

EMILY FRENCH

The Murder Victim

We never see Emily French on stage but, as the murder victim, she is spoken about throughout the production.

She was a wealthy widow in her 50's, with no close family or friends.

Janet Mackenzie says:

"She was a warm-hearted body- too warm-hearted at times, I'm thinking.

A wee bit impulsive too...

She was easily flattered."

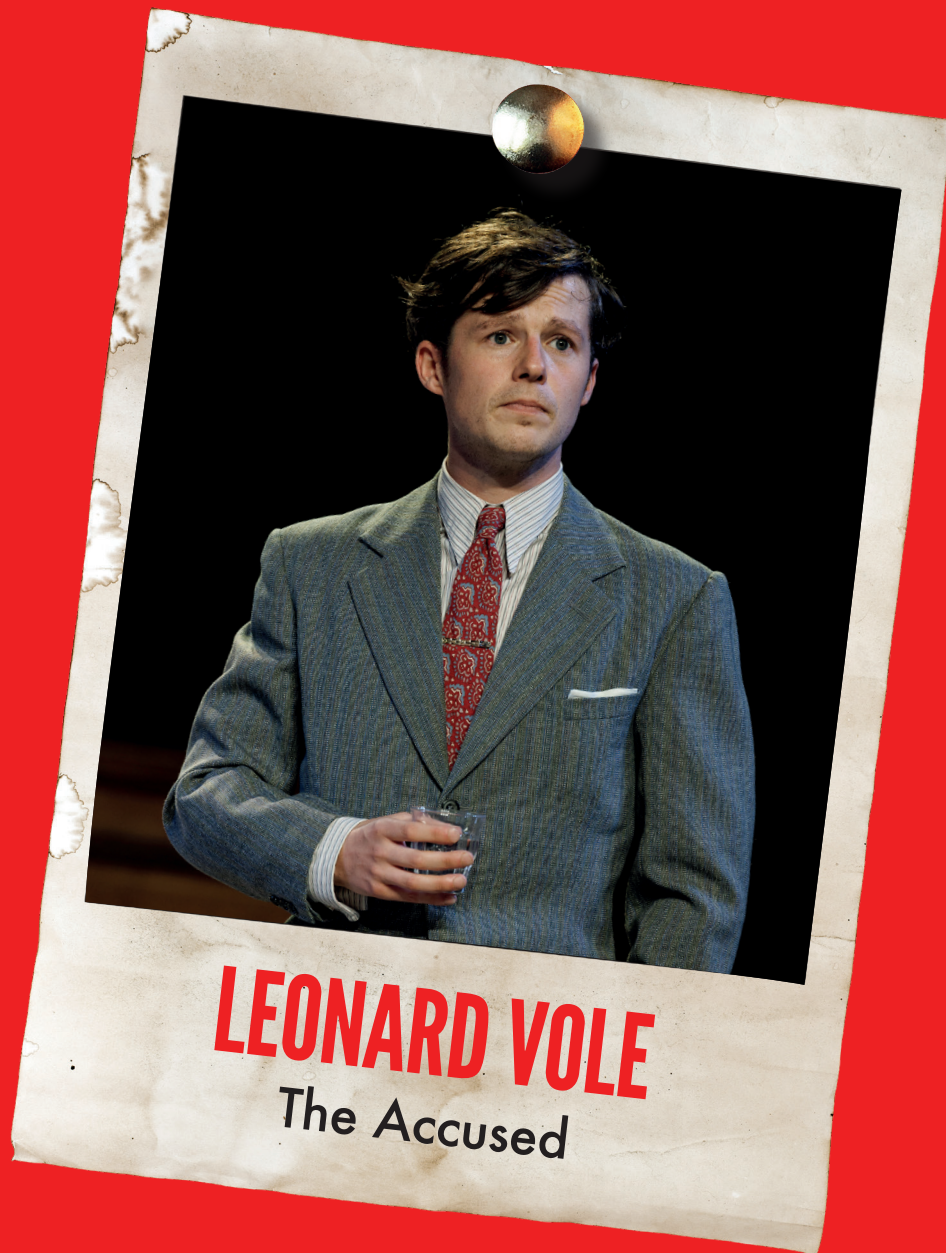


Emily French's loyal and devoted housekeeper of twenty years. Gives evidence in court against Leonard Vole, whom she loathes.

