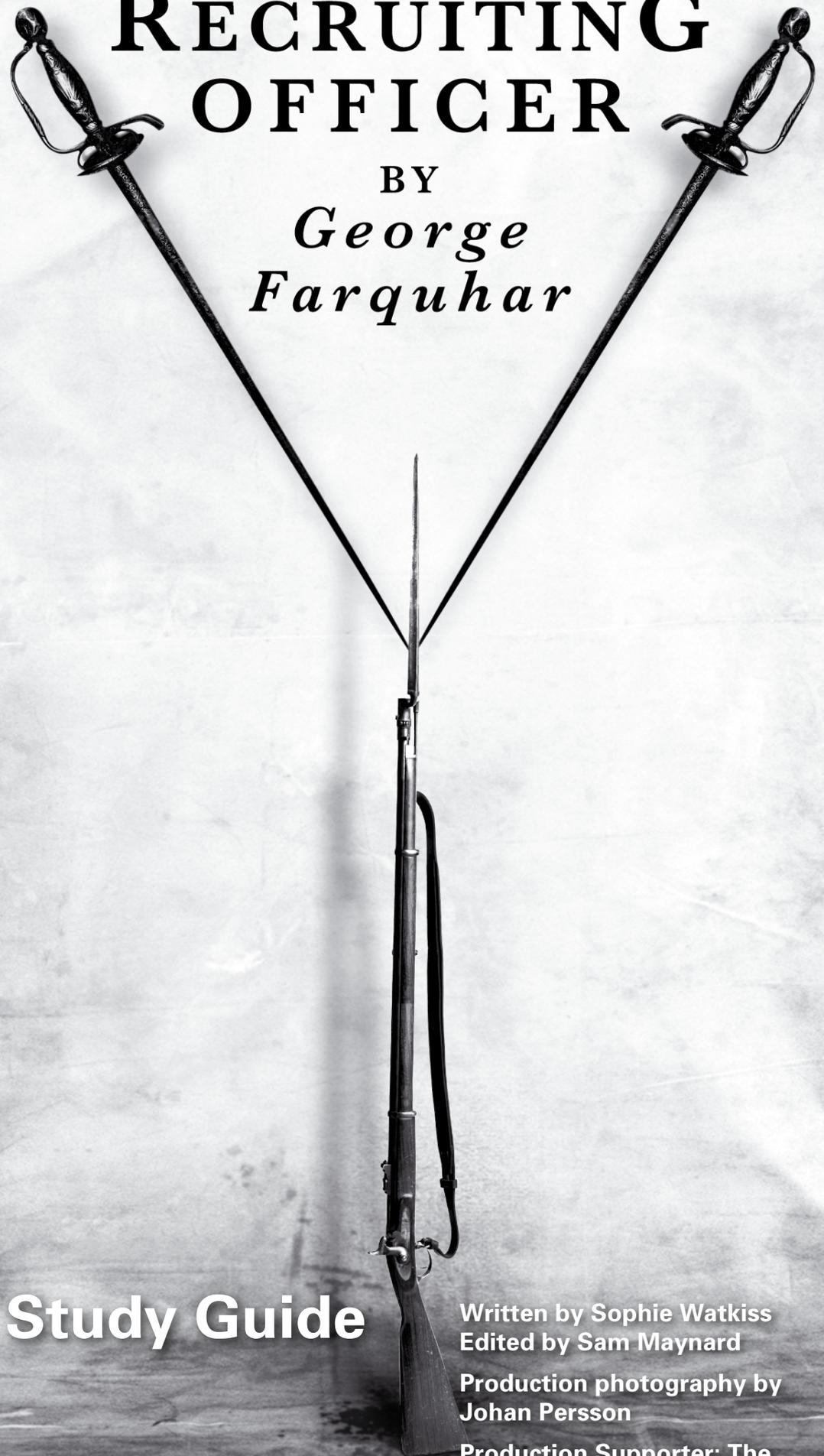


DOMMAR®

The
**RECRUITING
OFFICER**

BY
*George
Farquhar*



Study Guide

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Section 1

Creative team, cast and characters

GEORGE FARQUHAR, AUTHOR (1677-1707)

Farquhar was born in Londonderry, Ireland, in 1677. There is some speculation that he served in the Battle of the Boyne in 1690 when he was only thirteen. Farquhar entered Trinity College, Dublin in 1694, but left without a degree in 1696 to become an actor. He gave up the stage after accidentally stabbing a fellow actor during a performance of Dryden's *Indian Emperor*.

