts to bamboozles William with courtly words, calling him a clown and threatening to kill him in one hundred and fifty ways. William simply headbutts Touchstone and exits.

#### 02:38:50

Phoebe has written a letter to Ganymede, which Silvius delivers to Rosalind. In the letter, Phoebe writes purely of her love for Ganymede, as read aloud by Silvius. Rosalind bids that Silvius returns to her, and Ganymede's wish is that if she loves him, that she takes Silvius as her lover.

Oliver arrives at the scene, dishevelled and bloody, searching for Rosalind and Celia's cottage. Celia confirms that is in fact their cottage, and he recognises them from Orlando's description of Ganymede. Oliver produces a bloody handkerchief and tells them the tale of how Orlando has saved him from a hungry lioness. Oliver is now changed and helps his brother with his injuries from the battle with the lioness. The bloodied handkerchief is a token to prove Orlando's loyalty and bravery and proves why he will be late to his next session with Ganymede. On seeing this bloodied handkerchief, Ganymede (Rosalind) faints. Revived, part of her disguise is revealed to Oliver. Celia invites Oliver to accompany them back to their house.

#### 2:47:00

Tomorrow, Audrey and Touchstone will be married.

#### 2:47:15

Oliver confesses that he has fallen in love at first sight with Aliena, and with Orlando's blessing, he will marry her. Oliver vows that will give over all his estate and worldly

belongings to Orlando to live here for the rest of his days in the forest with Aliena, as a shepherd. Orlando agrees and says that they will be wed tomorrow, with the duke and his lords in attendance.

Enter Rosalind, exit Oliver.

They talk of how their brother and sister will be married tomorrow, and though it is a joyous occasion, Orlando will be bitter, looking at love through another man's eyes. Rosalind, still disguised as Ganymede, says that if Orlando wishes, that Ganymede will use his powers as a magician for Orlando to also be married to Rosalind tomorrow at the same wedding as his brother.

Phoebe pursues Ganymede in the forest, insisting on her love for him. Rosalind concocts a plan that all shall be married tomorrow and makes everyone pledge to meet tomorrow at the wedding, they all agree.

#### 02:54:00

The wedding day. Ganymede reminds them all of the vows they made. Orlando shall marry Rosalind, should he be able to make her appear. Phoebe shall marry Ganymede should be she able to marry, and if not able, she will take the faithful shepherd, Silvius, and Silvius take Phoebe.

Exit Ganymede (Rosalind)

Enter now too, Touchstone and Audrey, ready to be married. Duke Senior gives his blessing.

Corin introduces the entrance of Rosalind, now out of disguise, ready to be married. All agree to be married as they vowed, and they are married. Enter Jaques de Bois, the second son of Sir Rowland and the brother of Orlando and Oliver. He tells of how after an encounter with an old religious man, Duke Frederik has given up his worldly possessions and become a hermit, restoring all court and possessions to Duke Senior and his family. Jacques vows to join the Duke Frederik in his religious way, and wishes the couples happiness, before leaving on his melancholic new journey. The wedding party rejoices and celebrate the newly wed couples.

# Suggestions for Further Activity

- Research other productions of As You Like It and see how they compare to this
  one. You might like to explore at the 2006 film version directed by Kenneth
  Branagh or Cheek by Jowl's 1991 all-male production.
- In his review of the production in the Guardian, theatre critic Michael Billington said "Lizzie Clachan's design sets the tone." How far do you agree with this statement? You can read the full review here:

  https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2015/nov/04/as-you-like-it-review-love-gets-lost-in-a-forest-of-chairs-at-the-national#:~:text=Review-,As%20You%20Like%20It%20review%20%E2%80%93%20love%20gets%20Iost%20in%20a,of%20chairs%20at%20the%20National&text=Our%20march%20towards%20a,builds%20to%20a%20joyous%20conclusion.
- Research the work of director Polly Findlay. You can watch another two of her productions (*Antigone* and *Treasure Island*) on the NT Collection. Both plays were also performed on the Olivier stage.
- Research the work of designer Lizzie Clachan and find out more about her process. You can see more of her work, including *Treasure Island* and *Yerma*, on the NT Collection. You can find out more about her work here: <a href="https://www.lizzieclachan.com/">https://www.lizzieclachan.com/</a>.

### Find out More

#### Watch

Performing Shakespeare with Abigail Rokison-Woodall and Simon Russell-Beale <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JdmFNzyR27s&list=PLJgBmjHpqgs7citDojiasj-nMABL\_DXku&index=8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JdmFNzyR27s&list=PLJgBmjHpqgs7citDojiasj-nMABL\_DXku&index=8</a>

Shakespeare at the NT: Writer for Today

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3lnDNluJno0&t=1s

Shakespeare at the NT: The 21st Century

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gxgiayklr-0

### **Explore**

The National Theatre's Google Arts and Culture exhibitions, including this one on Shakespeare at the National Theatre

https://artsandculture.google.com/story/WQVxxgh-hh8A8A

### **Learning Hub**

You can find more resources for schools and teachers on the National Theatre's Learning Hub. Search by key stage, subject, theatrical style or practitioner and discover an ever-growing library of short films, learning guides and digital exhibitions. Find out more: <a href="https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/learn-explore/schools/teacher-resources/">https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/learn-explore/schools/teacher-resources/</a>

#### **National Theatre Archive**

More materials relating to the production including the costume bible, poster, prompt scripts, programme, stage management reports and more are held at the National Theatre Archive, which is free to visit.

Find out more: <a href="https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/archive">https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/archive</a>

We hope that you have enjoyed watching and studying **As You Like It**. Don't forget that there are many more fantastic productions to explore as part of the NT Collection. We hope that watching this recorded production has made you feel inspired to see and make live theatre. Why not find out what's happening at your local theatre and how you can get involved?

# National Theatre

# Thankyou