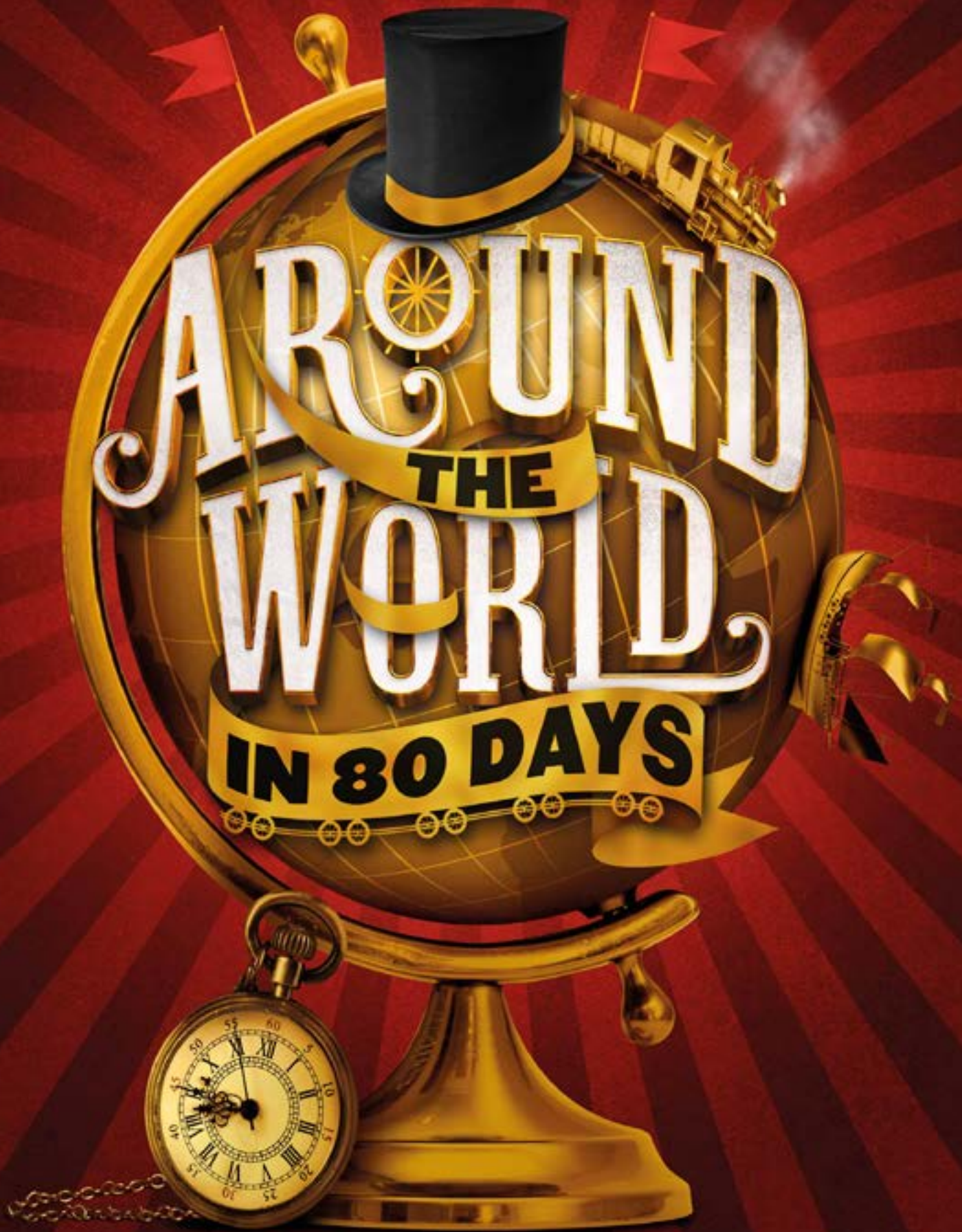


- EDUCATOR'S -
RESOURCE PACK



**BIDDING YOU
~ A WARM ~
WELCOME**

This Education Pack has been put together for teachers, students and drama groups in order to encourage students to explore the process of adapting this story for the stage, to understand how we approach ensemble storytelling on stage and the practices we use when theatre making.

You can follow the practical exercises from our rehearsal room back in your classroom. Teachers of KS3 English and KS4 Drama and KS5 Drama and Theatre Studies may find the interviews with our creative team the practical exercises in this pack especially useful. There are sheets at the back for notes to encourage your students to note their thoughts and observations when you watch our production of *Around the World in 80 Days*.

This pack encourages independent thought, analysis, discussion and practical participation as well as exclusive insights from the creative team. We want to encourage all to read the original book and watch the play and think about the choices our team made and the impact our production had on the audience.

Our intention is to share the joy of exploring everything that surrounds the story, and the excitement of staging a theatrical production, the challenges presented by touring a production rehearsal room insights.

The advisory age for this production is 5+

We really hope this pack is useful to you and enjoyable to all who use it.

Enjoy the show!

PS Let us know what you think!

<http://www.tiltedwigproductions.com>

info@tiltedwigproductions.com

[@tiltedwiguk](https://www.instagram.com/tiltedwiguk)

Tilted Wig Productions on Facebook

Tilted Wig
productions

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**YOUR MUNIFICENT
~ HOSTS ~
TILTED WIG**

Katherine Senior and Matthew Parish formed Tilted Wig Productions in 2017. Katherine and Matthew have 16 years experience producing and touring plays throughout the UK with Creative Cow – a Devon-based theatre company they co- founded in 2007.

From the very beginning of our careers as actors touring the depths of the British countryside, setting up shows in pubs and skittle alleys – and wherever else anyone would take us – we have worked hard to create a professional ensemble company of actors. Our shows now tour to some of the biggest theatres in the UK, yet that same ethos is still the driving force behind Tilted Wig Productions.

Whether Tilted Wig is producing a classic play or an exciting new adaptation, for each production they aim to bring together a vibrant and innovative creative team.

Over the years Katherine and Matthew have formed strong relationships with top venues all over the country, and with their inaugural production of *Great Expectations* they were proud to co-produce for the very first time with Malvern Theatres. 2019 will saw them co produce with Malvern Theatres again and also Churchill Theatre, Bromley on *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Philip Meeks' play *Murder, Margaret and Me*, which tells the fascinating story of the relationship between murder mystery author Agatha Christie and actress Margaret Rutherford.

2020 began with an exciting tour of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, adapted by Ciaran McConville. The tour was planned across the length and breadth of the UK but sadly was cut short due to COVID-19. 2021 saw us back on the road with a haunting production of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*.

We are delighted to be starting 2023 by touring the UK with this madcap production of *Around the World in 80 Days*.



THE SURPRISING ~ PLOT ~ SYNOPSIS

ACT 1

The ensemble, a group of circus performers announce to the audience that they are about to perform a live retelling of Jules Verne's *Around the World in 80 Days*. After some arguing

over roles, the Bull Whip performer announces they should tell the story of real life investigative journalist Nellie Bly, who travelled the world in 72 days. The suggestion is dismissed, but she is determined and peppers the storytelling throughout the play with remark-



able real extracts from Nellie's travel diary. The setting becomes Saville Row, London, 1872. Punctual and predictable Phileas Fogg recruits the energetic Frenchman Passepartout as his new servant. At 'the Reform Club' Fogg learns of a recent bank robber who is on the run, then surprises the other gentlemen by placing a bet. He claims that he can journey round the world in 80 days and if he does not return to that very room by quarter to nine on Saturday 21 December, he will pay out £20,000. Half his fortune.

Fogg and Passepartout hastily pack and travel to Dover, where they board a ship to France, leaving the cynics back at the Reform Club to doubt their success.

When Fogg and Passepartout arrive in Suez, the audience meet Detective Fix, a dogged policeman determined to catch the notorious bank robber and claim the bounty prize on the robber's head. Seeing an Englishman in possession of a large bag of cash, Fix mistakenly assumes Fogg is the robber and vows to arrest him as soon as he has a warrant for his arrest and they are

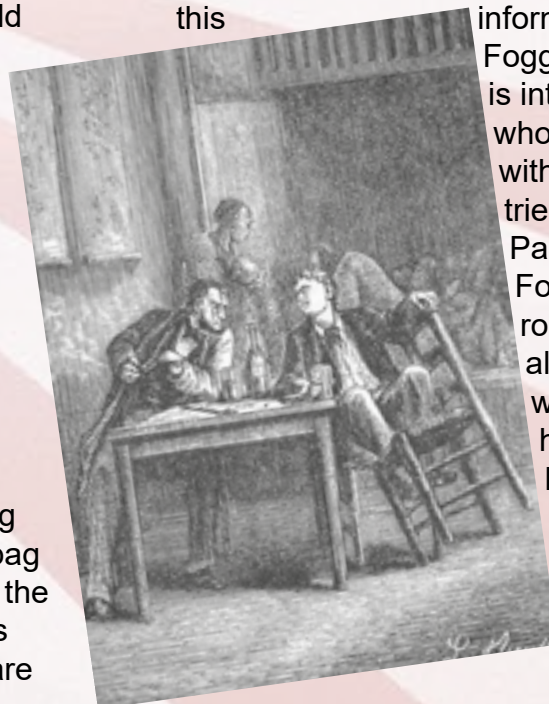
back on English soil. He follows the pair. After a rough journey on the red sea, the travellers arrive in Bombay. Their journey to Calcutta by train is disrupted and they hire an elephant. In the forest, they rescue Aouda from becoming a human sacrifice. She joins them on their journey.

