National Theatre Learning

wonder.land

a new musical created by Damon Albarn, Moira Buffini & Rufus Norris music by Damon Albarn, book and lyrics by Moira Buffini

Background Pack

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Contents



Welcome to the National Theatre's background pack for *wonder.land*

This background pack introduces the process of bringing the National Theatre production to life, from auditions through to press night.

Through imaginative and innovative in-school, on-site and online activities, NT Learning opens up the National's repertoire, artistry, skills, and the building itself, enabling participants of all ages to discover new skills and experience the excitement of theatre-making. If you've enjoyed this background pack or would like to talk to us about getting involved in NT Learning activities, please contact us on **learning@nationaltheatre.org.uk** or **020 7452 3388**.

Jane Ball Programme Manager, NT Learning March 2016 This background pack is published by and copyright The Royal National Theatre Board Reg. No. 1247285 Registered Charity No. 224223 Views expressed in this background pack are not necessarily those of the National Theatre

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Further production details: nationaltheatre.org.uk

The National Theatre production of *wonder.land*

a new musical created by Damon Albarn, Moira Buffini & Rufus Norris music by Damon Albarn, book and lyrics by Moira Buffini

Cast, in order of appearance

MC (Cheshire Cat / Caterpillar) HAL FOWLER Aly LOIS CHIMIMBA Bianca GOLDA ROSHEUVEL Matt PAUL HILTON Dinah WITNEY WHITE Kitty ABIGAIL ROSE Mary Ann STEPHANIE ROJAS Alice CARLY BAWDEN White Rabbit JOSHUA LACEY Ms Manxome ANNA FRANCOLINI Luke Laprel ENYI OKORONKWO Mr King ADRIAN GROVE Dum SAM ARCHER Dee LEON COOKE Mouse / Kieran ED WADE Humpty DAISY MAYWOOD Dodo IVAN DE FREITAS Mock Turtle CYDNEY UFFINDELL-PHILLIPS WPC Rook NADINE COX Ensemble + Swing SIMON ANTHONY Ensemble + Swing DYLAN MASON Ensemble + Swing LISA RITCHIE

Director RUFUS NORRIS Set Designer RAE SMITH Projections 59 PRODUCTIONS Costume Designer KATRINA LINDSAY Lighting Designer PAULE CONSTABLE Music Supervisor TOM DEERING Music Associate MALCOLM FORBES-PECKHAM Sound Designer PAUL ARDITTI Choreographer JAVIER DE FRUTOS Associate Director JAMES BONAS Associate Set Designer TOM PARIS Associate Choreographer CYDNEY UFFINDELL-PHILLIPS Staff Director TINUKE CRAIG Puppet Design 'Charlie' TOBY OLIÉ Company Voice Work JEANNETTE NELSON Production Photographers BRINKHOFF/MÖGENBURG

Understudies

Simon Anthony (Mr King/Dum/Dee/Dodo), Adrian Grove (MC/Matt/PC Rook), Dylan Mason (White Rabbit/Luke/Mouse/Kieran), Lisa Ritchie (Dinah/Kitty/Mary Ann/Mock Turtle), Stephanie Rojas (Humpty), Abigail Rose (Alice), Witney White (Aly)

Josh Hamilton is appearing with the support of UK Equity, incorporating the Variety Artistes' Federation, pursuant to an exchange programme between American Equity and UK Equity.

Musicians

Tom Deering (Music Director / piano / keyboard 1) Ian Watson (piano / keyboard 2) Sarah Freestone (violin / acoustic guitar / ukulele & banjo) James Gambold (percussion / kit) Tim Harries (electric bass) Simon Tong (electric guitar) Andy Findon (flute / piccolo / alto saxophone / bass flute) Christian Forshaw (clarinet / bass clarinet / soprano, baritone & tenor saxophones)

World Premiere at Manchester International Festival Palace Theatre, **2 July 2015** London Premiere at the National Theatre, **10 December 2015**

A synopsis of the play

Act One

Prologue

The MC welcomes the audience and requests that they switch off their mobile phones. This standard announcement then takes an unusual turn: 'May I remind you that filming, texting, tweeting, playing poker, chasing fruit, high-speed racing, zombie slaying, flying through the galaxy and taking selfies during performances – these things are *fabulous*...' He breaks into song, inviting everyone to enter a 'digital black portal / To boundless lands'.



Looking-Glass World

Aly Hatton is playing a game on her phone when her mother, Bianca, comes to the door and insists that Aly get out of the house because she has been on her phone 'all weekend'. Aly gives in and agrees to go to the supermarket with her mother and baby brother, Charlie. Aly sings 'Who's ruining my life?' to which the chorus respond: 'Your Mum.'