He moved to London and began writing comedies, including *Love and a Bottle* which premiered successfully at Drury Lane in 1698. He subsequently wrote *The Constant Couple* (1699) and its sequel *Sir Henry Wildair* (1701), *The Inconstant* (1699, based on John Fletcher's *The Wild Goose Chase*) and *The Twin Rivals* (1702), the last of his plays to be produced at Drury Lane. *The Stage Coach*, written with Peter Motteux, opened at Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1704. He also wrote a novella, *The Adventures of Covent Garden* (1698), and a collection of poems called *Love and Business* (1702).

In 1703, Farquhar married Margaret Pennell, a supposedly rich army widow with three daughters, but this marriage ended in estrangement when he discovered she was penniless. In 1704 he joined the army and took up the position of recruiting officer in Shrewsbury, also serving back in Ireland and in Holland.

He returned to London to write *The Recruiting Officer* in 1706. The play is the earliest documented drama produced in New York (1732), Charleston (1736), Kingston, Jamaica (1750) and was the first production in the then penal colony of Sydney, Australia, in 1789. The play also has a history of opening new venues, and heralding new tenures. *The Recruiting Officer* opened the New Theatre, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London (1714), the Goodman's Fields Theatre, London (1727), the Aungier Street Theatre, Dublin (1734) and the New Theatre, Edinburgh (1736). Farquhar's final play, *The Beaux' Stratagem* (1707), was only made possible thanks to a present of 20 guineas from the actor-manager Robert Wilkes to the then impoverished playwright. The play was staged just before his death, probably from tuberculosis. He is buried in St Martin-in-the-Fields, London.

Creative team

JOSIE ROURKE, DIRECTOR

Josie is Artistic Director of the Donmar Warehouse. Josie trained as the Resident Assistant Director at the Donmar Warehouse, was Trainee Associate Director at the Royal Court and Associate Director at Sheffield Theatres.

For the Donmar: *Frame 312, WorldMusic, The Cryptogram.*

As Artistic Director of the Bush Theatre: work includes *Sixty-Six Books, If There Is I Haven't Found It Yet, Apologia, Like a Fishbone, 2,000 Feet Away, Tinderbox, How to Curse.*

Other theatre: includes *Much Ado About Nothing* (Wyndham's), *Men Should Weep* (NT), *Here* (Sky Arts), *Twelfth Night, The Taming of the Shrew* (Chicago Shakespeare Theatre), *Crazyblackmuthafuckin'self, Loyal Women* (Royal Court), *My Dad's a Birdman* (Young Vic), *Believe What You Will, King John* (RSC), *World Music, The Unthinkable, Much Ado About Nothing, The Long and the Short and the Tall, Kick for Touch* (Sheffield Theatres).

LUCY OSBORNE, DESIGNER

Trained: Motley Theatre Design School.

For the Donmar: *Huis Clos* (Trafalgar Studios).

Theatre: includes *The Taming of the Shrew, Twelfth Night* – Jeff Award (Chicago Shakespeare), *The Roundabout Season* and *Roundabout Auditorium* (Paines Plough/Sheffield Theatres), *Where's My Seat?, The Aliens, Like a Fishbone, The Whisky Taster, If There Is I Haven't Found It Yet, Wrecks, Broken Space Festival, 2,000 Feet Away, Artefacts* (also nabokov/New York), *Tinderbox, tHedYsFUnCKshOnalZ!* (Bush), *Love, Love, Love* (Paines Plough), *Plenty, The Unthinkable* (Sheffield Crucible Studio), *The People Speak* (History Channel), *Timing* (King's Head), *When Romeo Met Juliet* (BBC/Coventry Belgrade), *Dreams of Violence* (Out of Joint/Soho/UK tour), *Shades* (Royal Court), *The Long and the Short and the Tall* (Sheffield Lyceum/UK tour).

JAMES FARNCOMBE, LIGHTING DESIGNER

For the Donmar: *Inadmissible Evidence.*

Theatre: includes *Juno and the Paycock* (NT/Dublin), *Men Should Weep, Double Feature* (NT), *The Duchess of Malfi* (Old Vic), *The Ladykillers* (Liverpool Playhouse/Gielgud), *Ghost Stories* (Liverpool Playhouse/Lyric Hammersmith/Duke of York's/Toronto), *The Changeling, The Glass Menagerie* (Young Vic), *Swallows and Amazons* (Vaudeville), *Juliet and Her Romeo, Far Away* (Bristol Old Vic), *Lord of the Flies* (Regent's Park), *Twisted Tales* (Lyric Hammersmith), *The Village Bike, Wanderlust* (Royal Court), *Plenty* (Sheffield Crucible), *Dancing at Lughnasa* (Birmingham Rep), *Like a Fishbone, The Whisky Taster, 2,000 Feet Away* (Bush), *The Overcoat* (Gecko), *Breaking the Silence* (Nottingham Playhouse), *Osama the Hero, Single Act* (Hampstead).

