

EDUCATION
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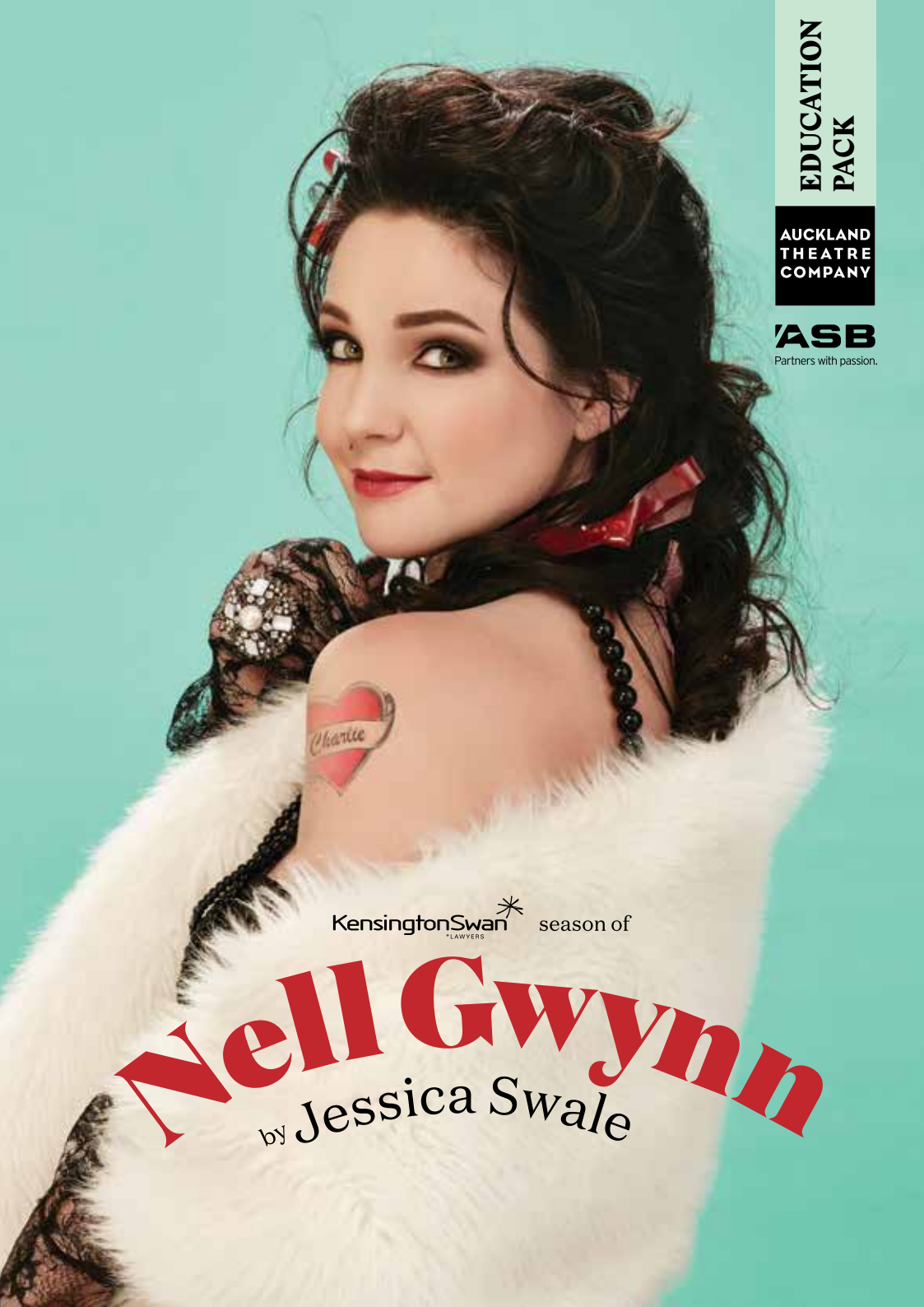
AUCKLAND
THEATRE
COMPANY

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KensingtonSwan*
LAWYERS season of

Nell Gwynn

by Jessica Swale



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Thanks to The Infinity Foundation for its support in delivering school matinee performances at the ASB Waterfront Theatre in 2017.