As they are about to board the steamer from Calcutta, all 3 are arrested for desecration of the pagoda of Malabar Hill, at Bombay, a charge engineered by Fix in order to delay their journey, whilst he waits for Fogg's arrest warrant. Fogg pays bail and the three escape to the steamboat to Hong Kong, with Fix in hot pursuit. Fogg and Aouda's relationship develops over games of whist on board, whilst Fix attempts to get close to Passepartout.

A tempest rages and threatens as Fogg calmly faces the realisation that they will miss the connection at Hong Kong to Yokohama, Japan making them 20 hours behind schedule.

ACT 2

Good fortune shines on Fogg as the ship to Yokohama has been delayed due to repairs. It is due to leave the following morning, but when Passepartout purchases 3 tickets, he is informed that the departure time has been moved forward. Before he can pass this



information on to Fogg, Passepartout is intercepted by Fix, who ploughs him with alcohol. He tries to convince Passepartout that Fogg is a bank robber, but loyal Passepartout will not believe him. When Passepartout falls asleep from too much drink, Fix hides him in the trap door.

Without the new information of the change in departure time, Fogg misses the ship and his journey is delayed by a week.

Not one to panic in the face of adversity, Fogg calmly charts a tiny pilot-boat with a tiny crew – the Tankadare, whose pilot agrees to take them as far as Shanghai to catch a connecting ship to San Francisco.

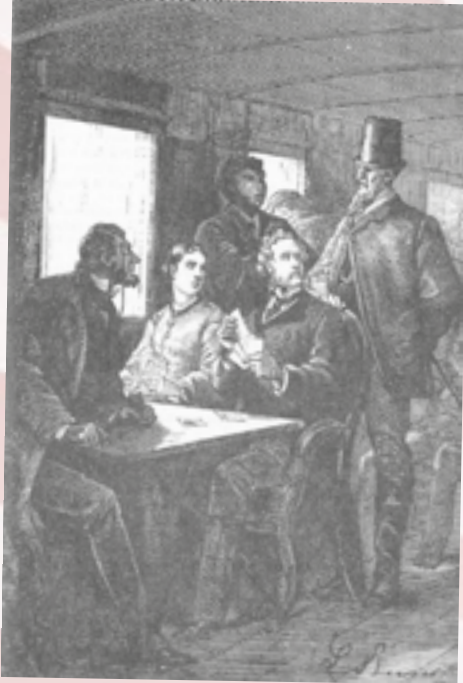
Unaware that Fix has been trying to thwart his journey, Fogg generously offers Fix a place on-board, who accepts.

A typhoon delays the journey further and the crew are forced to fire a canon as a distress signal to the

ship which has already left Shanghai.

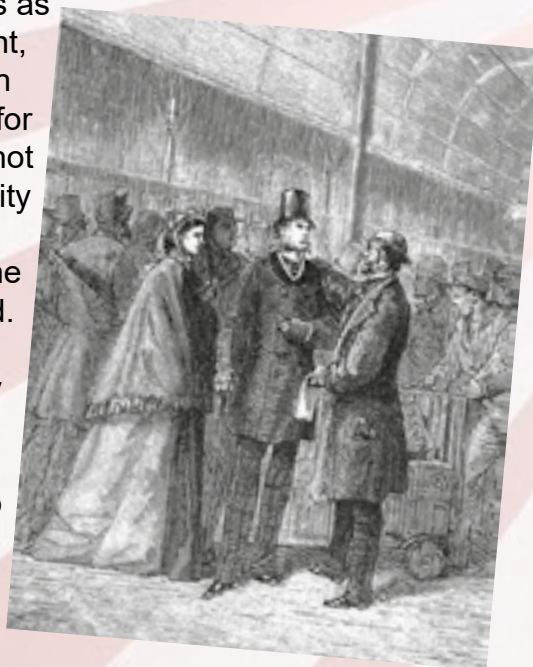
Meanwhile, Passepartout is on his way to Yokohama, using the ticket he purchased before Fix intercepted him. Penniless and hungry, he aimlessly wanders the streets. He worries about the whereabouts of Fogg and Aouda. To make some money, he joins a local circus troupe and performs as a clown. Much to his amazement, he spots Fix, Fogg and Aouda in the audience. He confronts Fix for his treachery, but is convinced not to tell Fogg about Fix' true identity in order to prevent him from being arrested as accomplice to the robbery once on English ground.

The group travel to America, where the journey is delayed by a herd of buffalo and there is a dramatic shoot out with a group of angry Native Americans, who are furious that their land has been stolen from them. The journey is then halted when their train comes to a bridge not able to take the weight of the train. Using

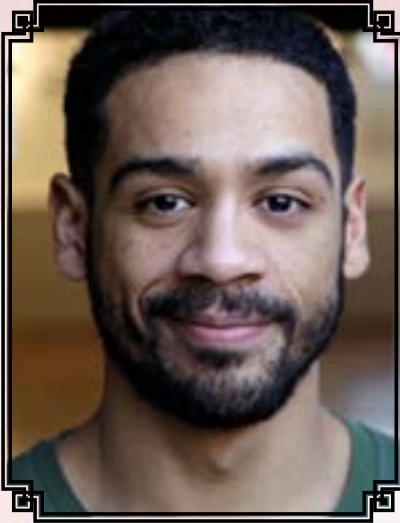


his engineering skills, Fogg manages to get the train across the bridge, before it crumbles in to the rapids of the Medicine Bow. When they arrive in New York, the travellers discover they have missed the steamer to Liverpool. Resourceful Fogg convinces Captain Speedy to let him and his party aboard his boat the Henrietta. He reluctantly agrees after being promised a huge fee, but refuses to take them as far as England. Once they have set sail, Fogg bribes the crew to hijack the ship. As they near England, they run out of fuel, so Fogg buys the Henrietta off a furious Captain Speedy and everyone begins to tear the boat apart to use the wood as fuel.

On the morning of the 21st December, they arrive in Liverpool but their onward journey to London is thwarted by Fix, who immediately arrests Fogg on suspicion of bank robbery. Fogg once again is faced with an event that seriously threatens the chance of him winning the bet....



INTRODUCING
~ OUR ~
PLAYERS



~ WILSON ~
BENEDITO



~ KATRIONA ~
BROWN



~ GENEVIEVE ~
SABHERWAL



~ ALEX ~
PHELPS



~ EDDIE ~
MANN

INTRODUCING
~ THE ~
CHARACTERS

~ THE ~
MAGICIAN

Wants to conquer the world with his circus troupe, possibly a little bit traditional in his views, wants to create a faithful re-telling of the story. He has a short fuse, and wavering ability to keep control of his performers. He would like to be as calm and as unflappable, as able to deal with what life throws at him as that epitome of Englishness, Phileas Fogg, but isn't. Plays Fogg, Dancer in Bombay, Clerk in Hong Kong, American Circus Owner, Clown in Japan.



~ BULL WHIP ~
PERFORMER

Wants to be the star turn, fed up of the scarcity of good roles for women, she wants to create a play that reveals the real history of women. Plays Nellie Bly, Gentleman 4, Consul in Suez, Dancer in Bombay, Guide, Police Officer in Calcutta, Judge Obadiah, Pilot, Clown in Japan, Captain Speedy,



~ THE ~
CLOWN

Hasn't really prepared or rehearsed for the show, probably hasn't read the book, and thinks there is a hot-air balloon in it. He is open, spontaneous and biddable, a bit childlike and very open with his emotions. He meets the story fresh at every moment. Plays Passepartout and Gentleman 3, Monkey Seller.



~ THE ~
TRICK RIDER

disapproves of the casual stereotypes in the book and some of the moments in the story, she would like people to understand other viewpoints and cultures. She is emotionally secure, confident and even tempered. Plays Aouda, Gentleman 1, Waiter, Police Officer and Dancer in Bombay, Elephant Owner, Clown in Japan



~ THE ~
FLAME THROWER
Likes facts and has over researched, he is a little bit cocky and know it all, loves a good action movie, but is also sharp, precise and objective. Plays Detective Fix, Gentleman 2, Dancer in Bombay, Conductor, Aouda's Guard, Steamship Man, American Passenger and Train Driver.

THE ASTOUNDING

~ MR ~

JULES VERNE

Jules Verne was born in France in 1828, the son of a lawyer. It is difficult to emphasise just how different this world was to ours now, and it is equally difficult to imagine the rate of change that he experienced in his lifetime. At the time of his birth, the fastest a human could travel was on the back of a galloping horse, the only way to brighten the darkness at night was with a candle and it would take four weeks for a single message to get from America to Europe. By the time of his death, in 1905, humans could not only reach speeds in excess of 80 mph, they could fly, streets and homes were lit by the electric lightbulb and thanks to the telegraph and then the telephone, messages could pass from continent to continent at a rate nearing the speed of light. Amid all this exciting change, who would want to simply do what their father did? Not young Jules, apparently.