Opera: includes *Kommilitonen* (Royal Academy of Music/New York).

EMMA LAXTON, SOUND DESIGNER

Theatre: *Invisible* (Transport UK tour/Luxemburg), *The Westbridge*, *The Heretic*, *Off the Endz!*, *Faces in the Crowd*, *That Face* (also West End), *Gone Too Far!*, *Catch*, *Scenes from the Back of Beyond*, *Woman and a Scarecrow*, *My Name is Rachel Corrie* (also West End/New York/Galway Festival/Edinburgh Festival), *Terrorism*, *Food Chain* (Royal Court), *One Monkey Don't Stop No Show* (Sheffield Theatres/Eclipse), *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Precious Little Talent*, *Treasure Island* (West End), *Where's My Seat?*, *Like a Fishbone*, *The Whisky Taster*, *If There is I Haven't Found It Yet*, *2nd May 1997*, *Apologia*, *The Contingency Plan*, *Wrecks*, *Broken Space Season*, *2,000 Feet Away*, *Tinderbox* (Bush), *Charged* (Clean Break/Soho), *Men Should Weep*, *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat* (NT), *Travels with My Aunt* (Theatre Royal, Northampton), *Sisters*, *My Romantic History* (also Bush), *The Unthinkable* (Sheffield Theatres), *Ghosts*, *The Gods Are Not to Blame* (Arcola), *A Christmas Carol* (Chichester Festival), *Pornography* (Birmingham Rep/Traverse/Tricycle), *Europe* (Dundee Rep/Barbican Pit), *Other Hands* (Soho), *My Dad's a Birdman* (Young Vic).

MICHAEL BRUCE, COMPOSER

Michael is Composer in Residence at the Donmar. He was previously Resident Composer at the Bush Theatre and the recipient of the Notes for the Stage Prize for song writing.

Theatre: includes *Noises Off*, *24 Hour Plays* (Old Vic), *Sixty-Six Books* (Bush), *The Pied Piper and Musicians of Bremen* (Roundhouse), *Much Ado About Nothing* (Wyndham's), *Men Should Weep* (NT), *Ed: The Musical* (Edinburgh Fringe/Trafalgar Studios), *Michael Bruce at the Apollo* (Apollo), *The Great British Country Fete* (UK tour/Latitude Festival/Bush), *Christmas in New York* (Lyric/Prince of Wales).

Orchestrations and arrangements: include *Friday Night Is Music Night* (BBC Radio 2), *Ruthie Henshall in Concert* (Guildhall), *Helena Blackman: The Sound of Rodgers and Hammerstein*.

Cast and characters



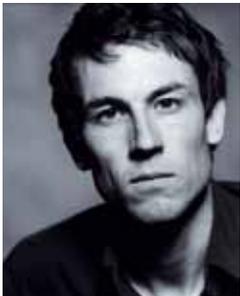
SERGEANT KITE Mackenzie Crook

KITE: So that if your worship pleases to cast up the whole sum, viz canting, lying, impudence, pimping, bullying, swearing, whoring, drinking, and a musket, you will find the sum total will amount to a recruiting sergeant.

Act II, Scene i

Kite is tasked with recruiting the men of Shrewsbury into the army, which he proves to be exceptionally skilled at. “He reads like a big man”, says Mackenzie Crook, “very confident, bullish, bullying and full of himself”. Kite’s impressive gamut of recruiting strategies weave through the plot, including his disguise as a fortune-teller. He openly reveals the intentions of this ruse to his Captain, Plume: “This device, sir, will get you men, and me money, which I think is all we want at present” (Act I, Scene i).

An examination of the play’s opening scene in Section 4 of the Study Guide outlines the discoveries that Mackenzie Crook and director Josie Rourke made about Kite when exploring his character in rehearsal.



CAPTAIN PLUME Tobias Menzies

PLUME: I am not that rake that the world imagines. I have got an air of freedom, which people mistake for lewdness in me.

Act IV, Scene i

The elegant Captain Plume is the returning war hero who has just served at the Battle of Blenheim, and the recruiting officer of the play’s title. In the Donmar’s production, his handsome blazing red officer’s uniform is topped with the regulation tricorne hat, adorned with a badge holding in place an impressive plume of feathers. To the Restoration audience, this plume would have been a recognisable motif of the hero in a tragedy.