At the supermarket, Aly bumps into her father, Matt, who no longer lives with the family due to financial problems. In extremely high spirits, Matt tells Aly: 'Climb into my trolley / And I'll take you for a spin.' Aly asks Matt whether she can come and live with him and he loses control of the trolley. This time, Bianca sings 'Who's ruining your life?' and answers her own question with 'Your dad' – the chorus takes up this new refrain. Bianca and Matt have an argument, with Bianca complaining about Matt's moans, loans, debts and threats, and Matt calling Bianca a nag and insisting that he is taking responsibility. Aly unsuccessfully tries to intervene. Matt says he's been waiting all day for a chance to see his family, but Bianca says he would have a better chance of seeing them if he put things right, got a job and paid back some of the money he lost.

Back in her room, in answer to the question, 'Who's ruining your life?' a frustrated Aly says 'The whole bloody lot of you!'

Down the Rabbit Hole

Aly picks up her phone and sends out a message online saying she'd like to talk to someone because she's just seen her dad and she can't get used to not having him around. Bianca comes to the door and tells Aly she's always here, and that they can talk. But Aly says no, she's probably going to go to bed, and returns to talking online. Aly types that she is finding it hard to be in a new flat, in a new part of town and new at school. Dinah, Kitty and Mary Ann all come online and start to tease Aly. Dinah says Aly is the new girl with 'the atmosphere', Mary Ann ponders whether she might have 'fat attitude' and Kitty asks 'Is that you there?' and posts a picture altered to show Aly as obese. The three girls then begin gossiping about Aly's dad, saying the family split because of the money he lost through online gambling and they call him 'The Mad Hat Man'. Aly tells them to 'Shut up, you slags' and the girls respond angrily, telling her to get a life and 'Be someone else.'

When Aly types this last phrase into a search engine, the wonder.land logo appears, along with the MC. She's prompted to enter a username, which she does: AllyPally32. During the song 'WWW', Aly creates her avatar, a tall, thin, blonde whom she calls Alice. Aly sings 'I'll be a different girl... Erase me / Go on, chuck me in the waste.' At the end of the song, Alice becomes 3D and Aly agrees to the site's only 'term and condition': 'Extreme malice will result in your deletion.' There is some confusion when Aly and Alice speak to each other. Aly: 'Right, you're me.' Alice: 'You're me.' Aly: 'No, you're me.' The pair immediately make each other laugh and have fun together.

During the song 'Fabulous', Aly is delighted to discover the possibilities of her avatar – she makes Alice walk, run, dance, sing and kick. When asked whether she would like to quest or play, Alice clicks on 'quest' and a White Rabbit appears. Aly commands Alice to follow the White Rabbit, which she does, falling down the rabbit hole after him. Alice and Aly sing 'Falling' with the refrain 'Nothing in wonder.land that you can't do.'

The Manxome Foe

Bianca hurries to get Aly up for school, worried that they will both be late, and asks her to do some household

chores. Aly responds 'Yeah' to everything Bianca says, and it's clear she is not really listening. The last thing Bianca tells her is not to play on her phone at school.

But Aly is still following the White Rabbit on her phone with Alice when Ms Manxome, the head teacher, catches her. The teacher says, 'It seems you children need reminding,' and launches into the song 'I'm Right', telling her assembled pupils that she is never, ever wrong, and that phones are banned. Luke Laprel walks into the assembly late. With help from Mr King and his boombox, Ms Manxome explains to the children her strategy for improving the school, which involves a ban on phones. She ends with 'Hear what I said / Or it's off with your head!' Ms Manxome mentions the fact she has a new guillotine, but hastens to add that it is only for paper. Once she is alone, Ms Manxome admits to feeling lonely sometimes, but she knows that this is her duty.

Aly walks into Ms Manxome's office and finds her chopping the heads off flowers with her guillotine. Before Ms Manxome gives Aly back her phone, she tells her they share the name Alice and that it means 'noble, of the nobility'. She warns: 'Alice, if I find you with this phone again, it's a beheading – I mean a detention.'

The Pool of Tears

Dinah, Mary Ann and Kitty surround Aly, and tell her they feel they were a bit mean, and that they want to be friends with her. Aly brightens up at this but then they say that to be friends all she has to do is say, 'Please forgive me, Dinah,' 'I'm so stupid' and 'I'm just a big fat bitch.' They then inform the rest of the class that Aly has been bullying them online. Luke arrives late to Mr King's lesson and doesn't know the answers. The three bullies are whispering 'Big / Fat / Bitch' at Aly, who responds by retreating into wonder. land and making Alice cry, telling her, 'Cry a whole pool of tears and then throw yourself in.'

Dum and Dee appear in wonder.land, squabbling over the game, 'You chose this stupid game,' / 'You chose it.' Their argument descends into the song 'Freaks' in which they insult each other back and forth. Aly has Alice say hello to them and suggest they be 'a bit nicer'. They insult Alice, calling her 'fugly as a boot' but she perseveres, and Aly tells her to stand up for herself. She fights them and so they warn her, 'Stop or we'll cry,' which they do, defusing the situation. Other avatars approach, including Mouse, Humpty and Dodo. They chat about the mysterious purpose of the game's quest, speculate about what each other's real identities might be and reveal the difficulties they experienced in the real world that drove them to this virtual world. In the song 'Crap Life' they tell each other more about their real selves: Humpty has an abusive stepfather; Dodo worries he might be 'twisted' in the head because he wears

girls' clothes; Mock Turtle is called Pizza Face at school; Mouse is very small and girls find him boring; Dum and Dee have panic attacks.