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- Please don't bring school bags to the theatre.
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Venue: ASB Waterfront Theatre, 138 Halsey Street, Wynyard Quarter

School matinee: Tuesday 29 August at 11am

Running time: 2 hours and 45 minutes, including a 20-minute interval

Post-Show Forum: Takes place in the theatre immediately after the performance (15 – 20 minutes)

Suitability: This production is suitable for Year Levels 11 - 13

Advisory: Contains occasional use of strong language

Nell Gwynn

by Jessica Swale

CAST

Nell Gwynn – **Claire Chitham** | King Charles II – **Tim Balme**
Lord Arlington / John Dryden – **Mark Hadlow** | Edward Kynaston – **Byron Coll**
Nancy / Queen Catherine – **Hera Dunleavy**
Lady Castlemaine / Louise De Keroualle / Old Ma Gwynn – **Alison Bruce**
Charles Hart – **Andrew Grainger** | Thomas Killigrew – **Roy Ward**
Ned Spiggett / William – **Samuel Austin** | Rose Gwynn / Servant – **Vida Gibson**
All other parts played by ensemble

CREATIVE

Director – **Colin McColl** | Musical Director – **John Gibson**
Choreographer – **Malia Johnston** | Set Designer – **Rachael Walker**
Costume Designer – **Elizabeth Whiting** | Lighting Designer – **Jo Kilgour**

MUSICIANS

Violin/Cello – **Charmian Key** | Trumpet – **Mark Hadlow**
Alto Sax – **Vida Gibson** | Guitar – **Tim Balme**
Mandolin/Tambourine – **Byron Coll** | Drums and Percussion – **Samuel Austin**

PRODUCTION

Production Manager – **Robert Hunte** | Company Manager (Maternity Cover) – **Eliza Josephson-Rutter**
Technical Manager – **Nik Janiurek** | Venue Technical Manager – **Josh Bond**
Stage Manager – **Kirsten Lee** | Assistant Stage Manager – **Theresa Adams**
Technical Operator – **Michael Craven** | Props Master – **Amy Snape**
Set Construction – **2Construct** | ATC Production Intern – **Nathanaël Ruestchmann**

EDUCATION PACK CREDITS

Writer – **Amber McWilliams** | Additional Material – **Lynne Cardy**
Editor – **Lynne Cardy** | Graphic Designer – **Wanda Tambrin**
Production Images – **Michael Smith** | Design images courtesy of **Rachael Walker & Elizabeth Whiting**

SCHOOL WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

Director – **Lynne Cardy** | Youth Arts Coordinator – **Nicole Arrow**
Teaching Artists – **Freya Boyle and Ella Gilbert**





Synopsis.

ENGLAND IN THE 1660S.

With the support of King Charles II, the theatres of London are thriving, including the Kings Company at the Playhouse Theatre, Drury Lane. During a performance, a woman selling oranges – Nell Gwynn – has a battle of banter with the hecklers in the audience. Afterwards she is approached by the leading actor of the day, Mr Charles Hart. He tells her off for her audacity, but sees her potential and offers to teach her the rudiments of acting. Nell shows natural talent. Her sister, Rose doesn't believe she should do it, but Nell decides to pursue the opportunity.

A month later, Edward Kynaston (an actor who takes the women's roles) bursts into the King's Company meeting to say that a rival company is going to ruin theatre forever by putting a woman

on the stage and selling out shows because of it. Hart suggests they do the same, and introduces Nell. After a few moments of nervousness, she gives a wonderful performance, and the company (with the exception of Kynaston) are convinced. After the others leave, Nell plays a seduction scene with Hart, and kisses him.

In the palace, King Charles is having issues with his mistress, Lady Castlemaine. He manages to calm her down, and begins a seduction. However, while she flirts, Lady Castlemaine insists that he should have his Chief Minister put to death, and promote a courtier called Arlington in his place.

Back at the Playhouse, the company are trying Nell out in rehearsals, although playwright, John Dryden, hasn't finished the script. Jealous, Kynaston

starts an argument, which ends with Nell giving him advice on how to deliver his single line of dialogue. He stamps off, leaving Dryden to complain about how hard it is writing the script. At Nell's request, he reads what he has written, and she laughs, saying no woman would behave as the heroine does. Her suggestions are brilliant and break his writer's block.

On opening night, Nell is so nervous she can hardly walk, but makes it onto the stage and gives an amazing performance. The audience is in an uproar, and Hart tells her she was extraordinary.

In the palace, King Charles is now having to calm his Portugese wife, Queen Catherine, who is furious that Charles

has suggested that Lady Castlemaine should be the Queen's Lady in Waiting.

At the theatre, Hart and Nell are playing Dryden's rewritten script brilliantly. King Charles attends the performance, and Nell directs the flirtations of the love scene to him. After the performance, Hart is scolding Nell for playing to the Royal Box, when King Charles comes into the dressing room and sends him away. King Charles woos Nell, but she engages him in banter and then leaves him bewildered by simply walking out.

The company argue about Dryden's new play. Manager, Killigrew points out that the King will literally put their heads on spikes if he is displeased with the content. At that moment, Charles II arrives

to speak privately with Nell. He offers her money to become his mistress. She turns him down. He says he will go to the Duke's Theatre to watch (rival actress) Moll Davies instead. Nell lets him leave, but asks Nancy, the wardrobe mistress, to help her with some 'special' baking. Hart arrives, and accuses Nell of having an affair with the King. She tells Hart that she turned the King's offer down, but the goodwill between the pair is broken.