He was sent to Paris by his father to become a lawyer and so follow in the family tradition, but in this city of poets and artists, Verne junior became more and more fascinated with his secret passion: writing.

Verne had started writing when he was a teenager, but it wasn't until he was 19 that he started taking it seriously by writing longer fiction, including an unfinished novel about his time at a religious school and two long-form poems. During his time in Paris, Jules continued to lead a double life of a dutiful law student and an aspiring writer. After excelling at school in subjects ranging from philosophy to singing, he went on to pass his first year law exams. At the same time, he spent many hours in the National Library of France, reading not only some of his literary heroes' works, such

as Victor Hugo (who wrote *Les Miserables* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*) but also many volumes of scientific discoveries. It was here that Verne had the inkling of an idea for a new form of fiction which combined both science and adventure.



In 1851, Verne graduated, qualifying as an advocate (lawyer) and in 1852 his father offered him the family law practice. Jules had to make the decision to follow a stable, well-paid career or follow his passion. Jules followed his heart.

Perhaps it was unsurprising he had an adventurous spirit: on his mother's side he was descended from seafarers and had fond memories of his ship-building uncle who had travelled around the world. Not only that, at primary school, his teacher, Madame Sambin, told the children fictionalised fantasy tales of her husband, who had been lost at sea some thirty years before, where this former naval captain was imagined as a castaway on an exotic island. So strong was this influence that it seems Jules tried

to sneak onto a ship bound for the West Indies when he was only 11. This obsession with travel appears in many of his novels, and many of his most popular ones involve some kind of voyage such as *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, *From Earth to the Moon*, *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, and of course, *Around the World in Eighty Days*. Verne eventually got to go on such an adventure in 1858, at the age of thirty, when he secured a free voyage on a ship that went to Scotland (by coincidence,

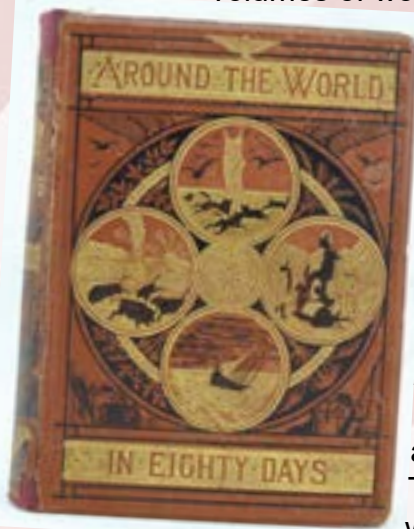
the place where his mother's family came from). In an age of steam and sail, this was a far bigger adventure than it would be today, taking in other major British cities such as London and Liverpool, and had a big influence on Verne and his writing.

In the meantime, Verne started making



good use of his time in Paris. He was already publishing short stories and had some small successes with his plays, but it was definitely not enough to make a living. However, because he came from a fairly well-connected family, he was able to get to know some of the celebrities of the day including Jacques Arago, an explorer who continued to adventure around the world even after becoming blind, and Alexandre Dumas, who wrote *The Three Musketeers*. He became good friends with Dumas' son, also called Alexandre, and wrote a play with him, *Les Pailles Rompues*, which was produced by the Opera-National. He also managed to get some of his printed literary works published including one called, *Voyage in a Balloon*. This was the first piece of work that showed where Verne's greatest abilities lay.

Verne kept working on his writing, getting short stories regularly published and having plays put on by the Theatre Lyrique in Paris, but also realised he had to make a living by other means if he wanted to marry and start a family. He had already suffered heartbreak twice in his life when his first love, his cousin Caroline was married off to an older man while Verne was in Paris and his other major romance ended by another marriage. So he was determined that with his new love Honorine Anne Hébée Morel would succeed and wanted to prove his worthiness to her family. He took on the position of a broker in partnership with his brother and worked hard every day to make a success of the business. However, at the same time he also got up early to devote the first few hours of the day to his writing. It seemed this was to just be a side hustle which provided a small additional income to his main job. Then he met the publisher



Pierre-Jules Hetzel.

Hertzel was an experienced businessperson who already had numerous successful authors working for him, including Victor Hugo, Verne's hero. Hertzel offered Verne a magazine publishing contract where he would write three volumes of work per year. This turned out to be a very good deal for Hertzel. During his time with Hertzel, Verne wrote some of his most famous works, including *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* and *Around the World in Eighty Days*. These were highly successful, and the stage adaptation of *Around the World in Eighty Days* was so popular, he was able to go to America and buy a yacht on the profits! This period of Verne's writing was largely crowd-pleasing and positive in tone, partly because

of Hertzel's advice on his writing. Later on, after a disagreement with Hertzel, his works took on a more pessimistic theme, often containing warnings on the misuse of technology. In a reflection of some of global issues we are now witnessing, this disagreement was about the portrayal of a dispute between Poland and Russia. Verne wanted his main protagonist in *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*,

Captain Nemo (recognise the name?), to be a Pole with a thirst for vengeance against Russia because of atrocities committed against his people. However, Hertzel didn't want to alienate his large Russian leadership. In the end they came to a compromise where Nemo used his ship to fight against slavery, which still existed in many parts of the world at the time. He had a son, Michel, who ironically proved to be just as rebellious as Verne was.. Although their relationship improved as Verne and Michel got older, Jules



was to suffer even worse family issues. In 1886, at the age of 58, Verne was shot by his mentally unstable nephew, Gaston. Although he survived the attack, he was left with a permanent limp from the injury to his leg.

As Verne became older his works became darker, but he also moved into the world of politics. He became a councillor in Amiens and served for fifteen years, championing a number of improvements in his time there.

He was also made a knight in France's Legion of Honour and achieved the rank of Officer there. However, at the same time his health was deteriorating. In 1905 he suffered a stroke while ill with chronic diabetes and died on 24th March.

In his lifetime, Verne was initially widely appreciated as an author both by critics and the public. However, later, some critics and fellow writers began to feel he was too commercial and he fell out favour as a 'serious writer'. It wasn't till later French writers in the 20th Century started reading and commenting on his works that he became recognised as one of France's greatest authors and some of his novels are a standard part of French University reading lists. His reputation in the English-speaking world was much worse for a long period of time, but this was because many of the translations were poor and the writing was aimed at children, not Verne's intended target audience. However, more recent translations have improved his reputation and, along with greats such as Mary Shelly and H. G. Wells, Verne is now considered one of the founders of science fiction. He is so popular that he is the second most translated writer in the world, second only to Shakespeare, and beating Agatha Christie into third place. His works continue to have a massive impact on literature and society leading the author and scientist Ray Bradbury to state 'We are all, in one way or another, the children of Jules Verne'.

As in his lifetime, *Around the World in Eighty*

Days continues to be immensely popular and there have been many film and TV adaptations of it. Actors who have played Phileas Fogg

include David Niven in the Oscar winning 1956 film, Steve Coogan (alongside Jackie Chan as Passepartout) and Pierce Brosnan, the person who played James Bond before Daniel Craig.

There was

also an awesome cartoon

in the 1980s '*Around the World with Willy Fog*' (ask your teacher) featuring Phileas Fogg as a lion, Passepartout as a cat and Aouda as a panther. More recently, a BBC adaption featuring David Tenant was released in Christmas 2021 – also including a female journalist character – perhaps a nod to Nellie Bly? 2021 also saw an animation released, with Fogg cast as a marmoset, accepting a challenge from a frog!



La famille (au premier rang : le fils et le petit-fils de Jules Verne).

“We are all, in one way or another, the children of Jules Verne”

-Ray Bradbury

THE INDOMITABLE
~ MISS ~
NELLIE BLY

~ **WHY NELLIE BLY ?** ~

Our director and scriptwriter Juliet decided it was important to incorporate Nellie Bly into our play as her story has been overlooked by history. Nellie Bly was awesome. A real person, inspired by Jules Verne's novel, she circumnavigated the globe in 72 days – less time than the fictional Fogg!

“The Nellie Bly story gives a very strong feminist counter narrative without diluting the joy of the original piece”

- Juliet Forster, Director

Bly's narrative places female empowerment at the heart of our story as well as adventure. In 1889, Nellie Bly began a journey to travel the world solo. This was 17 years after *Around the World in Eighty Days* was published and she was only 25 years old. During a chat about the book, her boss at New York World newspaper, Joseph Pulitzer commented that only a man



could make the journey around the world in 80 days. (Joseph Pulitzer, as in the Pulitzer prize for journalism. That's him).

Enraged by this casually sexist comment and attitude, Bly exclaimed that she could do it and write about it for the paper at the same time, creating quality content. Pulitzer was initially

resistant – in Victorian times women, especially middle and upper class women, were not meant to physically exert or excite themselves as men thought they were too frail and their reproductive organs would be damaged... But Bly was determined as well as brave, her boss eventually gave in and gave her the gig. She swiftly packed ONE bag and two days later, 14 November 1889, Bly boarded a steamer from New Jersey to London.

“Do you get sea-sick ?” I was asked in an interested, friendly way. That was enough; I flew to the railing. Sick? I looked blindly down, caring little what the wild waves were saying, and gave vent to my feelings.”