Aly becomes so involved in this virtual scene that she forgets where she is in the real world and stands up in maths class. Her classmates mock her and Mr King asks her to answer the question on the board, which she cannot. The three bullies surround her again, ordering her to say sorry so that they will be 'friends' with her. They make fun of Aly's 'moustache' too until she runs away, and Alice runs after the White Rabbit in wonder.land.



Advice from a Caterpillar

Aly enters the girls' toilets to hide. The Caterpillar appears and asks Alice in song, 'Who Are You?' When the three bullies come into the bathroom, they find Aly giggling into her phone and tease her that this is a sign of the madness that runs in her family. They keep needling her, making fun of her dad because of a news article they've found online about him 'fighting the debt collectors in his pants'. Aly tells them to 'F-off' and mind their own business, but Dinah warns her, 'If you ever come on my wall again, I'll post that you do sex acts,' before the three girls leave together.

Aly takes her phone out again. Alice is still singing 'Who are you?', to which Aly responds 'Alice, you don't want to know.' When Alice persists, Aly sings the song 'Secrets' which is about the things she cannot say, 'I've got secrets that loom in my head when I sleep / Secrets I'm burning to say and not keep.' Aly finally reveals to

Alice some of her secrets – one is that she told her mum that her dad had run out of money, despite him asking her not to. The other is that 'I totally utterly hate / Being me.'

The White Rabbit appears again, and Alice is flirtatious: 'Are you wild?' Aly is embarrassed, perhaps because he's 'cute'. She tells Alice to follow the White Rabbit when he exits.



Luke comes into the girls' toilets, saving he needs to hide, which he does in a cubicle. Kieran comes in looking for him: 'You're hiding that gayboy in here.' Aly tells Kieran she hasn't seen Luke. When he won't leave, she starts filming him on her phone and calls him a pervert, threatening to put the video online if he doesn't leave. Kieran backs off and leaves, so that Luke can now emerge safely from the cubicle. 'Are you gay?' Aly asks him. 'Are you fat?' he responds. They agree not to go back to class, playing companionably on their phones together instead. Luke asks Aly about wonder.land. He is surprised by her avatar: 'She's white.' ... 'Why shouldn't she be white?'... 'Strange though. People usually make avatars who are cooler than they are. You are definitely cooler than her,' Luke tells Aly, and it looks like the pair are forging a friendship.

Ms Manxome storms into the toilets, horrified to find Aly and Luke in there during lessons. She gives them detention and confiscates Aly's phone. She muses to herself 'I should be running the country; not just a school.' From the phone, Alice calls to Aly: 'Alice?', but Ms Manxome thinks she means her because they share the name. Ms Manxome is drawn into conversation with Alice who tells her that she knows she's lonely, will keep her secrets and that she loves her. Intrigued, Ms Manxome agrees to play in this virtual garden where there are 'no rules'.

A Mad Tea Party

As Aly and Luke leave school together, Aly is still devastated by the loss of her phone. She tells him about wonder.land and her quest, while he tells her about his game: Zombie Swarm. They meet Matt at the school gate and he invites them out to celebrate the fact that he is now 'technology free'. The two accept, both agreeing that they will skip detention, with Luke also avoiding his tormentor, Kieran.

Matt sings 'In Clover' about how happy he is now that he has got rid of technology, and secured a job at a garden centre. When they get to 'Treacle Teas' tea shop, Matt teases Aly and Luke about whether there is a romantic element to their friendship, but Luke tells him flatly that there isn't because he is gay. An increasingly excitable Matt says 'You know who you are and that's a great thing.' He then suggests that the three of them raise their 'cracked teacups to life's chances' which leads into the song 'Chances' about life, luck and gambling. Aly is worried about her dad's euphoric mood and embarrassed that other customers are looking at them, but Matt continues singing, playing the spoons and dancing on the tables. The waiters are concerned at Matt's behaviour, and it culminates in a scuffle between a waiter and Matt. Bianca walks in carrying Charlie and is horrified at the scene that meets her eyes. The family have another argument where Bianca criticises Matt for taking Aly out without letting her know, and Matt protests that he 'had sunlight in his brain.' The police arrive, and even more chaos ensues as Matt runs around the restaurant with WPC Rook on his heels. The chorus sing, in summary, 'Sooner or later / You'll begin to see / That life is not a gambling site / And chances don't come for free.' And the MC ends the act: 'Fabulous.'

INTERVAL

Act Two

The Garden of Live Flowers

Ms Manxome sings 'Me' about the euphoria she feels now that she has Alice. She buys her red accessories, and is delighted because 'I'm no longer alone.'

At the police station, WPC Rook is trying to get Matt to give her information about the incident at the tea shop. Matt and Bianca are having a heated argument, ignoring WPC Rook. Bianca says 'You have turned my hair half grey now,' but Matt defends himself, 'Seriously darling, I've begged / For mercy; oh how I've knelt!' They argue in song, with Matt calling Bianca 'heartless', and she in turn calling him 'useless'. Aly, who has been listening in

distress now intervenes: 'Sooner or later / You'll begin to see / That I am only holding on to / Shreds of a family' and her parents finally calm down.