A few days later Courtier Arlington comes to threaten Nell: she is to have nothing to do with the King or harm will befall her. Rose urges her to listen, but Nell is not frightened. Charles II arrives and says that Moll Davies was unable to satisfy him the

night before because somehow, she has eaten laxatives... Nell re-enters negotiations, making all sorts of demands, but finally agrees to become the King's mistress.

Nell is moved into Lady Castlemaine's apartment. The Lady comes to tell Nell to make the most of it while it lasts, and ensure she gets a title. Nell says she is not there for the money or the title - and Lady Castlemaine is pitying when she realises Nell has fallen in love with King Charles.

Arlington is trying to convince the King that he must sign treaties to protect his throne, but the King would rather walk the dogs with Nell. Arlington tries to break the infatuation and cement political ties with France

by offering the King a French mistress, but the King sends him away. Nell suggests King Charles should listen to Arlington about signing a treaty with the French, and coaxes him into bed. Later, Ma Gwynne, Nell's mother, arrives with Rose: Nell is mortified, and sends Ma away. Rose says Nell should visit her mother more often. Nell argues that she sends coins to her family.

The theatre company are panicking because the Duke's Company are building a new playhouse. They need a new and spectacular play to woo the audience back, one with a strong female character, but Dryden is all out of ideas. Killigrew suggests Lady Godiva. The team are convinced, but when Nell hears that Godiva

was famous for baring her breasts she refuses to play the part. King Charles walks in on this argument with a stunning new French mistress, Louise. He invites Nell to go away to the country with them. Hart says Nell must stay and rehearse. When the King and Louise leave, Nell agrees to play Lady Godiva. Only Nancy is let in on Nell's real secret – that she is pregnant. Louise returns to rub salt into the wound by saying that the King would not pay Nell if he loved her. Nell and Nancy declare “war on France.”

At the opening of the play, Louise, sitting with the King in the Royal Box, wears a spectacular hat. Nell parodies her, singing an ironic song in French – and wearing a replica hat four times as big. The King tries to hide his amusement, but fails. However, Arlington is furious. He waits in Nell's dressing room to tell her she's gone too far. Rose also waits, to accuse Nell of abandoning their family, and to tell her bitterly that their mother is dead. Rose storms out and Nell is left bereft.

Nell goes to find Dryden, who has written the role of Godiva “naked”, not simply bare-breasted. While Nell is arguing the point, Killigrew comes in to tell Nell that the theatre company cannot afford to be political, and that she has insulted the French within her satirical song. He ejects her from the company, saying they have received threats from the Palace. Nell brushes them away – until Hart comes in carrying Rose, who has been beaten unconscious.

Nell goes to tell King Charles that she is taking Rose home, and that she cannot bear to share him. He begs her not to go, but says he is bound by Parliament and cannot make them listen. She suggests he stands up for himself and dissolve Parliament. As she turns to leave, he tells her he loves her, and reveals that he knows about her pregnancy.

King Charles dissolves the Government and sends the Ministers home. Arlington is astounded. Nell suggests he could become the royal dog-walker.

At the playhouse, the company are trying to teach Nancy to act, without success. The disaster prompts Hart to say what they're all thinking: “We can't do it without Nell.”

Several years later, Nell and King Charles are happily playing croquet. The King tries to convince Nell to go with him to the playhouse, but she has not forgiven the company. King Charles falls down with a fit. Nell calls for help and the King is taken away.

Nell and Rose wait outside the King's room – Nell is not allowed inside. Arlington comes out and tells her with a look that the King is dead. His last words were: “Don't let poor Nelly starve.”

Back at the theatre, the company are still trying to coax a performance from Nancy. Nell visits, and is persuaded to return to the troupe – provided she plays only a small part. Kynaston is cast in the lead female role. Content, the company leaves, leaving Hart to counsel the grieving Nell. In the play, she gives a marvellous speech, allowing her the last word.





About the period.

THE ENGLISH CIVIL WAR (1642-1651) saw supporters of King Charles I fighting a group who believed that Parliament should be free of the monarchy. The second group, led by Oliver Cromwell, was successful in taking power. Charles I was executed at Whitehall on 30 January 1649.

There were others who continued to support the monarchy. Charles II was officially named King of Scotland on 5 February 1649. However, England did not recognise the new King, and Oliver Cromwell's group took arms against him.

After Charles II lost a major battle to Cromwell in 1651, he was deposed from his role as King of Scotland, and took refuge in Europe. He spent the next nine years in exile in France, the Dutch Republic and the Spanish Netherlands.