- Nellie Bly

Bly sent telegraphs along the way to update the newspaper of her progress and also kept a journal and later wrote a book about her adventures. Her travelogue was funny, lively and painted vivid descriptions of the different countries and cultures Nellie encountered. This helped people who had never been abroad (which was most people except the very rich in Victorian times) to imagine what it was like to travel. Her writing provides a narrative in our play which also helps conjure up strong images of the different countries on the journey. However, some of her observations of the people she met were outdated and prejudice, reflecting the attitudes of the time. Our production acknowledges this and Juliet's adaptation has tried to readdress the Eurocentric view of the world portrayed in the novel.

Not only did Bly prove her boss wrong, she beat the deadline - completing the journey in 72 days, 6 hours, 11 minutes! Besting her personal

goal of 75 days, she set a new world record! Nellie travelled around the world by ship, rail, rickshaw, horse and donkey and picked up a pet monkey along the way. She even had tea with Jules Verne himself in Paris, who said if she could complete the journey in 79 days, he would applaud her with both hands. It's not known if he also applauded her with both feet for her speedy, record time.

In a life imitating art fashion, her editors started taking bets on what time she would complete the journey in, the general public made bets on whether Bly would succeed or fail and she made the newspapers – frequently the front page, almost every day. She was also followed by a rival FEMALE reporter. Elizabeth Bisland from Cosmopolitan magazine was sent out by her editor hot on the heels of Bly. Bisland was reluctant and less enthusiastic about the challenge, apparently used to travelling in style. But she still did it. Bly was blissfully unaware of her competitor until she reached Hong Kong on Christmas Day, with only a month of her expedition remaining.

Two women, travelling the world. Alone. In Victorian times. Before women even had the vote. This was something not unheard of, there were a few female travel writers during the era, such as Mary Kingsley who travelled alone through West Africa in 1893, but it was very, very rare.

Bly received a rapturous welcome when she returned to America 72 days later and certainly proved her point.

~ WHO WAS NELLIE BLY ?~

“She was fearless, clever and compassionate”

-Goodnight Stories for Rebel Girls

Nellie Bly was a journalist, travel writer, inventor, feminist and human rights activist. Not to mention world record holder! But this isn't the only reason why Nellie Bly was famous in the 1800s. She introduced a ground-breaking new form of reporting, which we are very familiar with in 2023: investigative journalism.

She was born Elizabeth Cochran in Pennsylvania, America on the 5th May 1864. When she was 16, Cochran read an article in the local paper, the 'Pittsburgh Dispatch' titled *What Are Girls Good For?* The author firmly believed that a woman's place was in the home and described women who worked as 'monsters'. In a move similar to young Megan Markle responding to the sexist washing up liquid advert in the 1990s, Cochran was livid and took action. She picked up a pen (mightier than the sword) and wrote an impassioned letter to the editor. The editor was so impressed with her voice as a writer that he offered her a job. She wrote under the name 'Nellie Bly', inspired by a popular song at the time and threw herself into writing about women's lives, first focusing on the conditions of working women. However, the factory bosses complained and Bly the journalist was reassigned to writing about

fashion, gardening and society. This wasn't satisfying enough for Bly, who

wanted her work to instigate change and to experience more of the world herself. She left the paper and began her first step as a travel writer, spending six months in Mexico, before moving to New York with the hope of working for a serious newspaper.

She found it hard to find work as a journalist when she moved to New York as it was such a male dominated industry. However, an opportunity arose with the New York World newspaper. She approached the

editor with a passionate pitch, wanting to write about the immigration experience in the United States. The newspaper refused her proposal, but set her a challenge. To write an expose on a psychiatric hospital.

Two years before her journey around the world, aged 23, Bly purposely got herself admitted as a patient in Blackwell Island's 'Lunatic Asylum' in New York to expose the appalling conditions and the inhumane way patients were being treated. Without knowing if anyone would be able to get her out, this was a risky move. Her reporting led to reform, improved conditions for patients and raised awareness in mental



health treatment. At the time, a woman could be admitted by a male relative for something as simple as 'disobeying' them or even for being poor! Bly wrote a series of articles for

never shall.”

-Nellie Bly

Nellie Bly died of pneumonia in 1922 but in 1998 was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame. The New York Press Club has a journalism award named after her and her legacy of journalism to expose the truth lives on.



the New York World newspaper about her experience which shocked the nation and then wrote a more detailed book, *Ten Days in the Mad House*, which became a sensation. Nellie Bly was now famous and a new, hands on approach to journalism was born. She was like Stacey Dooley, but undercover.

“I always had a desire to know asylum life more thoroughly - a desire to be convinced that the most helpless of God's creatures, the insane, were cared for kindly and properly”

-Nellie Bly

Bly continued to be brave, focusing on topics that improved conditions for working people and women's rights, reporting from Europe during the First World War and exposing a black market for buying infants.

“I have never written a word that did not come from my heart. I

**THE INDEFATIGABLE
- TEAM OF -
CREATIVES**

Behind every successful production is a melting pot of creative ideas, talent, negotiation and collaboration.

Here our creative team share some of the processes and ideas behind this production of Around The World in 80 days...and some top career tips.

**~ THE ~
CREATIVE TEAM**

WRITER.....JULES VERNE
ADAPTED & DIRECTED BY..... JULIET FORSTER
DESIGNERSARA PERKS
LIGHTING DESIGNER ALEXANDRA STAFFORD
MUSIC & SOUNDED GRAY
MOVEMENT DIRECTORASHA JENNINGS-GRANT
FIGHT DIRECTORJONATHAN HOLBY
COSTUME SUPERVISOR..... HAZEL JUPP
COMPANY STAGE MANAGERDAVID NORTH
DEPUTY STAGE MANAGER..... SOPHIE DUFFIN
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER.....GUY DENNYS
EDUCATION PACK PRODUCED BYHOLLY GILLANDERS,
DESIGNED BY JOHN BARRON
PRODUCED BY.....TILTED WIG FOR YORK THEATRE ROYAL
PRCHLOÉ NELKIN CONSULTANTS
MARKETING.....BETH NICHOLS MARKETING

QUESTIONS

~AND~

ANSWERS

~ KATHERINE SENIOR ~

TILTED WIG PRODUCER

What does a typical working day for a producer look like?

I suppose the question could be, what does a day look like for a

typical producer? We may not be typical producers as one may imagine one. Myself and my partner, Matt run the company and we have 3 small boys under the age of 5 so it's quite a juggling act between those two very different worlds!

From the start of the process

i.e. choosing the production and a director, I then get going with creating the artwork for the show with a graphic designer. This image will sell the production to the audiences and initially the tour venues that Matt will reach out to for bookings. As the "pre production" moves on (which is anything pre the show opening) Matt will do deals with the venues, agree contracts. We will both be involved with setting up casting meetings with the actors, and along with the director we will hold auditions and meet with creatives. It's then a case of drawing up contracts for the cast and creatives, I will work alongside the press and marketing team to make sure we have "assets" for the venue marketing teams to sell the show. Assets include posters, trailers, production shots etc. Depending on whether it is an adaptation, Matt and I will work closely with the writer and have several read throughs of the play, online and in person so we can get it to a stage we're happy with for rehearsals. This is a very general idea!

Who else on the creative team do you collaborate with to be able to perform your role effectively?

Our closest collaborator is the director as they are the decision maker in the rehearsal room and they

work closely with the designers to achieve their vision for the piece which Matt has to make sure, along with his Production Manager (who looks after the budget) that everything is affordable and logistical for a tour.



What aspects of rehearsal and performance are you accountable for to ensure the production is a success?

We are accountable for everything, really; if the budget goes over- we're in trouble as we would then have to make it back on the Box Office at each venue and our blood pressure couldn't take that!

We need to ensure, along with our Production Manager who is our next port of call on all aspects of the set and production, that everything is safe for all concerned, that the correct insurance is in place. When we were touring in the pandemic, we had to make sure that everything was Covid Secure, so Risk Assessments were much longer during that period! The well being of the company is our prime concern and we ensure that through our Company Manager (who is the cast and creative's first port of call) that their needs are met. The only aspect we have no control over, is creatively as it's not our place to interfere in the creative process during

rehearsal (unless there is a safety, budget, running time issue) and production- we have to hand it over to the creative team.

Can you provide a snapshot of the process of producing a tour? (i.e from seeking venues to opening night at the first venue)

We have built up a good list of contacts over the 15 years we've been touring. Matt will reach out to these theatres and if their programming suits our offer, then they will book us in (that makes it sound easy- it's a long process sometimes of first pencils, second pencils, moving weeks, dropping out etc!) and we will try and book it in a geographically friendly way! Once rehearsals are underway, Matt is liaising every day with the production manager on the state of prop sourcing, costume sourcing/making, set building (although it's normally done by this point), and prepping for tech week. We then get the production in on the Sunday at our opening venue. Build the set for the first time, rig the lights as per the designers lighting plot plan, sound is installed, set has details added ie paint and dressings. On the Monday/Tuesday/Weds the tech will start in earnest at which point the actors will arrive and the company will slowly go through every cue in the script that has a change of lights, sound or physicality. It depends on the complexity of the technical aspects as to how long this process takes, but the show ALWAYS goes on either on the Thu matinee or Thu evening at the opening venues. By which time, Programmes have arrived (which I have worked with the graphic designer to create weeks previous), FOH staff are in place, and the doors open to an audience for the first time! Which is always nerve wracking.