In her office, Ms Manxome is watching Alice running around the wonder.land garden as they sing 'Me' together. When the avatars come upon Alice and join in the song, singing 'It's me / Me', Ms Manxome is upset and uncertain: 'What are they doing? Are they laughing at me? ... / They're stealing my song.' They can tell that Alice is different from the last time they met her (when she was being controlled by Aly). Dodo: 'Alice, talk to us. We're your friends.' But Ms Manxome has no time for friends: 'Friends are never friends. You're better off alone.' She pushes Mouse over, and commands them all to leave 'her' garden. But they band together and drive Alice (and Ms Manxome) away. The other avatars are sad that Alice is now so weird because they really liked her before.



The White Queen

Bianca is outraged that Aly missed a detention, was playing on her phone in the toilets and has now had her phone confiscated till the end of term. She wants to know what is going on, and Aly finally confides, 'All right, I'm being bullied... / They're teasing me about my dad.' Bianca wants to go into school and speak to Aly's head teacher about the bullying but Aly refuses. Aly wants to talk about 'what's really going on' – the rows her parents have: 'Ever since you broke us up, all you care about is Charlie!' Bianca denies this, and she blames Aly's feelings on 'that horrid little mobile' and bans her from using it except for homework. Charlie vomits all over Aly who sings the song 'Everyone loves Charlie' about how everyone seems to love her little brother more than her.

The Red Queen

When Aly tries to access her Alice avatar from an internet café, she is puzzled when she is told this is not possible because the avatar is already 'in use'. Meanwhile Ms Manxome is buying a sword for Alice. While Aly can now hear everyone in wonder.land, they cannot hear her. She is baffled by what is going on there - Ms Manxome tells Alice to ready her sword for battle. Alice is initally reluctant because the avatars are her friends, but she turns on them at Ms Manxome's urging. It dawns on Aly that the person controlling Alice, who calls herself 'The Red Queen' must be Ms Manxome. 'O children O children / Listen to me... / The Red Queen is going to / Reign over thee.' But Humpty rallies them, 'We have to stand up to her!' and the other avatars unite against Alice as she deals each of them a cutting insult in turn. The MC says: 'Warning: deletion / No extreme malice'.

In the internet café, Aly is extremely worried about her avatar which she considers 'desecrated' by Ms Manxome's take-over. She contacts Luke online, who is playing his Zombie Swarm game. They agree to meet at school to protect Aly's avatar from deletion.

In the police station, Matt sings 'Broken Glass' while Bianca also sings it, alone at home. Then Bianca realises that Aly is not in her bedroom.

Queen Alice

When Aly and Luke meet up at school, Luke tries to persuade her not to break and enter. 'I need your help,' she tells him, to which he replies 'Not this way,' and they part.

While Aly goes into the school, Luke goes online and types out a message: 'Putting out the word / Come to wonder.land / See the real Ms Manxome / Online thief.' Their classmates respond in disbelief to what they see as an invasion of Aly's online privacy by their head mistress.

At the police station, Bianca tells Matt that Aly has gone missing and that she thinks they can find her using a smartphone. In wonder.land the avatars are preparing to defend themselves against any further onslaught from Ms Manxome's Alice. On Luke's online network, he is telling everyone that Aly is breaking into school to get her phone back, which impresses all of their classmates.

Back at the police station, Matt has managed to hack into wonder.land and find Alice. Ms Manxome: 'I'm going to have order in this garden. It'll be a teenage-free zone. I'm going to wipe you out.' Suddenly the White

Rabbit appears. When it won't move, Ms Manxome's Alice says: 'Get out of my way. Move.' Aly takes the phone and Aly's Alice says: 'No, you move. Get out of my game.' Bianca recognises that this new Alice must be Aly. As Aly and Ms Manxome struggle over the phone, Alice is fighting with herself. As she swishes the sword through the air, she kills the White Rabbit. The MC again warns that Alice will be deleted for extreme malice. Aly's classmates get everyone online now to watch the chaos unfold.

Aly pleads with the MC not to delete Alice, as there is a case of stolen identity here: Aly is the real Alice. A fight ensues between Aly and Ms Manxome, both insisting: 'I'm Alice' and struggling for control of the phone and Alice. The spectators cheer Aly on, even the classmates who used to bully her: 'You're trending like a hero.'

Luke appears with some zombies from his game. When he asks Aly/Alice whether she is in Ms Manxome's office, she says yes, which reveals her location to her parents and police. Alice fights Luke, while Aly and Ms Manxome continue fighting, with Ms Manxome even putting Aly's head in the guillotine on her desk. Although Aly tries to prevent it, Alice kills Luke's avatar on Ms Manxome's command. Aly realises what she must do: delete Alice. Ms Manxome cries, 'Don't take her away... / I'm all alone.' But Aly insists, 'I'm not afraid of anything... / I know who I am.' Alice says 'I have finished my quest,' before she is deleted by Aly.