During the 11 years of commonwealth government, when England was without a monarch,

Puritanism was enforced in England. The Puritans believed that hard work helped people reach

heaven. Cromwell decreed that 'pointless' enjoyment was a sin. Sports and entertainment were banned; theatres and inns were forced to close. Plain dress was also enforced. Christmas celebrations – decorations or feasts – were forbidden, as people were meant to spend the holy season contemplating Jesus. Anyone caught

known as the Restoration, when Britain was restored to normality after the deprivations of life under the Puritans. Charles II was nicknamed the Merry Monarch, famous for his womanising, as well as his support of playhouses. His Portuguese wife, Catherine of Braganza, did not have any children who survived after birth. However,

Charles II was nicknamed the Merry Monarch, famous for his womanising, as well as his support of playhouses.

breaking the rules was punished by being put in the stocks, or imprisoned.

When Cromwell died in 1658, there was a political crisis that led to the monarchy being re-established. Charles was invited to return to Britain. He was crowned King of England, Scotland and Ireland in 1660.

The period from 1660 until his death in 1685 was

Charles acknowledged at least twelve illegitimate children and thirteen mistresses.

The Great Plague in 1665 and the Great Fire of London in 1666 took place during his reign as well as the construction of many of London's iconic buildings and churches such as St. Paul's Cathedral.



About the play.



- *Nell Gwynn* premiered on 19 September 2015 at Shakespeare's Globe, London.
- The play had its West End premiere at the Apollo Theatre, London, on 12 February 2016.
- It won Best New Comedy at the 2016 Olivier Awards.
- Prior to its success, it had been through a workshop process. An earlier version of the play was performed by students at LAMDA, as part of the 2014 Long Project.

CRITICAL RESPONSES TO THE PLAY.

“this rowdy comedy... celebrates the artifice of theatre and makes some neat political jabs.” – *Catherine Love*, in a review of the London production at the Globe theatre.

“Jessica Swale’s play about the orange-seller turned actor cannily mixes Carry On gags with an explicitly feminist message.”

– *Michael Billington*, in a review of the London production at the Apollo Theatre.

“Some may be disappointed that there’s more playfulness than profundity; we see the Nell that captivated the public and put on a show, and only hear snippets of her impoverished upbringing and prostitution. But, there’s still substance to this comedy. Jessica Swale’s writing deftly draws out a woman who remains, 400 years later, truly remarkable. And, in its portrayal of Restoration theatre, this new play celebrates traditional drama and the progress we have since made.”

– *Lucy Brooks*, in a review of the London production re-run at the Globe Theatre

In an interview with the Royal Museum Greenwich, Jessica Swale offers her respects to Nell Gwynn:

“Nell is a character who is absolutely worth celebrating. She’s often been rather misrepresented as the ‘tart with the heart’; she’s featured in various films and plays but often in a supporting role, so I wanted to put her back in the limelight. She is worth celebrating both for her prowess as an actress and her role in bridging the class divide at the time. Who else has had such a rise to fame, from the dirty brothel of Coal Yard Alley to the Royal Palace? It’s all

too easy to dismiss her as a bawdy floozy, but in order to be such a successful comedic actress, she must have been immensely intelligent. She was a wit, and that alone is enough reason to celebrate her. It’s a far greater accolade than praising her for who she ended up in bed with.”

“Charles II had seen actresses in Paris, so when he returned to England and reopened the theatres, he made his mark by putting ladies on the stage for the first time. High time, if you asked

me. French fashions were hugely popular, so it’s not surprising that London was keen to follow in the Parisian’s footsteps. And after the very dour years of the interregnum, in which theatres were closed and entertainment (including Christmas celebrations) were outlawed, putting women on stage was part of a celebration of all things bright and fun which characterised Charles’ ascension to the throne, and the end of what I think of as ‘the era of beige’, the Puritans and the civil war.”

Talking points.

- How is the Nell Gwynn character presented in this play as a feminist figure? How might she be presented to create an anti-feminist figure?
- Catherine Love refers to the play making “some neat political jabs”. What do you think she means? What political messages did you get from the play? Are they still relevant in a contemporary context?
- In what ways does the play overtly “celebrate theatre”?





Director Colin McColl



“**NELL GWYNN** was originally written for and presented by London’s Globe Theatre, and staged within the constraints of that theatre’s architecture. But in fact, Restoration theatres were very different from the Globe. They were indoor. They had deep proscenium arch stages with a large apron. Most of the action happened on the forestage. Behind the proscenium, a series of flats in forced perspective created the scenery and stage effects. The pit still existed but was peopled by rich young lads seated on benches, rather than the ‘groundlings’ who stood around at The Globe. The King and aristocracy sat on the first tier – level with the

stage – while servants and poor folk were relegated to ‘the gods’, the highest tier of seating and furthest from the stage.

We honour this Restoration arrangement in our production. The plywood of our set harks back to the wood of a Drury Lane theatre circa 1660. We chose to give our set and costumes a contemporary edge, while still acknowledging the seventeenth century setting, to honour playwright Jessica Swale’s language, and to draw links between past and present. For instance, Charles II’s relationship with Nell Gwynn could be seen as a forerunner to Prince Harry’s with Meghan

Markle. Princes, it seems, are still chasing actresses!