What skills does a theatre producer need?

Matt and I compliment each other as he is very good at understanding budgets in an efficient way. By efficient I mean, he keeps within them and he is very quick to know what is affordable and what is not which is valuable when talking to venues and doing the deals and also later on the process when we are buying materials for the production and spending on marketing and press.

I have more of any eye creatively and so can

offer, ha! It's hard to actually define what you can offer sometimes. I enjoy working with the graphic designer and building a visual for the show, one that will be appealing in a commercial sense i.e. sell tickets but also appeal to new audiences. I am an actor, so as well as producing our shows for the tour, I am currently working on my piece which I am R&Ding (research and developing) in the new year- so all these skills help you as producer, because I think you need to have a very good understanding of all aspects of the process and the production. We know what it's like to tour for actors so we endeavour to create an environment that is comfortable; we know how tech days work and Matt is involved in the "get ins" and "get outs" and then he'll get changed, do his hair and go and meet the theatres Chief Executive. As I said before, we're not typical producers!

Do you need to obtain performance rights to produce an adaptation from a novel?

Hmmmmnnnnnn. So, the "rule" is that if it's 70 years after the death of the author, it is in the public domain which means it's free.. HG Wells came into the public domain just a few years ago hence the recent adaptations of *The Time Machine*, *The Invisible Man* and *War of the Worlds*. However, we toured *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and we presumed (never do that) that it was in the public domain because it met the above rule. BUT because this book had a lot of controversy around it there was a second edition, the Cambridge edition which was still in the public domain because it was edited later. The Estate of DH Lawrence were so amiable and keen for the production to go on that all was well (phew! That was a scary few weeks) and the show went on, albeit for 2 weeks because of some global pandemic that shut the tour down. So, just double check with the estate (which is the body that looks after the author after their death). Sherlock Holmes adaptations are going on left, right and centre, often without permission but they do have rights. Trademark rights. So you need to just do your research.

How did you become a theatre producer? What was your career path?

I trained as an actor and still work as an actor, when children allow me, and met Matt at drama school. The training we received was true ensemble training and we learnt all aspects of the theatre. When we left drama school after 3 years and headed to London in search of the dream, it soon became apparent that was not happening! After some pretty rough jobs, including some acting, we decided to approach a director and ask if she would direct us in a play. We opened *The Private Ear and The Public Eye* in a pub in Exeter. This was not a pub theatre, this was a locals pub that just happened to have big upstairs area where we utilised the space to put on the double bill. It was well attended and went down well and so we carried on. We found more pubs that wanted theatre, we found village halls, skittle alleys, churches, anywhere that would take us and our clapped out old postal van. Soon 6 actors were clambering in that red rocket(it was so slow) with all the set, props, seating and we set up, flyered out on the streets, set up a bar, did the play, took it all down at the end of the night and went on to the next place. Soon we hit upon studio theatres, and then main stages and now we tour only theatres main houses as we couldn't make the former work financially. We were not funded and it's impossible to do it without funding or private capital! So we're not just theatre producers. I like to think of ourselves as theatre maker.

How has Covid-19 impacted the theatre industry recently?

It feels like it's almost back to normal, logistical-ly/risk assessment wise.

I think broadly it has opened up the industry. It has had to look at itself and answer perhaps, uncomfortable questions and I think that was well overdue. The need for better inclusivity across the board should now be paramount for all producers and theatre companies. And that includes a wide spectrum. It's a case of being more transparent at the very beginning, from casting calls. So if there was a role for an actress that felt she couldn't apply because of childcare issues then it should be made clear that protocols are in place to make that possible. So we don't lose a workforce. Scheduling can be in place to make more or less anything possible. We are in the process of becoming a

partner of PiPA (Parents & Carers in Performing Arts) whereby as a producer we will be guided to be more accessible in every area.

On another note- we see that audiences are not returning to the same things as they used to. So it's harder than ever to get bums on seats especially in a cost of living crisis.

***Around the World in 80 Days* has been re-imagined by Tilted Wig for indoor venues for the UK tour. What have the implications been for transforming the set and staging for theatres of various shapes and sizes, rather than outdoor spaces?**

It has thankfully been fairly straight forward, so far. We've had to adjust for stage rakes in certain venues and also we've had to section parts of it so it can fit in the truck and be manageable for the tech team. They can't carry massive pieces of heavy set, it needs to be in smaller sections. We didn't have a lighting designer for the outdoor production so this is an added element which is exciting.

What appealed to you about telling this particular story to audiences across the country?

I have to say the Nellie Bly thrust is most appealing. To tell the Phileas Fogg story is great as it's so well known but to surprise the audiences with this female angle of a real life investigative journalist, is so exciting! Can't wait to get it out there!

This production is full of fun and appeals to all ages, from grandchildren to grandparents, yet it is not children's theatre. How do you balance creating a show that appeals to families and adult audiences and attract all ages to buy a ticket?

It's quite a gentle balance. We don't want to put off our regular drama audiences but we want to attract new and young audiences to theatre for the first time. So it's about making sure that age guidance is clear but the artwork and copy is of a style that makes clear it's not an early years show. I hope we have achieved that. Family show is our target market.

What are your top tips for keeping a production on time and on budget?

Work closely with your production manager and creative team. Be on hand always to answer questions. Ensure everyone on the team appreciates that budgets are tight with a little wiggle room. Planning is key to both but especially to being on time. To have a clear schedule of what happens when and who is in charge of that aspect will keep things rolling along nicely!

Do you have any advice for students who are keen to pursue Theatre Producer as a career path?

Make sure you know about how to put on a production- understand what each member of the team does, what they need, how hard it may be, what difficulties they may face. This is why it is so good to know how each department works then you are never asking something of someone that is not possible. Have a good understanding of budgets. You don't need to be a maths wizz (excel will do all that) but you need to understand how to put a budget together and to do this, perhaps gain some work experience with a producer. There are schemes out there for young people. Stage One is the most well known. But there are initiatives across the industry to support new producers. We would be happy to talk anyone about it.

~ JULIET FORSTER ~

DIRECTOR AND ADAPTER

Why did you choose Jules Verne's story to adapt for the stage?

It was during the pandemic – we were all stuck at home not able to travel much and certainly not abroad, so I joked that we should put on *Around the World in 80 Days* to counter this. I liked the idea of armchair tourism! We originally staged this production in August 2021. I hadn't originally anticipated writing my own adaptation, while the idea of producing it was firming up, I realised that I didn't actually know the story that well, even though I knew it was about Phileas Fogg and Passepartout, so I started reading the novel and looked at several existing stage adaptations. But I couldn't find one I wanted to direct. Weirdly, the one element I had been really keen on – the journey around the world transporting the audience to different locations – is not very strongly present in the book, or therefore in the various previous adaptations. Verne focuses very much on the action of the plot – the wager, the chase, the delays they encounter, and as Phileas Fogg is written as a caricature of a stiff upper lipped Englishman who isn't interested in the world he is travelling through but only in winning the wager, he barely interacts with the countries he is in. Consequently, there is very little description of the locations, and Fogg spends most of his time drinking tea, playing card games, eating English food and reading English newspapers. In my version, this is described as "travelling the world, taking England with him". So I realised that I would have to adapt the book myself, to create the kind of production I was imagining.

How do you approach such a mammoth task? Did you have a directorial vision in mind as you were writing the script?



The directorial vision is very much in my mind whenever I am writing the script, as this helps me work through selecting what material to leave in and what to take out: I know what the actual story is that I want to tell. I don't read many books that make me think 'that would make a great stage adaptation', but sometimes when I am reading a novel, I do begin to see how it could translate well into a theatrical form, and what the theatre medium can uniquely bring to that story. Form matching content, then, is the starting point for me. Also, as *Around the World in 80 Days* had been adapted many times before for the stage (even by Verne himself in 1874), I knew it would work, but I found myself being excited by how we would create the different locations on stage and the various forms of transport used, and what our building blocks might be and how physically inventive we would need to be.

Nellie Bly's story is fascinating and not well known – why did you decide to weave it alongside Phileas' Fogg's adventure? Was it important for you to blend fact as well as fiction?

I knew vaguely about the journalist, Nellie Bly, because of her famous *Ten Days in a Mad-House* where she went undercover to an Asylum and blew the lid on the appalling treatment of patients with mental illness which brought about major reform in that area. Her name came up when I was doing a bit of research around actual attempts at circumnavigating the globe, before I started writing. I was genuinely shocked that I had been more familiar with the name Phileas Fogg and a piece of fiction, than I had been about the real-life Victorian woman who set the record for this – and she did it in less time! I started reading her book about the journey – as a journalist, she wrote about her journey for people who had never been abroad, so it was a beautifully written travelogue which really captured a picture of the world at that time. I knew I couldn't write the play without her story in it, and I realised that her descriptions of different countries would also help conjure the places for the audience.

What inspired you to use circus characters to narrate the story and how do you feel this enhances the play?