Ms Manxome threatens Aly with the police, as well as expulsion and corporal punishment. Luke enters Ms Manxome's office and is livestreaming what he sees. He is followed by Aly's family, who are very angry and accuse Ms Manxome of stealing Aly's identity. When the police arrive, they warn Aly they will have to take her to the station for entering the school illegally. But then Matt interrupts – Ms Manxome took Aly's phone and spent her real money on virtual red accessories, the sword and playing cards for Alice. The tables have turned and now it is Ms Manxome who will have to be led away by WPC Rook. Defiant to the end, despite the fact that she is now on the news and being livestreamed, Ms Manxome sings 'I'm a beacon, I'm a shining light...' which leads into another rendition of her song, 'I'm Right'. The rest of the characters respond with the refrain 'You're Wrong' and refute every insulting thing she accuses them of.

Bianca makes Aly promise not to go missing again, and Matt promises to be the 'poster-bloke for dads' in future. Luke urges Aly to tell her followers how she is feeling and she sings about the powerful glow she now feels, the assurance that she knows her own mind and that her family are strongly bound together. She feels that Alice is still with her. Bianca invites Matt to come for breakfast but he declines as he must go before the magistrate. Aly asks Charlie, 'Shall we go and stand up for our dad in front of the magistrates?' Charlie vomits.

The MC and avatars enter, and together they all sing. MC: 'So / Who do you want to be?' Aly: 'Nobody else but me.' Avatars: Come and see us, Alice.' Aly: 'I'd love to come and visit / But Mum has banned online.' Bianca: 'Not banned forever, is it? / Just don't waste all your time.'

Epilogue

MC: (Holding up the smartphone) 'So if you want to hide here Be careful what you play To follow the White Rabbit You only press OK.'

Rehearsal diary: week one

Rehearsals for the production began on Monday, 12 October 2015. Staff Director Tinuke Craig's rehearsal diary reveals how the process unfolded.

After a huge amount of Research and Development, workshops, redrafts, a whole rehearsal process and a run at the Manchester International Festival, *wonder.land* is finally about to go into rehearsals for its five-month run at the National Theatre. The first day of rehearsals is always an exciting one, but this one is unique as it already feels like the result of such hard work from the entire cast, crew and production team.

Rehearsals have kicked off with the ensemble cast starting to learn all the songs in the show. About half of the cast did the run in Manchester, but while the songs may be slightly more familiar to them than the actors who have just joined us for the London leg of our journey, the songs have undergone huge rewrites and there are many songs that are brand new or unrecognaisable as the songs they were earlier in the year. One of the most thrilling things about this process is that the core production team is very keen to keep the piece evolving and changing. The run in Manchester has given everyone a really great insight into what works and what still needs interrogating.

The songs in *wonder.land* are often quite difficult to sing, and the cast has to work really hard to commit them all to memory whilst remaining open to whatever rewrites and changes might come their way. It's really important to get the bare bones of the music down in order to progress, as it's really hard to stage and choreograph when the songs haven't been learnt. So whole days this week have been devoted to learning songs. The principle cast began to join us later on in the week. Because they sing solo much of the time, these sessions are a little more intensive. The actors work closely with our musical director Tom Deering to get a



really clear idea of the mechanics of their songs. Damon Albarn – the composer on *wonder.land* – has allowed songs to grow into really particular styles that require different vocal techniques. Some of the music requires the singers to use a more classical vocabulary whereas others feel more rooted in a jazz tradition. One of the new songs is a rap, to be performed by Alice Manxome, Aly's head teacher.

At the end of the week, we did a read/sing-through of the entire piece. For many of us this was our first time hearing the show in its entirety. Read-throughs are always exciting but this one in particular feels like the start of a huge undertaking that everyone is really ready for. The days of learning songs have paid off. And we're now ready to start looking at scenes in the show.



 Above:
 Damon Albarn, Rufus Norris and Moira Buffini in rehearsal
 Nation

 Above right:
 Lois Chimimba, Anna Francolini, Carly Bawden, Stephanie Rojas and Ivan De Freitas in rehearsal
 PHOTOS:

 PHOTOS:
 BRINKHOFF/MÖGENBURG
 PHOTOS:
 BRINKHOFF/MÖGENBURG

Rehearsal diary: week two

One of the things that the production team has decided to expand upon in the London production of *wonder.land* is the idea of having full-blown 'numbers'. The set pieces are going to be bigger in this production, and in that sense a little more in keeping with the musical theatre tradition. Because dances can take a long time to choreograph and learn, the cast is not learning the dance numbers in chronological order but rather in order of difficulty. This way we can be sure that we will have the longest time to perfect the hardest pieces and allow the dancers to work on any particularly difficult steps.