We begin our planning with lots of reading and research – searching the internet for images, paintings, biographic details and reports about the period – so we can make informed choices about how we will stage the work. Throughout the rehearsal process, the actors and the creative team pool their research to inform the realisation of the production. Jessica Swale’s interpretation of Nell Gwynn’s story is a pop history / biographical entertainment with some surprisingly pertinent comments about society that resonate with us today. But mostly, it’s fun!

I wanted our production to be about the cult of celebrity, and to celebrate theatre, particularly actresses on stage – because without Charles II’s decree that women be allowed to act, it might

female Restoration playwright who was a great mate of Nell’s) they forged a new career option for women.

According to Samuel Pepys, (whose extensive diaries provide great

One of the challenges has been our decision to double up roles, which means lots of fast changes of costume. Also, our actors play all the music live – there are songs and dances and even a snippet

hard. That’s the kind of feel we want to get into the production – that everyone’s dancing full on, because the good times might not last. It was a time of very bawdy songs. We look back at English history through the rather prudish eyes of the Victorians... But if you had wealth, life was much bawdier in pre-Victorian times.

It’s a production where the fourth wall is down. The actors often acknowledge the audience and share Nell’s journey with them. I’m hoping it will be fun for actors and audience alike – and that audience members will be sufficiently entertained and intrigued to delve more deeply into the Restoration world. The Restoration was a defining time in British history, as the country moved from a medieval towards a modern society.”

COLIN RECOMMENDS a couple of movies as references for the cast: *Stage Beauty*, about Kynaston: “It’s quite serious, and not much fun. Even less fun is *The Libertine*, with Johnny Depp, which is set in the period and is about the Earl of Rochester, who was in the inner circle of Charles’ court.”

According to Samuel Pepys... “pretty, witty Nell” had a unique naturalness on stage. We’ve honoured this by having the other actors perform in a stiff, two-dimensional way – until they see how effective Nell’s acting style is.

well have been a male-dominated profession today.

The playwright also has a feminist take on Nell Gwynn’s story. Nell was a feisty individual, and together with other actresses of the day (and Aphra Behn, a prolific

insight into life at the time and who was an inveterate theatregoer) “pretty, witty Nell” had a unique naturalness on stage. We’ve honoured this by having the other actors perform in a stiff, two-dimensional way – until they see how effective Nell’s acting style is.

of a dreadful opera – all of which is challenging for the performers.

When I was doing research, the most fascinating thing was what life must have been like in that time. During the Restoration, everyone (with money) was partying

Talking points.

- Colin wants this production to be partly about “the cult of celebrity.” What aspects of this were evident to you in watching the play?
- What was your response to the doubling up of characters? What are the pros and cons of this technique from a production point of view?
- Sexuality on stage has always been a social talking point. What do you think are the social conventions around sex that are shown – or broken – on the stage today?





Set designer – Rachael Walker.

THERE ARE 25 SCENES in the play: 17 are set at the Playhouse Theatre in Drury Lane, and the remaining eight are in the Palace of Charles II in Newmarket. The number of scenes is a challenge. We need to make it clear to an audience when the location and/or time changes, have enough variety to keep it visually interesting, and do this within budget and without slowing the necessary comic pace of the piece.

THE THEATRE

The design pays homage to many historical elements of theatrical staging, craft and collaborators in a modern way. It's a celebration of female actresses on the stage for the first time,

especially our celebrity, Nell Gwynn.

When King Charles II ascended the throne, he became the patron of a theatrical renaissance. In fact, his portrait presides over the central stage throughout the production.

Audiences are included and engaged in the action of the play by using:

- a thrust stage (it 'thrusts' out past the proscenium arch 'frame' into the auditorium)
- side of stage Royal Boxes (to see and be seen in)
- practical footlights and lamps (lights that the audience can see, which aren't in the lighting rig)
- the fourth wall being broken
- actors setting up scene



Rachael created a mood board of visual references for the set that she presented to the company on the first day of rehearsals.

changes for backstage and dressing room action.

Other theatrical and dramatic elements that are on display and honoured:

- printed and painted drapes that fly (rise out or drop in to the stage space)
- the red house curtain

story. I've used as many circular or curvy shapes as I could; this feeds into the set props, set-dressing, costume silhouettes and choreography.

COLOUR

Importantly, the play is being staged at the ASB Waterfront Theatre,

mismatching, exuberant flow, on and off the stage.

The 'floor and walls' are timber, to honour the 'treading of the boards' and standard stage construction. My modern (and practical) take on this is to use plywood, in its warm organic beauty. This is used in the Royal portrait, practical lighting, set props, Royal chairs and boxes. It is tactile, textural and stripped back to its naked form.