"Twenty years I've been with her and looked after her. She knew me and she trusted me, and many's the time I've prevented her doing a foolish action!"

RESOURCE 1 –
Character Description

Agatha Christie
WITNESS
FOR THE PROSECUTION



Put on trial for the murder of Emily French, after he befriended her towards the end of her life. The beneficiary of her will. Seemingly affable and naïve. A former soldier but unemployed at the time of his arrest.

"Look at me. You see the problem. It's hardly my fault, but people do tend to want to....Mother me."

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Character Description

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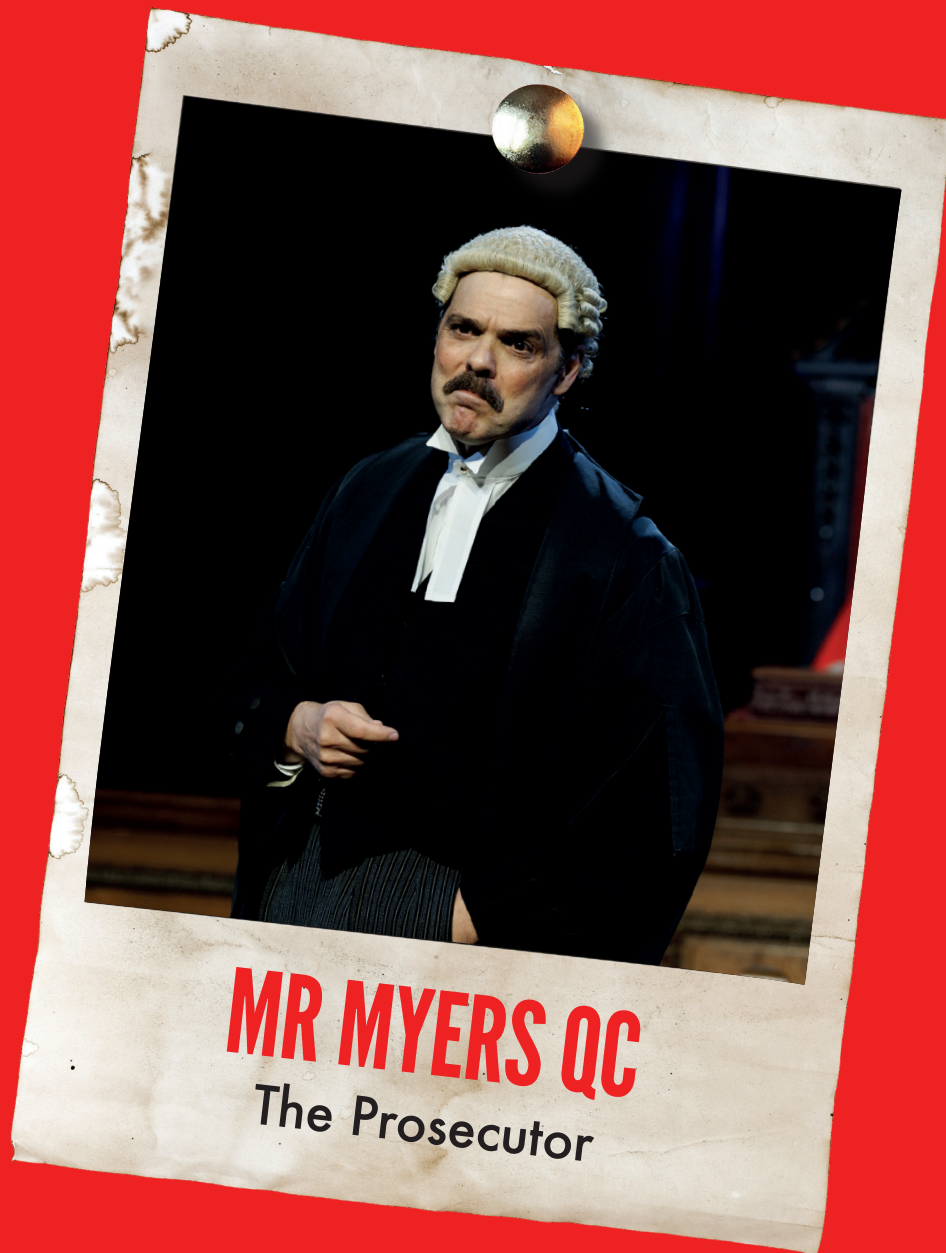
SIR WILFRID ROBARTS, QC
The Defence Lawyer