This week, we have started looking at Zombie Swarm. Zombie Swarm is a game that the character Luke plays: it's a first-person-shooter in which Luke must fend off brain-eating zombies who are coming at him from all angles. Rufus Norris (Director), Moira Buffini (Writer) and Javier De Frutos (Choreographer) have created a scene that plants the audience inside Luke's game, which features a 'Zombie Chorus Line'. This is an ambitious piece of choreography that takes place on two levels and features high jumps, quick steps and precarious balances. Many of the steps make big demands on the cast's flexibility, skill and nerve. It's really important with a piece like this that the cast feel safe, and that we're doing everything in our power to prevent their injury. One of the big challenges of the play is that we are working with a significant amount of video, produced by 59 Productions. The video is used to represent the different aspects of Aly's world and to bring wonder.land to life. We plan to have a lot of interaction between the actors and the video; and Zombie Swarm is a particularly challenging example of this. Luke is shooting zombies in his game, and the zombies appear both in real life played by our ensemble, and on the huge screen that hovers over their heads. We've got to make sure that the shots fired correspond to the music, the choreography and, crucially, the video. Unlike other elements of the show, the video generally cannot be changed; as the work is so complex it would take far too long to change. As a result, in scenes like this we tend to use the score as opposed to the script to write out our blocking on, as the importance of an actor doing an exact move at an exact moment is hugely important.

Choreographers all work differently – some like to have the entire dance in their heads before rehearsal begins, for example. Others, like our choreographer Javier, prefer to work from a few core pieces of material and expand on them, taking inspiration from the dancer themselves and the scene's development in rehearsal. Much of the material in the show is created on the spot in rehearsals, but never without prior consideration and development. Javier and Cyd (Associate Choreographer) can often be found during song rehearsals moving in response to the music, listening to the stories the songs are telling and experimenting with ways to articulate messages through movement. They then bring the material they have generated to rehearsals and work from there. We've been talking a lot about 'layers' in this process. Rather than working on one scene until we are completely satisfied with it, our process has largely consisted of building a basic shape to a scene/sequence and returning to it at a later point to add additional detail (or another 'layer'). This is a particularly helpful way to work on a production as large-scale as *wonder*. *land* because it allows us time and distance as we push the play to take shape. The play becomes like a painting where the painter continues to add whole layers on top of the existing work, deepening and developing the picture.

One of the best things about this week is that we have moved to the enormous Rehearsal Room One at the National Theatre. Typically used for shows performed in the Olivier, Rehearsal Room One is set up with facilities that really allow us to engage with the whole production (and minimise surprises for when we get into the theatre!). One of the things we've been able to try is the flying. There is a fair amount of flying in this production and it can be a daunting prospect for any actor, especially when one must descend from the dizzying heights of the Olivier rig onto the stage. Carly Bawden (who plays Alice) has had a session flying in the room with the flying team and Javier, working out the best way to move her body in the air.

This week we've been primarily working on Act One of the play. It's a daunting task, but the plan is to look at the whole of the first act as creating the first 'layer'. This is



Rehearsal Call

		IEARSAL CALL	
	A condection of the second sec	lay 30 th October	
C.	M N		
PLEASE READ T	HE CALL THOROUGHLY		
10:00am	Physical Warm Up (30mins) & Vocal Warm Up (30mins)	Full Company except Miss Bawden & Francolini Mr Fowler	
11:00am	Movement – Your Mum & Chances	As Above	
1:30pm	LUNCH (Rufus & Lysander to meet)		
2:00pm	Flying Rehearsal in costume	Miss Bawden	
2:30pm	Movement – Caterpillar	Misses Bawden, Maywood, Ritchi Messrs Archer, Cooke, De Freitas Fowler, Mason	
4:00pm	Work Bits	Full Company	
4:30pm	Stagger Act 1	Full Company	
6:00pm	CALL ENDS		
Rehearsal Room 5			
12:15pm	Fabulous & WWW	Misses Bawden, Chimimba Mr Fowler	
12:45pm	Voice Call with Jeannette Nelson	Miss Chimimba	
1:30pm	LUNCH		
2:30pm	Bullies & Aly	Misses Chimimba, Rojas, Rose,	
3:00pm	To RR1	White	
<u>Wig/Hair Calls</u> 10:00am – 11am	<u>5th Floor, wh&m dept</u> Miss Cox Mr Grove (teeth mould)		
11:00am-12:00pm	Miss Bawden		
Many Thanks			

Rehearsal diary: week three

the first week that we've had Damon Albarn in the room with us and it's been wonderful to be able to experiment with the music with his guidance. Damon has been particularly interested in keeping the songs varied, whilst keeping enough repetition to allow the audience to hook into the music.

One of the unique elements of working on a new play is that more often than not you get to have the writer in the room. Moira is constantly reworking and adding text, and part of an actor's task when working on a new piece of work is to be able to adapt quickly to changes and additions. The impact of a change in text is always significant to the rehearsal process in one way or another but when working on a musical the knock-on effect can be really quite sizeable. If a scene is changed, the song in that scene might no longer feel it belongs and will also have to be changed. If a song is changed, the musical director will have to work on a new orchestration that suits its new mood. The choreography will also have to be changed to fit with the new information provided by the scene and the song. If the choreography is changed, the costume department may well have to adapt costumes to accommodate different dance moves. It goes on!