In order to tell Nellie Bly's story too, the play had to be written as conscious storytelling, and I needed a framing device. Circus is all about illusion and physical prowess, and of course circuses travel around the world too. Circus is also very strongly featured in Jules Verne's novel: Passepartout is a former circus performer, in Japan he ends up working in a circus when he is separated from Fogg and the circus show is featured in the story, and there are also various processions and carnivals in the narrative, all of which made circus feel a good fit. Then I realised that instead of trying to use culturally specific items to evoke each country or form of transport, I could use circus equipment as the building blocks that conjured these images, and that this would give me a common language that was simply used in different ways accompanied by changing soundscapes. On a more minor note, it also seemed an interesting subtle allusion to the British approach to Empire – pitching up across the world, bringing their own culture with them, proclaiming themselves the best, and waiting to be admired and emulated.

What are the challenges you face when adapting a well-known novel to a play for a 21st century audience?

There are a few! There are almost always outdated world views and attitudes, particularly with something written in 1872, and so you face a choice of whether you cut certain characters or episodes, change or rewrite them or whether you challenge them. In editing, you also have to be careful not to lose significant component parts of the story that the audience might know and love. And then the story still needs to work if you cut things out for valid political reasons. The original story obviously has some dated, Eurocentric perspectives as well as being a bit too dominated by the British gentlemen's club feel. Fortunately, Verne himself was poking fun at the British, which made it easier to navigate this, so all the circus characters at times, challenge, discuss, complain about, laugh at or dismantle outdated perspectives, all in a very playful way, and the Nellie Bly story gives a very

strong feminist counter narrative without diluting the joy of the original piece.

In the rehearsal room, what strategies did you use to devise scenes? In the script the stage directions allow for a lot of inventiveness e.g. 'they meet the elephant and owner', 'they create a train'. How did you play with these ideas and bring them to life?

I had already decided on various pieces of circus equipment that I thought might help us with some scenes, and I made sure we had everything in there from day one of rehearsals. We did lots of playing, building interesting shapes and trying things. There were some things that I knew how I wanted to make work, and other bits that I knew we would find an interesting way of doing as we went along. For example, I knew I wanted to use Isis wings for the elephant, as they are often used in circus, but the final image of that came through trial and error in rehearsals, and yet I had decided to have a seesaw as part of the equipment, but I really didn't know how I was going to use it until we started playing...

Was it important for you when casting for the actors to have physical theatre skills?

Very much so. The actors all needed to be physically inventive. I was keen that we had at least a couple of performers who had more specific circus skills, so we have ended up with performers who are skilled in Fire staff, bullwhip, clowning and magic, as well as being fit, agile and able to learn other elements as needed.

The ensemble is slick and the pace of the piece is fast – mirroring the race against time faced by Fogg and Bly. How did you achieve this rhythm? Is pace an important factor when creating a piece of theatre for a family audience?

Understanding pace is very hard to teach. It is fairly innate for me – I can feel when things are too slow, or when we have earned the right to breathe. It is important not to be too self-indulgent if a piece of business is too long we have to make it slicker, however much we love it! The interweaving narratives of Fogg and Bly

really help control the pace, as one interrupts or bounces off the other. But also, having only five performers to create all those different places and people, means that the multi-rolling in itself requires a swiftness that is in keeping with a race. Pace is important for family audiences – the story needs to keep moving and changing often enough to hold the attention of younger ones, but allow enough story and character to develop to interest more mature minds. A delicate balancing act!

Would you say you have used a Brechtian approach to telling the story with the set, music, movement, costumes all combining to convey the story, mood and atmosphere? How does this approach establish the relationship between performer and audience for you?

It is very much a Brechtian approach – the framing device and circus characters already create a distance which allows us to think about the themes and not just be drawn in to the story. The moments where the circus performers drop out of their Verne characters are carefully placed at intervals, always reminding us that they are telling a story, and this helps keep the audience close. Also many of the positions taken by the circus characters are influenced by the viewpoints of the actors devising and playing them. The “circusization” of this piece of theatre is quite Meyerhold influenced too.

How did you become a director for theatre?

I studied Theatre at Birmingham University. I originally thought I wanted to be an actor, but across my course I realised I was more interested in other areas. I didn't study directing – I could have, but I opted for playwriting instead. This gave me a really strong understanding of text and form. After university I ended up joining a theatre company made up of contemporaries of mine from university, and I found myself doing all sorts of things: administration, producing, fundraising, education, writing, acting, lighting design, stage management... the education work meant that I started directing youth theatre and work in schools, and this later led to directing professional work.

Do you have any tips for students who are interested in pursuing Theatre Director or playwright as a career path?

See as much theatre as you can – in as many different styles of theatre as possible. The shows you love, ask yourself why, the shows you hate, ask yourself why even more! Take any opportunity to make your own work, however big or small and be in the audience for every performance – don't just focus on what you have made - focus on the audience and learn from their reactions.

What mode of transport would you choose for a round the world trip?

Hot air balloon...even if that is entirely impractical. Or maybe an airship!

~ ED GRAY~

MUSIC & SOUND DESIGNER

What does a sound designer for the stage do?

A sound designer will prepare all the sound effects that are needed for a show. Any sound that isn't made by the actors onstage will probably have been prepared by the sound designer. Sometimes preparing a sound is as easy as finding a matching pre-recorded one (like a door knock for example) and other times it requires making the sound from scratch (literally designing it). This can be done by building it up with layers of other pre-existing sounds, or recording something yourself. Usually some sort of audio manipulation is involved to shape the sound into what you want (for example a crow played at a quarter speed sounds like a really angry bear!)



What was your journey to becoming a composer and sound designer for the theatre?

I originally started in the music industry as a drummer/percussionist, and then moved to more composition and sound design work after doing a Masters at the Royal College of Music. My first work for theatre came from answering a random Gumtree advert!

How does your role integrate with the wider creative team? Do you work closely with other aspects of production (i.e. lighting, set and costume design)?

With any production it's always important to get an idea of what the show will look and feel like, so that you know what kind of world your sound is going to be living in. You want to be creating a sense of cohesion with everyone so that your sound doesn't feel out of place (unless that's a specific effect you want, of course!) So having those discussions at the outset is pretty important. Most of the time after the initial creative conversations, though, you're sat in your studio by yourself and only checking in with the

other departments every now and again! On some shows there can be tighter integration which requires closer collaboration (e.g. you want the sound and the lighting to sync up on something), but that might not happen later until you're all together in the space anyway.

What was the starting point for your creative ideas for *Around the World in 80 Days*? Do you develop your design before or during the rehearsal process?

Around the World in 80 Days was originally conceived as an outdoor production, which meant that a lot of the methods typically used to set the scene and give the audience a sense of location, like lighting & shifting set design, wouldn't be available. Therefore the sound was going to have to do a lot of the work in getting the audience

to feel like they were in the different places. This all starts with reading the script, marking in where and when I thought the sound and music should go, and then comparing notes with the director to see if we agreed on things. Nearly all the design was done before rehearsals started as there was so much sound and music to prepare there simply wouldn't have been enough time otherwise.

The audience travel around the world with the cast in this production, experiencing different lands and adventures portrayed in efficient and imaginative ways. How does the music and sound design for this production help to convey the different locations and heighten key moments of the action?

To quickly establish locations there are a lot of musical shorthands that we can use, such as instruments typical of that region (e.g. accordion for Italy/France or the harmonica for North America). As Fogg and the gang utilise many different forms of transport over the course of his journey, this is where sound design can really help to make the audience feel like they're on the ship, or the back of the elephant, or in the middle of a gunfight(!) with them.

How can the soundscape and score of a production enhance meaning for an audience?

The sound in a show can be used in so many different ways to interact with the audience. It can be very literal, like with the scene setting I mentioned earlier in order to establish a location. You can use music to highlight the emotion of the characters in a scene. But you can also use music to reveal the emotion of a character that's not in the scene! You can use tense music to increase the tension in a scene, or you can use calm music in a tense scene to create an unsettling contrast that can somehow make that scene even more intense! Using sound in harmony, or contrast, with the action on stage can be a key tool in helping the audience connect more deeply with a story, character, or feeling.

Where did the recording take place and what software did you choose?

All the sounds were chosen and manipulated from sound libraries, and nearly all the music was recorded using sample libraries. The one exception was the music for the funeral scene, which I recorded at my home studio using all the drums I could get my hands on! I use Basehead to find sounds, and then import them into Nuendo for editing. I also write the music in Nuendo. The finished sound & music then gets transferred and programmed into QLab, which is what the DSM uses to fire off the sounds and music at the right times during the show.

When working on a touring production, do you visit every venue to experience the acoustics?

I wish! Unfortunately there's usually never enough time for me to do this so I mix the sound as well as I can on my own speakers and leave it in the capable hands of the touring crew to tailor it best to the acoustics of a particular theatre.

What is the biggest challenge of being a sound designer?

Coming to terms with the fact that sometimes you'll spend hours designing a sound or writing some music that you think is really good, but

finding out during rehearsals that it doesn't work as well as you thought and will need rewriting!

What skills do you need to be a sound designer?

Creativity is obviously fundamental; you need to hear in your head what sounds or music you want before you try and create it (although there are also plenty of happy accidents where you stumble onto a good solution!) Once you know what you're looking for you then need lots of patience for trawling through sounds until you find the ones you want coupled with a really good ear for detail so you can recognise what sounds will work along with how to shape them into the sound you're hearing in your head. Aside from all the technical and creative skills perhaps the most important one is the ability to be able to work well with everyone else in the company, especially the director. You have to be able to communicate effectively with the director and understand what they want from you and how they want you to support the show with your sound. Your role within the creative team is to support the director's vision, and they have the final say, so humility is always important. Just remember to be a nice person and you're 99% of the way there!

