



**ALMEIDA
THEATRE**

KING LEAR

By William Shakespeare
Directed by Yaël Farber

**LEARNING
RESOURCE**



Photography: Marc Brenner



COSTUME NOTES

Director Yaël Farber and Costume Designer Camilla Dely give an insight into the costume designs for King Lear, accompanied by original costume sketches for the production.

COSTUME DESIGN INFLUENCES

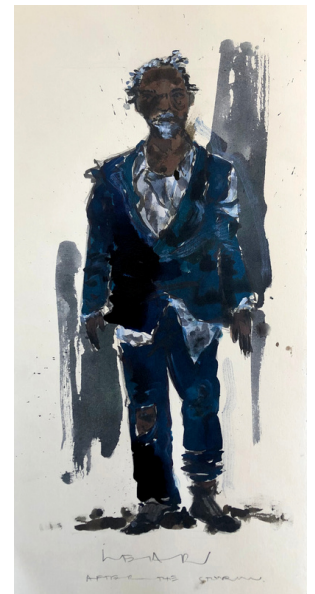
YAËL: The first thing to say is that Camilla and I have both spent a lot of time living abroad, but our upbringing is fundamentally South African. King Lear is a play essentially about people who must make homes beneath the sky. We have both grown up in a context where homelessness was and is part of the fabric of life because of the enormous inequalities in society. There is an epic quality to that presence in the periphery of life in South Africa and I knew Camilla would understand that.

CAMILLA: Our research was about observing real people and getting our hands on real things. We were doing the dual work of developing the dramaturgy of our story and then going out into the world with open eyes and allowing what we saw and found to collide with what we had been dreaming up. We knew that the world we were building for Lear was not South African, but it is heavily influenced by the specific materiality of that place.

SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

CAMILLA: Now we are in rehearsals, the real work has begun of stripping everything back and finding the key visual signifiers of each of the significant moments in the play. As human beings, we carry strong associations with certain objects and images. These have become loaded over time through repetition in the media. For example, we recognise images of beaches strewn with neon orange life vests are an aftermath of the ongoing refugee crisis. We immediately recognise what those vests signify.

YAËL: The great challenge of Lear is that very often a director either manages to get the domestic drama or they manage to get the military national drama. But the unbelievably challenging magnificence about this work is its layers. This is not a TV or film production (nor would we want it to be), where we can strew the set with a thousand refugee life jackets, for example. In theatre, one jacket can do that work on its own- there is an unconscious connection to these images that happens in a live setting, which is utterly unique.



Initial design sketch of King Lear before and after the storm by Camilla Dely

HOW THE COSTUME DESIGN HAS ADAPTED AND CHANGED THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS

CAMILLA: When you start designing, you stare at people's headshots and photos of them on the internet, trying to get as much theoretical information as you can. Then you show up on the first day of rehearsals and you meet the actors, and they are three-dimensional people. They have totally unique physicalities, voices, ideas, and they begin to breathe life into the characters - and everything changes.

We knew there were certain characters that we wouldn't crack before being in the room with them. For example, with Edgar's transformation into Poor Tom, we came in with so many ideas that we wanted to try. What's percolated out is none of those things and that's wonderful. It's exactly what it had to be. When designing the Fool, we had worked up a rich and specific visual evolution but when Clarke Peters came in and started to play alongside Danny, it was so clear what worked and sparked in their visual relationship to one another, and we had to follow that. The Fool's design is so integral to who Clarke is and what he brings to the role.

The show is also incredibly physical from a movement and violence perspective, so there is a large amount of adapting to accommodate that. I want to give people the best tools, aesthetically and physically, to tell the best story possible. I'm always reconciling the aesthetic idea with the reality of what's happening in the room and on stage.



Initial design sketch of the Fool in the storm by Camilla Dely



ACTOR'S INSIGHT

Akiya Henry (Goneril), Gloria Obianyo (Cordelia) and Faith Omole (Regan) discuss the process of developing their characters, and exploring the dynamic of the relationship between the three daughters of King Lear.

AKIYA: What we find a lot of the time in King Lear is that the two older sisters (Goneril and Regan) are vilified. What's been lovely in exploring our relationship in the room is really understanding the root of where that actually comes from, and the complexity of that. So finding the heart of these characters has been really interesting for us as part of the process.

GLORIA: Especially the way siblings can be put against each other, usually by either a narcissistic or an insecure parent, it can compromise and deteriorate any of the purity that existed between the siblings. There are moments in the play when the sisters are a unit, and others where we're pit against each other and have to disband, and look after ourselves.

FAITH: As the three women in the play we've been exploring what it means to be a 'good woman' and what it means to be a 'bad woman', and often in plays we'll watch there are women that are villains and not, and what's nice is, we're not approaching it like that. These are just complex women who do terrible things, but they are real people.



MOVEMENT DIRECTOR INSIGHT

Movement Director Imogen Knight discusses the role movement played in building the world of the play, and the role of a Movement Director as a creative in the rehearsal room.

What does the role of a Movement Director consist of, and how have you specifically collaborated on King Lear?

The role consists of a lot of different things depending how much you're in rehearsal, but ultimately it's about providing a movement language for a piece of work. You've got to listen to the room, the Director - how the piece of work wants to be made, what's most important about the work and how movement might be able to serve that piece of work.

My work very much works with the Director and the Designer - I'm working with a lot of materials and the environment that's on stage, exploring how the actors might interact with that. In this production we've got quite a wide open space, so we're figuring out how we might get actors on and off, and how transitions might work.

How do you think the movement will help tell the story?

King Lear is a story that's about emotion - in many ways you could describe it as a love letter to the world. It's about suffering, betrayal and many impactful human experiences, and so I feel that the movement of this piece is to enhance that feeling. Rather than it also telling a direct narrative story, it's sometimes working with the subconscious.

The movement does a lot of the work in terms of shifting space, and going from one scene to another, but it also does some of the work of the imagination - what a character might be going through, not necessarily what they're saying but what's physically happening to them.





Photography: Marc Brenner

KING LEAR

CAST

Oswald Hugo Bolton
Duke of Burgundy/ Curan Oliver Cudbill
Duke of Cornwall Edward Davis
Edmund Fra Fee
Earl of Gloucester Michael Gould
Goneril Akiya Henry
Duke of Albany Geoffrey Lumb
Earl of Kent Alec Newman
Cordelia Gloria Obiany
Regan Faith Omole
Fool Clarke Peters
Knight/ Captain Steffan Rizzi
King Lear Danny Sapani
Edgar Matthew Tennyson

CREATIVES

Writer William Shakespeare
Director Yaël Farber
Set Designer Merle Hensel
Costume Designer Camilla Dely
Lighting Designer Lee Curran
Sound Designer Peter Rice
Composer Max Perryment
Movement Director Imogen Knight
Fight Director Kate Waters
Casting Director Julia Horan CDG
Costume Supervisor Heidi Bryan
Wigs, Hair and Make Up Supervisor Sophia Khan
Assistant Director Danielle Kassaraté
Assistant Sound Designer Pia Rose Scattergood



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