Nevertheless, repercussions must be embraced if we're to make the best show we can. One of the biggest numbers in the show is a song called 'Chances', which takes place at the end of Act One. It's really important that we end the first act with high energy. One exciting element that has been added is that the cast will be playing the spoons. We were lucky enough to have a musician come and work with us who was in the National Theatre's production of One Man, Two Guvnors some time ago and had become adept at working with 'cockney instruments'. Everyone in the room grabbed a pair of spoons and learnt a series of simple rhythms that we can use throughout the piece. The verses and chorus of this song are variations on a musical theme that is revisited a lot over the course of the play, and we've been doing a lot of chopping and changing between the different variations to find the right order to place them in so as to give the song the best shot at a dramatic arc. There have been some challenges: during the song the character Matt sings the line 'sooner or later I had to mess it up'. This is clearly a sombre line and therefore musically we wanted to go somewhere slower in order to convey the story properly. However we also wanted to keep the energy of the song building in order to justify its climactic finish. One of the ways we've solved this problem is to keep the movement and the spoons alive even though the music dampens. It's been a really helpful way for us to serve both the story of the song and the arc of the show as a whole.

At the end of the week we had our first 'stagger-through' of the first act of the play. This is a brilliant opportunity for the production team to see how the show hangs together, and allows the cast to get some sense of continuity. This is especially important for us, as we've not been working in chronological order, and for some of the cast this is the first time since the read-through that they have been able to hear the scenes in order. It also gives the actors a sense of how much stamina they will need to get through the whole act once we have opened the show.

One thing that we need to work on in Act One is the reveal of the 'garden' in wonder.land. At the moment, when Alice and the avatars reveal their secrets to each other, the garden is revealed and the characters all sing about how wonderful their lives are in wonder.land. It's



a pretty moment, but the fear the production team have is that it might come across as a bit sentimental. Damon and Moira are going to do some more work on the song and try and unpick it a bit so it feels more truthful and less sugary.

This week we've been working across two rooms in order to maximise efficiency. During dance rehearsals, Rufus and Moira have been taking small groups of actors to look at shorter scenes. One of the scenes we managed to get a lot done with this week is the scene where Aly first visits 'The Network' and has an online conversation with classmates Dinah, Mary Ann and Kitty, who start to bully her online. We spent a lot of time with Moira and the actresses in those roles thinking and talking about the language of the internet and the difference between how we type and how we speak. We also had to spend some time working out which words feel most appropriate and relatable for teenagers but understandable for everyone in the audience. Questions like 'Do people still say "butters"?' abounded. We followed the same pattern as last week, but this time with Act Two. Act Two is a slightly trickier proposition than Act One: it features more flying, more big song

Rehearsal diary: week four

and dance numbers and two giant tower blocks that come up from the floor. The world which we see on the backdrop screen in Act One is full of grey buildings, tower blocks and pylons; all creating a sense of Aly's 'real world' and showing the stark contrast between the world Aly lives in and the world she is offered in wonder.land. In Act Two, the grey world of the screen begins to encroach upon the stage in 3D: small tower blocks and pylons will appear on stage and the characters will have to navigate around them. As the story progresses, two giant towers will feature heavily in the final showdown between Aly and Ms Manxome. The towers are about 20-feet high and they are built to be climbed. At the beginning of the week the cast were given the chance to get used to climbing the towers. Javier is keen that the climbing have a dance-like quality in places, and the cast has shown impressive nerve experimenting with this. Everyone's really excited about this section of the show. Another feature of the towers during the final battle will be that they will house pyrotechnics and let off explosions. After rehearsal we got to test out a variety of pyrotechnics to see which ones work best. We decided on a blue electric-like spark for the pylon and some bright red explosions for the towers. The bright red sparks have a great video-game





look about them. We tried out a huge pyrotechnic that gave off such a huge boom the entire production team literally cowered, but we decided that one was maybe a touch too alarming!

The final showdown at the end of the show features the entire cast. They are split off into groups (Alv's Parents. The Avatars, The Schoolgirls, The Zombies...) and throughout the song that accompanies the fight, each group is singing a slightly different melody with different lyrics. The result is a fun and complicated piece that really helps show all the different people in Aly's life coming together. The song is accompanied by different sets of dance moves, some up the towers and some on the ground. Javier and Cyd have been rehearsing this with everyone in the room, giving each group a dance routine and leaving them to practise as they move on to another group to teach them their moves. It makes for a busy room which could become chaotic but everyone is extremely disciplined and there is a great amount of creative contribution from the whole company.

The end of the week saw another stagger-through, this time of Act Two. The second act is shorter than the first, but just as busy. We got through it, but there are going to be lots of changes put into place over the weekend. Next week we'll be working towards a run of the whole thing.

Week Five is here and it's the last week in our rehearsal room. Next week we'll be moving into the theatre for a week of technical rehearsals. There will be big changes along the way, but this week is about brushing up on what we have, giving people the new changes to learn and working on the transitions between all the scenes.