Plume’s military objective is to raise as many recruits as possible, with seduction being key to the recruitment process: ‘kiss the prettiest country wenches, and you are sure of listing the lustiest fellows.’ (Act IV, Scene i). Outwardly viewed as a rake, his inner ambitions defy this label, and his personal objective is to align himself romantically with Silvia, of whom he is fiercely protective. During the rehearsal process, Tobias Menzies discovered these dual impulses in some of the situations that Plume finds himself in: he knows what he is supposed to be achieving, i.e. raising recruits, but it is different from what he actually wants, which is to marry Silvia.¹ As Justice Balance warns him at the opening of Act II, his dual objectives are incompatible, “You’re engaged already; wedded to the war. War is your mistress, and it is below a soldier to think of any other.”

¹ Interview with Hannah Price, Assistant Director, THE RECRUITING OFFICER.



SILVIA Nancy Carroll

SILVIA: I need no salt for my stomach, no hartshorn for my head, nor wash for my complexion; I can gallop all the morning after the hunting-horn, and all evening after a fiddle; in short, I can do everything with my father but drink and shoot flying.

Act I, Scene ii.

These sentiments – made during Silvia’s opening scene – are exemplified in the Donmar’s production by costuming her in the practical linen riding skirt and jacket we can well imagine a spirited young eighteenth-century lady from the Shires wearing. Silvia’s overall objective in the play is to secure Plume as her husband. However, the death of her brother, which occurs in the play’s third scene, makes her sole heir to the estate of her father, Justice Balance, and this becomes an obstacle to the marriage; with her new status as heiress to the family estate, her father now deems Plume an unsuitable match.

Silvia is a strong and ambitious woman, who seeks to challenge how her sense of self is determined by the limitations of her gender. This is demonstrated by her taking on the disguise of Jack Wifful for the majority of the play’s action, enabling her to experiment with the freedom of playing a man. With actresses appearing on the English stage for the first time during the Restoration, the ‘breeches role’ – involving a female character disguising herself as a boy or young man – was an expedient way of revealing parts of the actress’s body that Restoration fashion and decorum denied.



MELINDA Rachael Stirling

MELINDA Our education, cousin, was the same, but our temperaments had nothing alike.

Act I, Scene ii

Melinda is a ‘lady of fortune’, whose recent inheritance of £20,000 per annum gives her a newly acquired air of haughtiness with both her suitor Worthy, and her cousin Silvia. She is an example of Restoration comedy’s ‘difficult girl type’; her inheritance gives her power and a new social status, exacerbating her volatile nature. Rachel Stirling discusses her approach to playing Melinda in Section 3 of the Study Guide.



MR WORTHY Nicholas Burns

PLUME: So, as you [Worthy] grew obsequious, she [Melinda] grew haughty, and because you approached her as a goddess, she used you like a dog.

WORTHY: Exactly.

Act I, Scene i

Listed in Farquhar's 'Dramatis Personae' as 'A gentleman from Shropshire', Worthy's ambition in the play is secure Melinda's hand in marriage. The obstacles strewn in his path are many – most notably Melinda's newly found status as an heiress, and a rival in the form of the foppish Captain Brazen. Worthy demonstrates a shrewd understanding of how Melinda operates, and is willing to use trickery to win her hand. He is the good friend of Plume, and during the play they are drawn together by, as Worthy puts it "the equality" of their fortunes in loving women who have had literal fortunes drop into their laps. Nicholas Burns captures the playfulness of Worthy, as he alternates between stoic heroism and childish defiance in his endeavours to secure Melinda's hand.

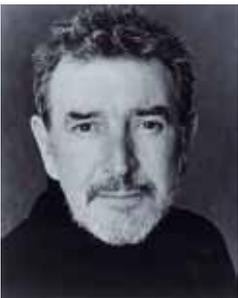


LUCY Kathryn Drysdale

LUCY: Lady's maid to Captain's wife – I spy a promotion.

Act I, Scene ii.

Lucy is another feisty female role, with a malingering ambition to move beyond her current position as Melinda's maid.



JUSTICE BALANCE Gawn Grainger

BALANCE: 'Looke, Captain, once I was young, and once an officer as you are; and I can guess at your thoughts now by what mine were then, and I remember very well that I would have given one of my legs to have deluded the daughter of an old plain country gentleman, as like me as I was then like you.'

Act II, Scene i

Justice Balance has a beautifully open and understanding relationship with his daughter, Silvia, based on love, affection and mutual respect; he would rather "counsel than command", eschewing the patriarchal authority permitted by Restoration society. However, his journey in the play is a complex one, and Act II, Scene ii sees him contend with the death of his son and heir.

Like Plume, Balance was once an officer, and is still involved in military affairs in his capacity as a Justice of the Peace. This role gives him the legal jurisdiction to decide which men should be recruited. The way he uses this absolute power becomes all too apparent in the play's final scene: set in the town's Court of Justice, he quashes each defendant's challenge to be recruited to the army, coming down on the side of the Crown in every case heard.