THE PALACE

In contrast, the eight Palace scenes are minimalist. Here I've used highly polished black and silver hard surfaces, long entrances and stylised, suggestive sculptures. We add an element of fertility and life in the form of mandarin topiaries, once Nell is living in the Palace. This is a reference to her old profession, the child she has to King Charles, and the brood of Cavalier King Charles Spaniels they own together.

I have used the Fleur de Lis symbol to denote the

Palace location as a generic formal 'Royal' counterpoint to the colourful chaos of the theatre scenes. Practically, as this drape is more than 10 metres upstage of the audience, it needed to be graphically bold. The Fleur de Lis is a stylised lily. It has ancient origins, but is still used in many flags, coats of arms and official insignia internationally today.



The script dictates that a character must smash a Bernini bust of Charles II. Our interpretation of the

sculptures Charles has in his Palace are glossy Jeff Koons balloon animals and a slightly more suggestive version of this. The reality of what this 'bust' will look like, and how we are going to smash it every night on stage, is still a work in progress.

BACKDROPS

I have loved having hundreds of years of theatre history to reference. I discovered an Italian architect called Sebastiano Serlio. He wrote a seven-book treatise on Architecture and Perspective in the mid-1500s. The second book included examples of perspective theatre

backdrop etchings – and we were able to purchase a high-resolution file of one of these.

Working with a graphic designer, I modified the physical size, added some blocks of colour to merge it more into our theatrical world, and printed the image onto fabric. A sail-making company sewed it into an 11m x 5m backdrop. This honours the origins of hand-painted theatrical backdrops, but in a modern medium, courtesy of an image that predates our play by over a hundred years. I have also continued this black linear etched detail in the edges of the plywood set props and practical lights."

“We need to make it clear to an audience when the location and/or time changes, have enough variety to keep it visually interesting, and do this without slowing the necessary comic pace of the piece.”

- forced perspective
- black masking
- upstage cyclorama
- painted wooden scenery
- trucking set props (things on wheels)

The intention for these theatre scenes was to create a fun, cheeky, feminine, enveloping stage environment for this love

which adds the modern context! The colour of the real theatre seating is a direct influence on the design palette for the 'theatre' scenes – one of the upholstery fabrics is orange, which is our perfect pop colour, because Nell was an orange seller. The use of colour purposefully continues the colourful,

Talking points.

- Did you pick up on the set's relationship to the colour in the theatre seating? Where else did you see the colour palette in the play?
- How did the staging techniques work to engage and implicate the audience?
- Which specific theatrical moments did you find the most memorable? What technologies were used to create the 'wow!' factor?



AIKE CHITHAM

Design.



Costume designer – Elizabeth Whiting.



“The overall concept of the costume design for *Nell Gwynn* is the discovery of parallels between 1660s fashion and modern street fashion. The aim is also to celebrate the theatricality of costume design.”

I USE MY LIBRARY of Art books and Fashion/ pattern-making reference books as the first port of call when I start my research for a period piece. Then I look at movies set in a similar period to the play. I particularly enjoyed *The Libertine* and *Stage Beauty*, which Colin recommended

that the cast watch in preparation for this production.

My research about the period revealed a use of layering and varied textures of fabrics in the menswear, and constriction – contrasted with freedom – in the womenswear. I have used waistcoats, shirts

and cut-off jeans in silk, lace and denim to create a 1660s feel for the men. The women will have full skirts, corsets and crop-tops in cotton, linen, silk and knit fabrics – with the focus on revealing their breasts.

Nell Gwynn’s clothing changes over the period of the play. She begins as

a fairly poor orange seller, wearing simple muslin and finishes in silk and lace to indicate her change in

through costume changes that are extremely quick but still convincing. The most difficult is the

and entering the stage. That means we need to stitch all the actor's garments together, so that they are taken on and off as one piece. The costumes also use quick release fastenings, like domes and Velcro. There will be a dresser set off stage to assist the actor with these quick changes.

This play celebrates love and the triumph of personality over class. The cast has embraced this, and is working together with the design team to produce a delightful romp. Each actor is contributing ideas for their character and enjoying understanding why I have chosen to design each character as I have..."

status when she becomes the King's mistress.

With a small ensemble cast, my challenge has been to differentiate characters

Arlington/Dryden change, which occurs several times during the play. There is no time scripted between these characters leaving

“This play celebrates love and the triumph of personality over class. The cast has embraced this, and is working together with the design team to produce a delightful romp.”





Talking points.

- Nell's costume changes to reflect her changes in status. How is the status of each of the other characters made apparent to the audience?
- Try ranking the characters by status, according to their clothing and accessories. Does modern society rank people by their dress?
- Choose one specific element of costuming – colour, fabric, shape – and look at how it functions across several costumes. What decisions have been made, and why?

Lighting designer— Jo Kilgour.