The set of the play is largely dictated by a group of large grey walls that can be wheeled about. There are seven walls in total, all with different locations painted on the

Above: Daisy Maywood in rehearsal Above right: Paul Hilton and Enyi Okoronkwo in rehearsal PHOTOS: BRINKHOFF/MÖGENBURG

Rehearsal Call

	REHEARSA Thursday 12 th		
Time 10:00am	Rehearsal Room 1 Warm ups – Full Company except Misses Bawden, Francolini	Sitzprobe, Music Studio	
11:00am	Chances – Full Company except Misses Bawden, Francolini		
11:40am		Who Are You – Mr Fowler	
12:20pm		Me – Miss Bawden, Miss Francolini	
12:40pm		O Children – Miss Bawden, Miss Francolini	
12:45pm	In Clover – Full Company except Misses Bawden, Francolini, Rose, Roshuevel Mr Hilton		
1:00pm		That's Crap – Miss Chimimba, Miss Roshuevel	
1:30pm	LUNCH	LUNCH	
2:30pm	Wall Movements – Full Company except Misses Bawden, Chimimba, Francolini, Roshuevel Messrs Fowler & Hilton	Secrets - Miss Chimimba, Miss Bawden	
2:50pm		Fabulous/Falling – Misses Bawden, Chimimba Mr Fowler	
3:10pm		Network – Misses Chimimba, Roshuevel Mr Fowler	
3:30pm		Your Mum – Misses Chimimba, Roshuevel Mr Hilton	
3:50pm		Charlie – Misses Chimimba, Roshuevel Mr Hilton	
4:10pm		Heartless Useless – Misses Cox, Roshuevel Mr Hilton	
4:30pm	Tea Break	Tea Break	
4:45pm	Scene work – Misses Bawden, Chimimba, Rojas, Rose, White Mr Okoronkwo	In Clover – Mr Hilton	
5:00pm		Broken Glass – Miss Roshuevel Mr Hilton	
5:15pm		CALL ENDS	
6:00pm	CALL ENDS		
	Wig Fittings, 5 th floor	Understudy Music Rehearsal, RR4	
	10:00am Miss Ritchie	6:30pm Miss Cox	
	Mr Wade	Miss Rose	
	10:20am Miss Rojas	Miss White	
	Mr Lacey	Mr Grove	
	10:50am Mr Anthony	8:30pm CALL ENDS	
	11:20amMiss Rose (30mins)3:30pmMiss Bawden (40mins)		
	Costume Fitting, 4 th Floor	Many thanks	
	10:30am Miss Maywood	Team Thom	
	10:45am Mr Cooke (15mins)	07720 706812	

Rehearsal diary: week five

back by the National's scenic painters. They will be used in a variety of ways to depict different locations. The quality of movement with which the walls are shifted from scene to scene should give us a great sense of the energy of the scene we've moved into. We will also be using the walls to show when characters are travelling. In one particular number, 'In Clover', the walls are being moved at a brisk pace with the doorways of each wall swiping over the heads of the characters on stage. This gives the wonderful impression of speed as the characters Luke, Aly and Matt move across the stage.

Working out the wall movements takes time. We need two people to move each wall. Deciding who can move which wall and when depends on a huge number of criteria such as who is in the scene before the transition, who is in the scene after, who needs to be changing into another costume, who is understudying another character (and therefore would not being able to move the wall in the event of going on as a different character), who needs to be singing backstage during this time... it takes a lot of logistical thinking to make it happen! We also have to be very careful with the walls: they are very heavy and moving them without them wobbling requires a very specific technique. Our Saturday rehearsal is devoted almost entirely to the logistics of the transitions, even though they will last less than ten seconds each.

At the end of the week we did our first run of the whole play. Lots of members of staff from all around the theatre came to watch it, and it was the first time that much of the material had been performed in front of an audience.



It was great to see the audience react positively to the work and this is a really encouraging way to move on to the next stage of our process.

Damon and Moira have been working on a new song to go into the scene where the avatars and Alice confide in each other about their secrets and this week we got to hear the song for the first time. It will replace the 'It's Wonderful' song that was felt to be a little too sentimental. The new song is a bouncy and lyrically clever song called 'Crap Life'. The cast has responded really well to it and we're going to learn it over the next few days and have it ready for the first preview.



Rehearsal diary: week six

Rehearsal Call

	A PE IN LA	EARSAL CALL 27 th November
Rehearsal Room 12:30pm	5 Physical Warm up (having had lunch)	Full Company except Misses Bawden, Francolini Mr Fowler
12:45pm	Notes with Mr Norris & Radio Mics to be fitted	As Above
Dlivier Theatre 1:00pm	Working Notes Onstage with full tech support	As Above
2:00pm	To join	Mr Fowler
3:00pm	To join	Miss Bawden Miss Francolini
5:00pm	Break & Reset	
6:00pm	Flying Rehearsal	Miss Bawden Mr Fowler
	Vocal Warm up with Mr Deering (RR5)	Full Company except Miss Bawden Mr Fowler
5:30pm	Hair & Make-up calls begin	