Do you have any tips for students who are interested in pursuing sound designer as a career path?

Go see as many shows as you can, and listen carefully to what the sound is doing and how it connects with the audience. Use your ears as much as possible in your day to day to life, listen to everyday sounds and analyse what the fundamental components of a sound are (e.g. high/low pitch, metallic/wooden/etc, tonal/atonal). Try recording some of these sounds, you never know when they may come in handy! Get comfortable with audio software such as Logic/Cubase/Nuendo, you'll be using them a lot in future. Get involved with local theatre groups and see if you can contribute something to their shows. There's no substitute for practice, write as much music and create as many sounds as you can. Oh and don't forget to be a nice person!

~ **ALEXANDRA STAFFORD** ~
LIGHTING DESIGNER

How did you become a lighting designer for the stage?

I started working in local theatres as a “casual” technician whilst studying for a degree in English Literature. I then worked as a Lighting Technician eventually becoming Head of Lighting at Derby Playhouse. I was very lucky to be asked to design lighting for shows whilst working as a Technician and carried on designing as Head of Lighting. I then became a freelance Lighting Designer.

Did you collaborate closely with the director on the design? Who else do you work closely with to perform your role?

Collaboration is really important and as a Lighting Designer you are responding to the Director’s and the Set Designer’s vision and concept for the world of the play. I also work closely with the Theatre’s Electrics Department who will rig the lighting equipment from my design and look after the technical elements of rigging and focusing and operating the lighting for the show. Then there is the Lighting Programmer who programs the computer controlled Lighting Desk as we create the lighting states for the show and also the DSM (Deputy Stage Manager) who is responsible for calling the lighting cues during each performance of the show. It’s always a team effort!

When designing for a tour, do you have to plan according to the lighting rig and equipment that the venue have, or does the production tour with it’s own lighting kit?

Each touring Production is different. For *Around The World in 80 Days* we are using “in house” lighting equipment which the venues own but also touring some “Moving Lights” which will allow us to create lots of different looks using colour and highlighting different parts of the stage. We are also touring LED Cyc Battens to light the backcloth or Cyclorama (Cyc) at the back of the set.

How long does the lighting get in take for this production?

We have what is called a “One Day Get In” on this tour. So the Technical Team will arrive at the venue with the lorry containing the Set and toured Lighting equipment on, for instance, a Monday morning and do the Get In, rig the lighting equipment which is toured with the show, focus and check the lighting states all before an evening show on the same day!



How has lighting in the theatre changed since the Victorian era, when *Around the World in 80 Days* was written and the play is set?

Stage Lighting in Victorian times was

mainly oil and then gas lamps. Lighting came from Footlights on the downstage edge of the stage which uplit the actors. Electric powered lighting was just starting to be used at the end of the Victorian era. Stage Lighting transformed over the 20th Century up to current times. Lanterns are specifically designed, we have control over intensity, colour and choices of lighting positions. We also have computer lighting desks and “intelligent” Moving Lights which can change position and colour all controlled by the Lighting Desk.

Do you have any tips for students who are interested in pursuing Lighting Designer as a career path?

There are some great Lighting Design courses offered by Drama Schools to consider. Or you can get involved at school or with your local theatre to get experience that way. You may get the opportunity to watch other Lighting Designers work too. Try to see lots of live Theatre. Look at the lighting and think about how the effects are created. Live Music Concerts and programs on television like *Strictly Come Dancing* also showcase great lighting which you can learn from.

What was your favourite subject at school?

English Literature.

~ ASHA JENNINGS-GRANT ~ **MOVEMENT DIRECTOR**

What is a movement director?

A movement director is a person who focuses on the movement and physical world of a production. They have a particular eye on the way the performers tell their stories and tend to collaborate very closely with the director, performers and other relevant creative team members (such as composers, designers etc). The areas that a movement director would work on can vary depending on the particular skillset of the movement director or the needs of the show. These could include character physicality, staging/blocking, choreography and anything else that supports and reflects the tone of the director's vision.



What is your role in this production?

My role in ATWIED revolves around the physical storytelling, dance and movement that ties in with the strong circus theme of the production.

Who do you collaborate with closely in order to perform your role?

For this show, I work closely with Juliet (director) and Ed (music & sound).

Do you have set movement pieces in mind for specific scenes when you work with the cast/choreographer before rehearsals or do you lead the cast through an organic devising process?

It really depends on what the director wants from you and their own background. If it's necessary for me to create set movement sequences prior to rehearsals, then I probably will discuss music ideas with the composer/sound designer before putting together any ideas. In some cases, initial ideas aren't set

and confirmed and there's an openness in the rehearsal room where we can explore ideas before piecing things together.

The audience meet a whole host of characters in this production, played by just 5 actors. Do you work with the actors on their individual characterisation choices?

Yes there are few characters where we work on accentuating their dynamic qualities and adding to the fun and comical elements of the show. This also helps with how the actors utilise the stage to make it a fully engaging performance for the audience.

When creating movement sequences for a tour, what considerations do you have to make for the different performance spaces?

With potential changes of the stages and their sizes, it's important to be flexible with entrances, exits and where people are in the space. There are always circumstances where choreography even has to be changed or cut in places in order to be adaptable. Regarding creating choreography, I will also consider and think about how movements can be extended or reduced if necessary.

Which movement pieces were the most fun to tackle in this production?

I would say the choreography for the "Bombay procession" and the "Pacific Railroad" train section.

Do you have any tips for students who are interested in pursuing Movement Director as a career path?

Keep watching performances that excite and inspire you. Discover what your own go-to movement is - the thing that connects you to yourself, disconnects you from things that stifle creativity, give you joy!

What 3 words would you use to describe the dynamic quality of this production?

Fast paced, energetic, interactive.

~ JONATHAN HOLBY ~
FIGHT DIRECTOR

What is a fight director?

A fight director is someone who oversees the creation and safety of a scene that has physical aggression or violence.

How did you become a fight director? What training do you need to undertake to become one?

Everyone has a slightly different route into becoming a fight director. I trained in martial arts from a young age prior to going to drama school. There are different governing bodies that you can train with in stage combat that teach you the safety and techniques for many historical weapon systems which I continued with after graduating. Alongside my acting career I then assisted and later became the associate to another fight director before moving fully into the creative side of the industry as a fight director on my own.

Who do you collaborate with on the creative team to perform your role? How do you approach working together in the rehearsal room?

The collaborative aspect of the job is my favourite part. For me the best moments are created when all members of the creative team are involved. As a result I tend to “discover” the fight in the room and we create it together as a team with the performers.

Does the style of fighting in this production reflect the setting of the Victorian era?

I would say the style is more influenced by the genre of the show rather than the period but yes, period is always a major factor in the consideration of a fight director and there’s some nods to Victorian boxing.

What safety measures do you have to

consider when choreographing fight scenes?

Everything from set, lighting, props and other performers. The foot wear is a huge factor also. There’s a lot to consider and it’s vital the performer feels safe and comfortable above anything else.

How important is eye contact between actors during a fight scene?

For certain moments it’s vital but there’s other ways to create a safe fight scene which allow us to be a little more scrappy. That being said, there’s certain moments where eye contact is a must and I try and work it into the story rather than have it there solely as a moment of safe practice.

Is the approach for directing fights different for stage and screen?

It is. In film you might only shoot one reaction rather than a whole sequence. You’ve also got the luxury of swapping performers out for stunt people to

ensure additional safety. I love choreographing for both in very different ways.

What was your favourite subject at school?

My favourite subject was Drama and DT.



**JOIN IN THE FUN WITH YOUR
- VERY OWN -
PRACTICAL EXERCISES**

Teachers, these rehearsal room practices can be used in the classroom so the students can to experience exactly company devised the scenes in the play and hopefully give inspiration for their own devising projects.

Here, our director Juliet explains some of the devising exercises that our ensemble used to create material for the show.

~ 1. OBJECT BUILDING AND ANIMATION ~

A lot of work was done with the designer in advance of rehearsals to give us a set full of circus objects that would be a useful toolkit to make all the locations and modes of transport. Over the first few days of rehearsals, we spent a lot of time playing with the objects to make interesting images, and various different ways of making trains and boats as there are so many in the show and we didn't want them all to look the same!

Sometimes we needed the image to be really simple – a glimpse of the thing it was representing, a fleeting image that could be struck quickly to keep the story moving. The exception was the Henrietta – the last boat the characters travel on, which is dismantled as part of the story – the actors were tasked with using as many items that had already been used in the show as possible to make this last vessel. The result is pretty impressive and very detailed. The following rehearsal games are useful ways in to this type of creative image building:

Make-Me-A... In groups of 5- 10 people, pick key images from the story you are creating: e.g. a train, a boat, a paddle steamer, a storm at sea, a train crash, an elephant, a circus, a prison cell. Call out one at a time “make me a train” and give the actors a count down from ten to collectively make the image as a group using only their own bodies, without discussion or talking, and then freeze them and take a look. For some images e.g. the train crash, ask the group to bring them to life briefly with sound and movement.