“IN NELL GWYNN, there are several different locations for the action, and the play chops and changes between them. Lighting works with the stage settings to help the audience keep track of where each scene takes place. The audience may not notice lighting changes as much as set changes, but the lighting design helps

makes the time and place clear. The lighting can also highlight or hide parts of the stage to draw focus to specific actions.

A lot of the scenes in *Nell Gwynn* take place in the Playhouse Theatre, where the lighting has a warm colour palette – using gold, chocolate and lavender gels – to give a sense of fun and rowdy enjoyment.

These are Nell’s colours, so using them for the theatre scenes helps show that she is comfortable and belongs here.

When the cast are rehearsing or just talking in the theatre, the lighting is fairly naturalistic, as if they are just backstage or in the rehearsal room with the working lights on. However, when they are performing

a ‘play within a play’, there is more dramatic lighting, with stronger colours and different angles helping to create texture. There are also footlights in the ‘performance’ scenes to create the feel of the Playhouse Theatre stage based on the period setting.

In contrast, the Court and Palace scenes use a

cooler palette – open white lights (with no colour gel in them), and steel blues. This creates a more formal setting, and highlights the silver used in the set and costumes. When Nell moves into the palace, some of her colour palette will be brought in too.

One of the challenges of lighting this show has been the layers of scenery.

We must light the actors in a way to separate them visually from the set and only light the set when we choose. Most lighting hung above the stage area is quite steep to enable us to light between each wall. We use side light to help light the actors upstage where it is more difficult to light their faces from the front.”

Talking points.

- Discuss the impact of lighting on the production. Did you specifically notice the lighting changes, or were they more subliminal?
- Why do you think warmer, brighter colours are associated with happiness and fun, while cooler colours indicate sadness or formality?
- Lighting has styles, just like clothes do. What was the ‘style’ of the lighting during the scenes at the Theatre? What other styles might you be able to recognise and describe (for example – horror lighting, glamour lighting, melodramatic lighting)? How are these created?
- Using a lamp or torch, work together to create some different lighting effects. Which angles are most flattering? How does the distance between the light and the subject make a difference? How can you isolate the subject from the background?



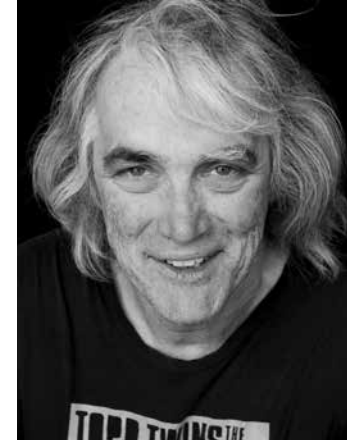
Design.



Talking points.

- Why do you think only acoustic music was used in this production?
- What was the effect of having the musicians involved in the action?
- Which elements of the songs best related to the music you hear today?

Musical Director – John Gibson.



“The whole production will be acoustic. Charmian Keay, the violinist, will be leaping about playing jigs and reels while Nell is selling oranges. Any sound you hear on stage will be real, not recorded. If it’s not Charmian, it will be the cast playing drums, guitars, saxophones, trumpets.”

THE IDEA IS THAT it’s pure ‘person power’. To give you some idea of the period, the violin was the electric guitar of the day. It was wiping out every other instrument, because it was so loud and so strong. The French king had 24 violins, and Charles II had the same. Charles II’s favourite song was called *Cuckolds In A In A Row*. We use the tune for Nell to sing her number, *I Can Dance And I Can Sing*.

The English of the time liked jigs and hornpipes, and Charles II couldn’t stand anything he couldn’t

tap his foot to. He liked everything in triple time: 1, 2, 3; 1, 2, 3. And he hated slow music.

People danced to the songs in ‘Playford’s Dancing Master’. It was a popular book with the music at the top of the page and all the steps spelled out underneath. There was only one publisher of music, and Playford made a fortune.

This was also the time when songs as we know them, were invented. Music theatre and dance were all abolished by Oliver Cromwell, so – like in the

aftermath of World War II – there was a ground zero for culture. What came back was dancing and the rhythms of the body: tunes with a big bass and lyrics about sex and drinking. It was ‘party like its 1660!’

Another thing that was introduced around this time was coffee. The coffee house was where all the men went, and they would sing catches and glees, which were songs in three or four parts, sung in canon or in unison. In 1660, you made your own entertainment.



Choreographer – Malia Johnston.



“DANCE is used to help with the characterisation and energy in some songs. For example, there are a couple of songs the characters sing as part of their Playhouse Theatre performance. Choreography is also used for a couple of sequences where they’re ‘off-stage’, when they’re preparing their show – those scenes are more like choreographed chaos, with lots of rapid prop movement that makes it look like they’re rehearsing.