A very experienced and somewhat famous Defence Barrister of Leonard Vole. Confident, determined, articulate. Losing a case is not an option, especially to Mr Myers QC, who is an 'old rival'.

"It gives me a great deal of satisfaction to beat anyone."

RESOURCE 1 –
Character Description

Agatha Christie
WITNESS
FOR THE PROSECUTION



The prosecutor in the trial of Leonard Vole.
Thorough and determined to beat his counterpart Robarts
in this case. Finds every way possible to prove that
Leonard Vole is guilty.

To Leonard Vole - *"Just answer the questions."*

RESOURCE 1 –
Character Description

Agatha Christie
WITNESS
FOR THE PROSECUTION



A cold, clever and fearless German actress whom Leonard Vole says is his wife. Indebted to Leonard after he helped her escape to England during the war.

"I told the police, Leonard was at home with me by half past nine and they made it very clear they thought I was lying."

RESOURCE 1 –
Character Description

Agatha Christie
WITNESS
FOR THE PROSECUTION

“I knew at once it was a gift of a space. Most Londoners know of County Hall but have never been inside. As soon as I saw this amazing secret chamber, I knew it was perfect for staging Christie’s courtroom drama.”
Lucy Bailey – Director



When Director Lucy Bailey was first shown the Council Chambers at London’s County Hall, they had been long disused and were covered in dust.

What is Site-specific theatre?

Theatre designed for a specific space or location that is not itself designed for theatrical use. *Witness for the Prosecution* is staged in County Hall, London and becomes The Central Criminal Court, London, better known as The Old Bailey.

Immersive Elements

Whilst *Witness for the Prosecution* could not be described as ‘Immersive Theatre’, it does contain elements and features which make the experience both immersive and interactive. Which of the following did you experience when watching the show?

- ✓ A group of audience members, all sitting together took on the role of the Jury. They were addressed by the actors and given the responsibility of writing down and submitting their verdict, which was read aloud by the Head Juror and Spokesperson.
- ✓ The production was multi-sensory, engaging all senses, through the site-specific nature of the performance, the feel and touch of the space, the seats etc.
- ✓ Actors in role interact with the audience before the show and outside of the performance space, establishing the audience’s role as members of the courtroom, observing the case as it unfolds.
- ✓ Mic Pool used a range of strategies within his sound design to immerse the audience in the world of the play.

Architecture – The original features of the Council Chambers which were part of the set/backdrop. For example, the pillars, seats, columns etc.

Thrust Stage – The name of the Stage Space used for the production, with the audience on three sides.

The performance space used within the Council Chamber for *Witness for the Prosecution* is a **Thrust Stage**, with the audience on **three sides**. You may have already encountered a Thrust stage space when studying Shakespeare. Early modern playhouses, such as The Globe Theatre, utilised thrust or apron stages. The playing space 'thrusts' out into the audience, creating greater intimacy and more opportunities for interaction between the actors and the audience.

Key Vocab in Focus - Sightlines

One of the most important considerations for a set designer. If both vertical and horizontal sightlines have been carefully considered, audience members should have an excellent view of the performance, regardless of where they are sitting.