ROSE Aimeé-Ffion Edwards

PLUME Pray what's your name, pretty creature?

ROSE Rose, sir. My father is a farmer within three short mile o' th' town. We keep this market; I sell chickens, eggs, and butter, and my brother Bullock there sells corn.

Act III, Scene i

A country wench who is seduced by Plume in order to lure her brother Bullock and her numerous sweethearts into the army. She is completely enraptured by Plume's attentions, believing he will make her "a captain's lady."

Aimeé-Ffion Edwards also plays the small role of Mary.



CAPTAIN BRAZEN Mark Gatiss

WORTHY: He has the most universal acquaintance of any man living, for he won't be alone, and nobody will keep him company twice. But the most surprising part of his character is his memory, which is the most prodigious, and the most trifling, in the world.

Worthy on Brazen, Act II, Scene i.

Brazen is a recruiting officer, without the wherewithal to raise a recruit; he is also the arrogant pursuer of Melinda's affections.

He is the play's fop, and, in the true Restoration spirit of this character type, Mark Gatiss has discovered that Brazen has "absolutely no inner life whatsoever." Mark discusses his approach to playing Brazen in Section 3 of the Study Guide.

The Actor Musicians: the men of Shrewsbury

A band of five actor musicians play the men of Shrewsbury, and represent the life and vitality of the countryside through the music. As the production progresses, the music undercuts how their lives are affected by the military presence that arrives in the town, as the officers try to recruit them all into the army.

Farquhar writes the country dialect into these rural characters' speech, as can be seen in some of the quotations used below to illuminate the actor musicians' named roles:

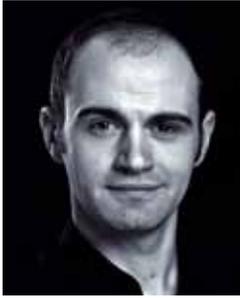


THOMAS APPLETREE/VIOLIN Matthew Romain

APPLETREE: And I'se scarcely doff mine for any captain in England. My vether's a freeholder.

Act II, Scene iii

A country lad, who, when targeted by Kite, proves a reluctant recruit.



COSTAR PEARMAIN/WOODWIND Tom Giles

COSTAR: Since this Pressing Act your Justice can force any poor or idle man into the army.

Costar addressing Kite, Act II, Scene iii

Appletree’s close friend, also targeted by Kite as a recruit, and captivated by Plume’s promises of becoming a captain in the army.



BULLOCK/DOUBLE BASS/MANDOLIN/GUITAR Peter Manchester

BULLOCK: Ah! Ruose, Ruose, What will become of me in the army?

Act IV, Scene i

Bullock is Rose’s brother. He travels to Shrewsbury with his sister Rose to sell corn at the market, and his objective is to return home to the countryside as soon as possible once this task is done. Unfortunately for Bullock, he becomes embroiled in Kite and Plume’s recruitment campaign.



BRIDEWELL/GUITAR Stuart Ward

BRIDEWELL Put up your sword or I shall knock you down, and so I command the Queen’s peace.

A constable.



SCALE/PERCUSSION/BARITONE UKELELE Chris Grahamson

SCALE I say ‘tis not to be borne, Mr Balance. We justices must uphold the law.

A second Justice of the Peace.

THE RECRUITING OFFICER has an intricate plot, which can be subdivided into three separate strands: the recruiting scenes, the plot revolving around Silvia and the plot revolving around Melinda.

In the Donmar’s production, these plots come together and break free from each other with pace and vigour, highlighting the comedic nature of character and situation, whilst at the same time pointing up the harsh realities of recruiting, as this rural community is stripped of its young men.



The play's historical context

Warfare and recruiting in eighteenth century England

PLUME: 'The battle, sir, was a very pretty battle as one should desire to see, but we were all so intent upon victory that we never minded the battle; all that I know of the matter is, our General commanded us to beat the French, and we did so, and if he pleases to say the word, we'll do't again.'

Act II Scene i

THE RECRUITING OFFICER was first staged in 1706, against a backdrop of England's engagement in the War of Spanish Succession.² The play is set in Shrewsbury in September 1704, directly after the Battle of Blenheim, which had been fought in Bavaria the previous month. The battle has gone down in history as one of the turning points of the War of Spanish Succession. The massive Allied victory over the Franco-Bavarian army was led by the Duke of Marlborough and was a source of great celebration and pride, delivering the reigning monarch, Queen Anne, the first significant English triumph on European soil since Henry V's success at Agincourt, three centuries earlier.