Prop Mania Standing in a circle, pass an object around from person to person, as each actor has the object, they must use it as something new, not what it actually is. Keep the prop going around the circle so that each actor has to use the prop again and again in different ways.

The Customs Officer One actor is the customs officer at the airport of a country where chairs are illegal. One by one, each actor must try to get a chair through customs by using it as something else – the most inventive and the most convincing ideas and justifications should get their chair through customs and win.

~ 2. THE SEE-SAW ~

In our production we created a scene between the characters Passepartout and Detective Fix that takes place on a see-saw. The devising of this interaction (which in the novel is set in a bar in Hong Kong) developed across a number of discreet stages. You may not have a see-saw to work with, but the same approach can be used with a range of different objects or pieces of set furniture – climbing frames/tables or desks/a set of steps/a sofa/even a very sturdy chair. (Choose carefully what you use for what scene and with safety always a consideration – gym mats can be very helpful in rehearsals!)

Stage One: Exploring the Object.

Out of character, the two actors were asked to simply familiarise themselves with the see-saw, both individually and then working in partnership, to see what range of physical positions they could discover. Importantly, each actor was to bear in mind the physicality between, a: themselves and the object, and b: whilst using the object, between themselves and the other actor.

(This first stage is also important in terms of safety, ensuring that the actors have had a chance to properly explore the limits of the object and understood balance points, got a feeling of its sturdiness in relation to their own weight, etc... if a number of students are to take turns devising with apparatus, each must have a chance to explore it for themselves first – don't be tempted to skip it, and also encourage mutual support, rather than competition.)

Stage Two: Key moments.

Thinking about character dynamics – a few key moments of the scene were then chosen to explore on the see-saw 'in character'. First the shifting dynamic between the two characters to be found in the scripted scene was discussed, then these moments were improvised on the apparatus, without using the scripted words.

Stage Three: Play the scene.

With these semi-devised key moments 'in the bag', the whole scene was then played, first through following the structure of the scene roughly whilst improvising the dialogue, and then again with script in hand, always with an emphasis on physicalising the dynamics between the two characters and how they relate to one another. It is a largely instinctive exercise and the actors were encouraged to maintain a natural pace to the scene, rather than being given too much time to deliberate or 'plan' their actions. The role of the director is to note and help recreate movements the actors may not have even consciously created, look out for opportunities for new moves that can be added, and build the scene moment by moment. Obviously, the holding of scripts is an obstacle to finding creative movement... hence stage four.

Stage Four: Off-script.

Having been asked to learn the scene overnight the two actors returned to the same scene to once again 'play' on the equipment, whilst rehearsing – this time using the scripted dialogue to inform their movement choices more precisely, but again encouraged to focus on shifting character dynamics over and above any naturalistic action – (ie: drinking and bickering in a bar - a potentially very static activity). It is then down to the director to shape and finesse the physical routine that emerges from the actors' various offers, being careful not to stifle the dynamic flow between the two protagonists and keeping the playful energy alive.

Hand out - dialogue for the scene;

PASSEPARTOUT: Excusez-moi, I must, my master, steaming, le steamer, time...

FIX: Sit down.

PASSEPARTOUT: What for, Monsieur Fix?

FIX: I want to have a serious talk with you.

PASSEPARTOUT: A serious talk? We can talk tomorrow; I haven't time now.

FIX: Stay!

Fix places his hand on Passepartout's arm and lowers his voice.

You have guessed who I am?

Passepartout smiles and winks.

PASSEPARTOUT: Shhh! Parbleu!

FIX: Then I'm going to tell you everything—

Passepartout starts to giggle.

PASSEPARTOUT: Now that I know everything, you're going to tell me?! Hah! that's good. But go on, go on. First, though, let me tell you that those gentlemen have put themselves to a useless expense.

FIX: Useless! It's clear that you don't know how large the sum is.

PASSEPARTOUT: Of course I do. Twenty thousand pounds.

FIX: Fifty-five thousand!

PASSEPARTOUT: What?!

FIX: And if I succeed, I get two thousand pounds. If you'll help me, I'll let you have five hundred of them.

PASSEPARTOUT: Help you?

CREATING A MOVEMENT SEQUENCE FOR AN ENSEMBLE.

Below, our Movement Director, Asha, talks us through her process of generating original movement sequences with our ensemble

In a general warm up, I usually start off with activating the skin by doing firm strokes/massages working through the body from top to toe. We then do some lights mobilisations of body parts - isolating areas and articulating full range of movement. This would continue to getting the body moving in the space so sometimes walking in the room and gradually increasing the speed whilst adding different objectives (such as rhythm, change of space, interaction with others). Once heart rates have increased and there is a fun and joyful feeling amongst the performers, I tend to slow down and do a few lengthy stretches. I would then leave the performers to do their own stretch for a few minutes before continuing the day.

A simple format to follow for a devising process would be to teach the students a few individual movements or actions that tie in with a particular theme, style or quality. Themes linked to this production include travel in the Victorian era, feminism/female travel writers, the circus and the British Empire. Movements could include;

- *Reading a map
- *Running to catch a train
- *Dropping a suitcase
- *Juggling
- *Walking the tightrope
- *Writing in a notebook

Next, ask the students to build on one of these gestures or movements and creating two or three of their own. Allow plenty of time for them to create their own sequence of movements as individuals or in pairs, using the context given to give them a good foundation and reference.

You could play music in the background as students work, in keeping with your chosen theme to help inspire the students. For our themes, music by Elgar, 'Sherlock Holmes' film soundtrack (Robert Downey Jnr version), 'No Doubt 'Just A Girl' or traditional circus music could all work for this exercise.

The next stage would be to think about the transitions between each movement getting them to think about the intention or a narrative in mind which will encourage them to use the space more. During this process, reminding the students to think about:

- *changes in speed
- * levels
- * size
- *the dynamics – sharp, soft, graceful, hard
- *order of their movements.

By this time, each person should have something which can be shared with the class, divided and selected to create the main movement sequence.

Note that this exercise can also be done in small groups.

Consider these when making notes

Performance observations

1. Choose an actor from the cast and reflect on how they changed their voice and physicality for their interpretation of each character they played:

*What was their posture like?

*What speed did they move at?

*What dynamic quality did their physical gestures have? Fast and sharp? Slow and deliberate? Graceful and flowing? What impact did this have on the audience?

*What did the physicality tell you about the character?

2. How did they change their voice for each character they portrayed?

*Accent

*Pitch of voice (high, low?)

*Enunciation (Were they clear and crisp and easy to hear. Did they talk quickly?)

*Intonation (Did they bring energy to their voice? Was it light and airy? Was it dull and all one note?)

*Pace - (fast, slow, stilted?)

*What did the change of voice tell you about the character?

3. Was the movement quality of the ensemble natural or stylised?

Genre and setting observations

1. What genre would you describe this production as? Why did the director choose this. Do you think it was an effective choice for a family audience?

2. How did the director use the space to indicate action in the 80 Days plot, Nellie Bly's story and narration from the ensemble?

3. What other genre could have been chosen for the stage adaptation of 'Around the World in 80 days'? Melodrama? Musical Theatre? How do you think a change in genre would impact on the relationship with the audience?

4. How were the themes represented in the production? What are the themes of the production?

5. It was really important for the director to tell the story of a Victorian woman who really did travel the world alone, inspired by Jules Verne's novel. How else could Nellie Bly's story been shown in the production?

6. Was there a moment in the play that really stood out to you?

7. How do you think the audience around you felt when they left the auditorium?

8. How did the production make you feel?

Staging, costume and set design observations

1. What staging configuration was used for the staging of this production? Proscenium arch? In the round?

2. What levels were available for the actors to perform on? How did the levels help to mark out different action in the story and

3. What materials, colours and textures were used for the costumes? How are the costumes designed so that actors can have the flexibility to move?

4. Describe a costume you can remember in detail. Did it evoke a particular era?

5. How does the set make you feel included in the action as an audience member?

6. How does the set look? What levels are available for the actors to perform on? Does this enhance the production?

7. Thinking about the conventions used in this production, were you reminded of the work of a particular theatre practitioner who may have influenced the work?

Lighting and sound observations

1. What lighting effects did you notice (blackouts, fades, colours, gels)

2. Was there a particular moment where the lighting helped to enhance the atmosphere and mood of the action?

3. How did the production use light and sound to indicate a change of location or passing of time?

4. What stood out to you about the sound design of the production?

5. What considerations do you think the designer needed to make when deciding what materials to use for the costumes?

6. How were props used in this production?

7. Was there anything about the production you would have changed and why?

MAP & TOUR DATES



USEFUL LINKS

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WORLD WIDE WEB
~ AND BEYOND! ~

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zmn9382/revision/1>

Designing for productions - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z7p4vk7/revision/1>

Theatre glossary - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zj94382/revision/1>

Backstage insights at the Old Vic <https://www.oldvictheatre.com/discover/the-hub/insights>

<https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/nellie-bly-0>

TED-Ed The contribution of female explorers -- Courtney Stephens - YouTube

Where have all the female travel writers gone? | Travel writing | The Guardian

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Nellie-Bly>

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/nellie-blys-record-breaking-trip-around-world-was-to-her-surprise-race-180957910/>