TASK

Think about your experience of seeing the show and consider the advantages and disadvantages for the actors, director and designers who are working with this stage space. List your ideas below:

Advantages for actors, directors, designers	Advantages for audience
Challenges for directors & designers	Challenges for actors

TASK

**Match the following sound terms to the correct definition.
 Write your answers in the first column.**

DIEGETIC

NON-DIEGETIC

SOUNDSCAPES

UNDERScore

MANIPULATION

ACOUSTICS

**WIRED
MICROPHONES**

LOUDSPEAKERS

Sound Design Term	Definition
	This involves layering several sounds. For example, if you were to create a soundscape of a city in the 20th Century, sounds might include traffic, horns beeping and traffic light signals.
	Sound heard by people present in the location of the scene being performed e.g. three loud knocks on the door prior to the Judge entering.
	The properties or qualities of a room, which determines how the sound is transmitted.
	Music and sound effects used to accompany the action taking place on stage.
	Sound which is more abstract. It includes the soundscapes that underscore key passages of the text, in particular the testimony of witnesses recollecting events they are being questioned about, and also the music which occurs between scenes.
	Converts the electrical signal from the amplifier back into sound waves.
	These were used for each of the actors, to ensure that their voices are amplified & can be heard by the whole audience.
	How a sound effect is changed or altered, using different effects.

TASK

Task- Think carefully about *Witness for the Prosecution* and how sound was used within the production. Using the following images and questions as prompts, brainstorm ideas for 15 mins.

- ◆ How do you think the sound design contributed to your experience as an audience member? In what ways did it make your experience more immersive?

- ◆ What does this image show and what were they used for in the production?



- ◆ List five diegetic sounds used in the production.

- ◆ The debating chamber at County Hall is fifty-foot high, with marble walls. Unfortunately, while visually splendid, it is widely regarded as a problematic space for speech. What do you think was used in the production to solve this problem and ensure the actors are always heard?