Although the English army won the battle, it is crucial to appreciate that the country was still at war with the Spanish-Franco alliance, and there was a constant drive to recruit in order to keep up their army. For the battles taking place against the massive armies of France, Spain and Bavaria, England could not rely on army volunteers; there simply weren't enough of them. To keep their regiments reinforced, colonels abroad sent back home a deputation of officers, sergeants and drummers each winter to get recruits.³

Farquhar as recruiting officer

PLUME: The fatigues of recruiting are so intolerable that unless we could make ourselves some pleasure amidst the pain, no mortal man would be able to bear it'.

Act IV Scene i

Farquhar's play is based on his own experience of being a recruiting officer, after he was commissioned as a Lieutenant of Grenadiers in 1704; between 1705 and 1706 he was actively recruiting in Shrewsbury. Winter was the recruiting season as the harvest was in, men had no jobs and, in many cases, little to do.

² The King of Spain, Charles II, had no direct heir. The nearest possible heir was the Dauphin of France. For France to gain control of Spain and all its territories was unthinkable in Europe at that time, not least due to the mass suspicion of Catholicism in England. European diplomacy worked to prevent this. Eventually the French King, Louis XVI, agreed that France would not claim the Spanish throne in return for compensation. The aged Spanish King disagreed with this decision and before dying made a will leaving the Spanish Empire to the grandson of Louis XIV, who was duly crowned Philip V of Spain. This action led to the formation of a Grand Alliance between England, Holland and the Holy Roman Empire, which fought against the Spanish-Franco Alliance, called The Two Crowns.

³ The information under this heading is sourced from period information researched by Hannah Price, Assistant director, THE RECRUITING OFFICER.

This is exactly the scenario we see in the opening scene of *THE RECRUITING OFFICER*; set in the autumn following Marlborough's great win at Blenheim, the summer campaign is over and Plume and his sergeant, Kite, have been sent to Shrewsbury to raise recruits. As Hannah Price, Assistant Director on the production corroborates, "I think that it's really important to know that when they went to Blenheim, they suddenly needed to triple the size of their army, because if you don't understand that they had to fight a war, and that they had to find these men, year in and year out, then the drama of what the young men are being taken off to is lost."

After a century of war in various guises, England was a fairly patriotic place, and yet Plume and the recruiting officers of his time often used immediate materialistic gain as a way to raise recruits, rather than relying on the love of Queen and country. Plume and Kite are also selling the ideal of the army; men together, singing, laughing and, as Kite puts it, "living" away from the restrictions of family and rural life.

Yet recruiting was not always achieved through wit and guile. The play frequently refers to 'pressing', the practice of forcing men into service in the army. What the cast found helpful in terms of plotting was that The Act of Raising Recruits – popularly known as The Pressing Act – had just come into force at the time of the play. This act allowed Justices of the Peace, such as Justice Balance, to conscript all able-bodied men 'not in visible employment' into the army. This means that Appletree is right when he declares a Justice "greater than any Emperor under the sun". "It's the equivalent of an ASBO, but times 50" says Hannah, "the



punishment for hanging around on a street corner, or drinking in the wrong place, could be being put into the army.” As Plume notes, there is only a small difference between pressed men and slaves.

Other acts were passed in order to swell the size of the army to commit to The War of Spanish Succession. In 1702, at the start of the war, the Mutiny Act was passed. This released insolvency debtors from prison if they served in the army for the duration of the war. A second Act followed, pardoning those sentenced to death if they served. While no capital offenders are subscribed in the play, felons from the court are in Act V. This would have been pleasing to Plume and Kite who wouldn't have to go searching for these men, or pay them their enrolment fee.

A change in the way wars were fought marked a shift in the type of recruits that were wanted. The army was more organised, technologically advanced and bureaucratic than ever before: men were employed for skills, and while brawn would always be useful in the army, skills and training were more valued than they had been before. This is evident in Kite's wily attention to the butcher and the smith in the fortune-telling scene. The movement away from hand held weapons such as halberds, swords and pikes and towards the use of guns, entailed heavier losses, putting even more pressure on recruiting officers to replace the dead soldiers. Plume and Kite are recruiting for a very particular type of soldier, the Grenadier. The Grenadiers were renowned for being well built, dashing young men, hence Plume's interest in recruiting Bullock.

After entrance into the army, recruits were subject to a harsh routine of training and discipline. Punishment for disobeying orders or not adhering to drill or other measures of discipline was strict, and military executions were not uncommon. Kite threatens Costar and Appletree with exactly this, and they are right to be wary of the threat.

It should be noted however, that Farquhar's main objective in writing his play was to amuse and entertain his audience, not to put down the practices of recruiting, on which his own commission had depended.⁴

Sex and money

WORTHY My Melinda coquets it with every fellow she sees. I lay fifty pound she makes love to you.