The two pieces that are in the ‘play within a play’ are more formal. We’ve kept that quite old-fashioned, so it has a real difference to what they do

off the Playhouse Theatre stage. There are older-style movements that you might have seen from that period’s choreography: quite literal hand gestures; holding the body stiffly upright; more traditional sequences of steps; very simple.

When the ‘actors’ are working outside the performance, we deconstruct the movement, so it’s a lot more playful. In these sequences, we get the liveliness of Irish country dancing – lots of energy, lots of fun. We even use some Vaudeville material, which wouldn’t have been used at that time.

When we see Nell Gwynn in rehearsals, because she’s

quite a character, we’ve made some of the dance quite sexy, with movements that you wouldn’t have seen in the period! This gives her a more modern punch. For example, she does a shimmy, and a lot of ‘knees-up’ movements, and a lot of ruffling the skirts, like in a can-can, but slightly modernised.

I’ve worked with Byron (Kynaston), who is doing the fan dance, and encouraged him to be really over the top with the fan movements – they aren’t the way the fan would traditionally have been used – to bring a sense of playfulness and mad energy to it.

Some of the cast are more nervous of movement than others. The way that I work is to find out how each actor moves, and then give them some playful movements that they can really own. I wouldn’t be interested in teaching them

something they couldn’t achieve; they really work with me to find the movement that suits them. When we were building *One week to go*, which is about the countdown to the performance, they worked with me and helped devise

some of the material, and then we souped it up. A lot of the jig material that we used, or the side-steps, are quite common movements, that they are all able to do just fine. It was lots of fun making the material with them.

Talking points.

- How are the set and props incorporated into the choreography in this production?
- What makes a movement playful?
- Research one aspect of the movement used in the production – for example, fan dance, shimmy, knees-up, Vaudeville, Irish jig – and explain where it comes from and what it traditionally looked like. Why was it included in the choreography of this show?



1. Thinking about the theatre technologies used in the play; (set, costume, props, lighting, and sound), choose one or more of these and note how these contributed to your understanding of the of the play.

Was there a scene or a moment that particularly stood-out for you? It might be something you enjoyed, or something that confused you. What was it about it that you remember most?

2. What choices did the actors, director or designers make that gave this moment impact?

3. Why do you think they made those choices?

4. What are you still wondering about Auckland Theatre Company's production of *Nell Gwynn* by Jessica Swale?

Additional resources and readings.

- Billington, Michael. “*Nell Gwynn review – Gemma Arterton sparkles in chaotic comedy.*” The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/feb/12/nell-gwynn-review-gemma-arterton-apollo-london> Published 12/02/2016. Accessed 25/07/2017. Web.
- Love, Catherine. “*Nell Gwynn review – this is what a restoration-era feminist looks like.*” The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2015/sep/28/nell-gwynn-review-shakespeares-globe-gugum-batha-raw>. Published 28-09-2015. Accessed 31-07-2017. Web.
- Smurthwaite, Nick. “*Jessica Swale: Shakespeare’s Globe is a magical place.*” <https://www.thestage.co.uk/features/interviews/2015/jessica-swale-shakespeares-globe-tricky-magical-place/> Published 13-09-2015. Accessed 31/07/2017
- “*What can we learn from the story of Nell Gwynn?*” Royal Museums Greenwich. <http://www.rmg.co.uk/discover/behind-the-scenes/blog/what-can-we-learn-story-nell-gwynn> Published 10/03/2016. Accessed 31/07/2017. Web.
- “*Who was Nell Gwynn?*” Royal Museums Greenwich. <http://www.rmg.co.uk/discover/behind-the-scenes/blog/who-was-nell-gwynn> Published 04/03/2016. Accessed 25/07/2017. Web.

ATC creative learning – encouraging acts of imagination

ATC Creative Learning promotes and encourages teaching and participation in theatre and acts as a resource for secondary and tertiary educators. It is a comprehensive and innovative arts education programme designed to nurture young theatre practitioners and audiences.

Whether we are unpacking a play, creating a new work, or learning new skills we are encouraging habits of thinking that foster acts of imagination to take place.

ATC Creative Learning has direct contact with secondary school students throughout the greater Auckland region with a

focus on delivering an exciting and popular programme that supports the Arts education of Auckland students and which focuses on curriculum development, literacy, and the Arts.

Curriculum links.

ATC Education activities relate directly to the PK, UC and CI strands of the NZ Curriculum from levels 5 to 8. They also have direct relevance to many of the NCEA achievement standards at all three levels.

All secondary school Drama students (Years 9 to 13) should be experiencing

live theatre as a part of their course work, Understanding the Arts in Context. Curriculum levels 6, 7 and 8 (equivalent to years 11, 12 and 13) require the inclusion of New Zealand drama in their course of work.

The NCEA external examinations at each level

(Level 1 – AS90011, Level 2 – AS91219, Level 3 – AS91518) require students to write about live theatre they have seen. Students who are able to experience fully produced, professional theatre are generally advantaged in answering these questions.

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