Notes

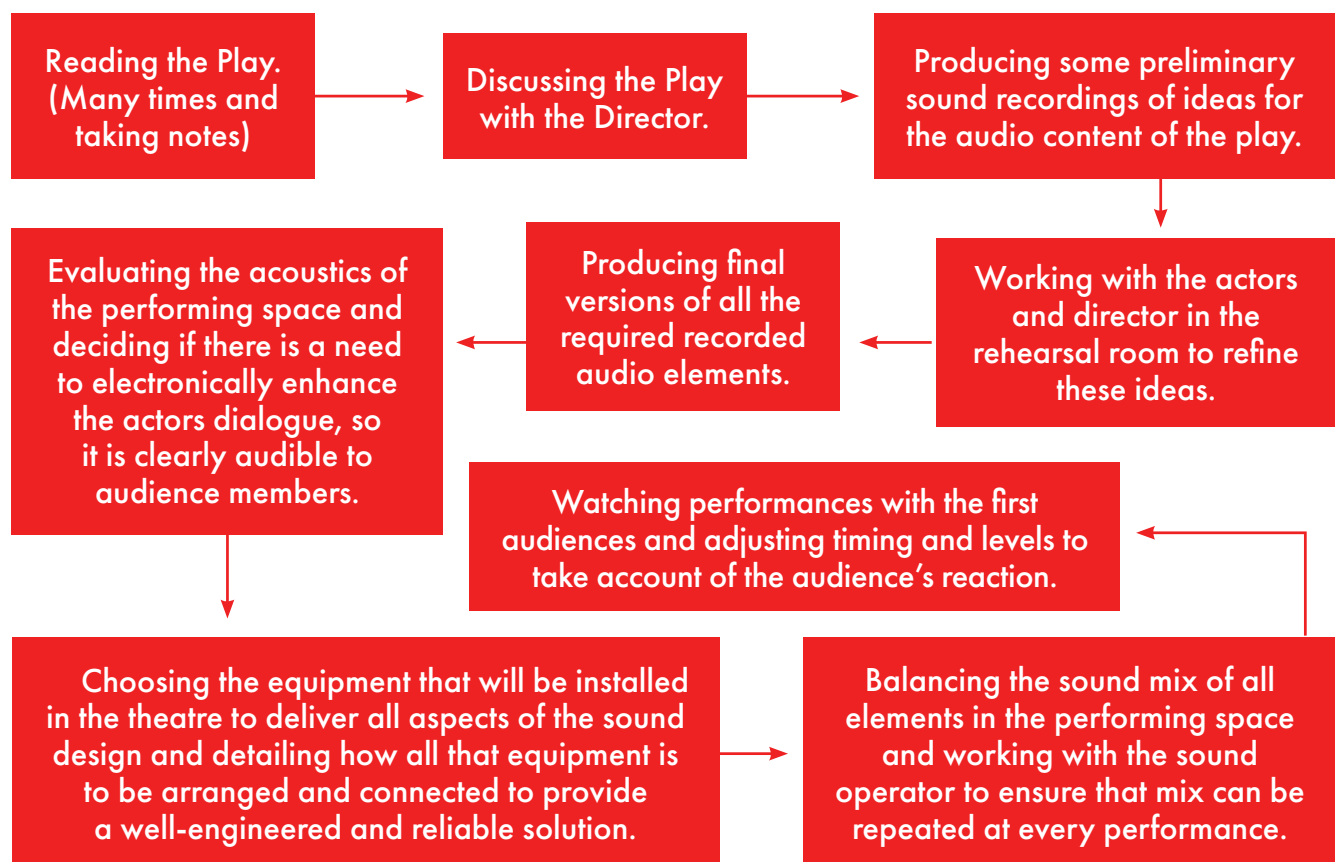
Notes

Mic Pool

Mic Pool is an award-winning sound and projection designer. He works across the broadest spectrum of theatre production, from West End and Broadway theatres, Fringe and Off-Broadway productions, international opera, site specific work, regional productions, and community projects. He is a prescribed practitioner on the A-Level AQA Drama & Theatre specification. The sound design he has created for *Witness for the Prosecution* is incredibly sophisticated and he had to overcome many challenges throughout the design process.

Mic Pool’s Process as a Sound Designer

The key stages in the journey from being engaged as sound designer for a production through to sharing that work with an audience for the first time can be summarised as:



A full generalised description of Mic Pool’s sound design process can be found here: micpool.com/the-aural-imagination/step-by-step-guide-to-sound-design

Further educational resources about the work of the sound designer, Mic Pool are available here: micpool.com/educational_resources

TASK

Read the script extract below from *Witness for the Prosecution* and use the following colour key code to annotate it with your initial sound ideas.

Colour Key Code

Yellow

Location/Time

Are there references to where the scene is set? Indoors or outdoors? Visual clues? What time of day/year is it?

Green

Specific reference to sound effects.

What specific references are there to sound effects? E.g. 'deep uneasy sound'

Blue

Mood / Atmosphere

What is the mood and/or atmosphere being communicated? How could the sound be used to create this?

Setting: Sir Wilfrid's Chambers

- LEONARD.** Can I refuse to accept it -- would that be legally possible?
- MAYHEW.** Of course.
- SIR WILFRID** But it wouldn't help your defence --
- LEONARD** My defence --
- MAYHEW** The Prosecution would say you'd only refused the money because you'd been caught out -- and you were trying to save your neck.
- LEONARD** Oh God, Oh my God
- CARTER.** Sorry to bother you sir, I wonder Mr. Mayhew if you would come outside for a moment?
- MAYHEW.** Of course. Excuse me, Gentlemen.
- SIR WILFRID** Compose yourself my boy. I imagine the police are here.

It is 1953, a couple of weeks before Leonard Vole's trial. Write a letter to the editor of a newspaper from the perspective of Romaine Heilger. You have just read an article about Leonard Vole, insinuating that he is guilty of the murder of Emily French and that it is likely he will be found guilty.

You must use appropriate rhetoric and language to persuade the newspaper editor of the following:

- ◆ **Argue** that the opinion they have expressed in their article, (that Vole is guilty) is inaccurate and provide counter-arguments
- ◆ **Remind** the editor of the possible negative consequences that their article might have had on Vole's trial and potential members of the Jury.
- ◆ **Suggest** that they should focus on informing people of the truth rather than catastrophising to sell copies
- ◆ **Back up** your points with evidence, statistics, anecdotes, and research.

Remember to maintain a polite but firm tone throughout.

Try to include the following:

- ✓ Rhetorical Questions- e.g. Are you deliberately trying to jeopardise Mr Vole's trial?
- ✓ Use emotive language, such as a range of adjectives and adverbs.
- ✓ Use facts and figures to support the points you are making.

TASK

Write some bullet points and notes here before you start

Notes