PLUME I'll lay fifty pound that I return it if she does.

Act I, Scene i

From the very start of the rehearsal process, it was clear to the cast and creative team that the overriding themes in the play were sex and money, and that a firm understanding of how these two ideas were regarded in the eighteenth century was needed in order to get to the heart of the piece in performance. “People weren't worried about saying what something was worth, or saying ‘we should have sex’; the airs that made it difficult to talk about this came much later” says Hannah. “So it's been necessary for the cast to access the idea that they don't need to feel shy about talking about money or sex; the characters have a completely different language to talking about them than we have now. We've

⁴ Ibid.



done a lot of work about getting rid of the shyness that we have about both of those issues, which is a hangover from the Victorian age”

The late seventeenth century was a revolutionary time in relation to money, firstly with the establishment of the Bank of England in 1694 – which came about because of England’s need to raise money to rebuild its Navy⁵ – and secondly the birth of the regulated London Stock Exchange in 1697. This had a notable impact on women and money. As it was a new phenomenon, women could legally invest in the stock exchange as no one had thought to legislate against it. By 1704, the period of THE RECRUITING OFFICER, unmarried women, such as Melinda, were getting more used to the empowerment that managing their own money gave them.⁶ Melinda’s £20,000 inheritance is worth £2,370 000 in today’s currency; Sylvia’s £1,200 a year is worth £142,000.⁷

5 The Bank of England was set up as a private institution to supply money to the King in order to raise money to rebuild its Navy after their crushing defeat in naval engagements with France, culminating in the Battle of Beachy Head (1690). It was devised by Charles Montagu, 1st Earl of Halifax. He proposed a loan of £1.2 million to the government. In return the subscribers would become stakeholders in the bank, with long-term banking privileges including the issue of bank notes (credit notes that could be exchanged for their equivalent value in gold). This was the establishment of the first national debt. Of the £1.2 million raised in twelve days, half was used to rebuild the Navy.

6 Under English law, unmarried women and widows had virtually the same rights over property and money as men. However, as soon as a woman married, she was prevented by the legal document *femme covert* from owning land and personal property, including stocks and shares; rents and other income were also subject to her husband’s control. Married women weren’t to get the same rights over their property and money as unmarried women until the Married Women’s Property Act of 1882.

7 *Ibid.* Note: the calculation for the worth of Melinda and Silvia’s fortunes is made using the retail price index for January 2012.

The Restoration theatre and its influence on the Donmar's production of THE RECRUITING OFFICER

The cast and creative team working on the Donmar's production of THE RECRUITING OFFICER have discovered the sheer joy of working on a piece of Restoration comedy. Cast member Rachael Stirling (Melinda), believes it's important to remember the historical context of the plays – that they come out of post-puritanism, with the restoration of the monarchy and the re-establishment of theatre-going after twenty years of Puritan rule. "The Restoration comedies are all about the rediscovery of play and fun and joy – the art of 'silly'", says Stirling, "that is what is really important about them".

Oliver Cromwell's parliament had closed all of London's theatres within a month of the end of the civil war in 1642, and they were destroyed in 1648. When Charles II was restored to the throne in 1660, he issued patents to Thomas Killigrew and Sir William Davenant to establish their own company of players. Both companies, the King's Men (His Majesty's Servants) under Killigrew and the Duke's Men (the company of the King's brother, James, Duke of York) under Davenant, chose a tennis court as the first improvised space in which to create a theatre. These buildings, roofed with surrounding galleries, were the most readily adaptable spaces for theatre going. It was also the closest to the fashionable indoor theatres people recalled from the years before Cromwell. The space these buildings provided determined the type of play and performance that developed, as well as the style of playhouse built during the subsequent Restoration period, including Drury Lane, a far smaller and more intimate space when it was first conceived in 1661 than it is today.⁸

The Restoration playhouse as an inspiration for the design for THE RECRUITING OFFICER

Theatres like Drury Lane were inspired by the improvised tennis court spaces, which were divided into two where the net had been, with half the space given to the actors for the stage, and half to the audience. The audience also sat in the galleried area, so that the dominant characteristic of the newly developed playhouse was a deep apron. Two or three doors were positioned on both sides of the proscenium arch, with access straight onto the apron. All entrances onto the stage were made through these doors, so the performers would find themselves playing directly to the audience as soon as they made their entrance. Emerging so near to the audience, the actor's first words in a scene were often an aside. The dynamics of the space lent itself to this type of interplay between actor and audience: soliloquies, winks, double takes, glances, throw-away lines, and playful reverences, all conjured up a strong connection between the audience and the stage. The Donmar is ideally suited to staging pieces from the Restoration period which demand this connection between actor and audience: the intimacy of the space, with its apron stage surrounded on three sides by the audience, bears similarities to the original performance conditions.

⁸ For more information on the development of the English Playhouse, see Richard and Helen Leacock, *The Development of the English Playhouse*, Methuen 1973 and *Theatre and Playhouse*, Methuen 1984.

The creative team for THE RECRUITING OFFICER have worked with the features of the existing space, and enhanced them in order to evoke the atmosphere of the Restoration playhouse. "We want to create the feeling that the audience are walking into an improvised Restoration theatre of the period – a playhouse that has been created in Covent Garden", says designer Lucy Osborne, "giving a sense that a team of actors have stumbled upon the space and set up their own theatre".

Members of the audience get a view of the set from the back of the stalls as they enter the auditorium, achieved by stripping back the panels that normally mask the auditorium from the entrance walkways into the space. As the audience enter, the creative team want them to have a sense that a play is about to begin; this anticipation is evoked by lighting the space with chandeliers and candles. The band is on stage too, welcoming the playgoers into the environment with a spirited repertoire of folk music inspired by the period. The structure of the improvised setting is predominately made of wood. Beams have been constructed to create the flavour of the playhouse, including platforms stage left and right for the musicians. The design extends into the auditorium to further connect the audience with the acting space, with wood panelling covering the sides of the dress circle, and a wooden slatted ceiling above, allowing stage lighting to add to the 'flickering' candle effect, whilst concealing the source. The wooden floor has a shallow rake, and there is a concertinaing sliding screen upstage – a nod to the scenography of the period – depicting a Gainsborough inspired sky. Stripping the space back, and positioning the screen in front of the architectural wall at the rear of the stage, accentuates the depth of the acting area.



Chandeliers and candlelight

The Restoration playhouse was lit by daylight from its windows, supplemented by chandeliers hanging from the proscenium arch. There would be additional footlights, or 'floats', candles floating in troughs of water, or lights made from cotton wick threaded through cork floating in oil. This was another reason for actors to position themselves downstage – to find the light.

Set and lighting design find perfect synergy in the Donmar's production, as homage is paid to the glow of candlelight that imbued the Restoration stage. The cream painted, wrought iron effect screen at the rear of the stage, has a plethora of candles attached to the concertinaed joints in its framework. Four large, circular wrought-iron chandeliers hang from rope and pulley systems above the four corners of the apron. This is complimented by footlights positioned along the perimeter of the apron, and candles in coloured glass at balcony level, to lift the eye above the acting area, and to further connect the actor with the audience seated here.

Lighting designer James Farncombe has created the illusion of a candlelit glow surrounding the acting space by supplementing the low level of light coming from the candles, with a warmth created from stage lighting. This aura subtly shifts in intensity to accentuate key moments in the production, from the poignancy of Justice Balance absorbing the news of his son's death, to the impact of the recruiting theme as the young men are stripped away from the countryside.

The music

Restoration comedy was known for its musical content, and most of the texts contain songs. From the first performances of the early works, a small orchestra formed an integral part of every production, and Restoration actors and actresses were expected to be able to sing. The musicians were traditionally seated in a music gallery above the stage, or might even appear on the stage itself. This historical context has informed the Donmar's use of music in this production. As cited earlier in the Study Guide, a band of five actor musicians play the men of Shrewsbury, and represent the life and vitality of the countryside through the music. As the production progresses, the music undercuts how their lives are affected by the military presence that arrives in the town as it tries to recruit them all into the army. The instruments they play are similar to those used in the Restoration period: strings – including guitar, mandolin, ukulele, violin and double bass – and woodwind. "Because the play's setting is 1704, we're looking at late seventeenth, early eighteenth century folk music", says composer Michael Bruce, "The play is very sexy, very bawdy and very alive, and that's what's inherent in the folk music of the period – it is very raw". The band's energy and sense of ensemble is impressive, swapping instruments as they are playing and moving swiftly between levels on the acting area. Director Josie Rourke feels the idea of bringing folk music into the play "is really interesting – and useful, because you get the flavour of the play's country town setting". At key moments in the production, the folk music is juxtaposed with the blazing military drumming, used to entrance the young men and draw them in to the army.



The costumes

The creative team want a feeling of vibrancy and fun as the actors fill the performance space. The costumes make it colourful, with the dashing reds of the military uniforms, and the splendid silks of the women's dresses. They have been designed along the lines of traditional Restoration fashion. Rachael Stirling (Melinda) wears the Restoration lady's bell-shaped gown, all satin, lace and brocade, with the skirt separated at the front, to show her highly decorative petticoats. She wears her cloak when 'abroad', as was expected of a Restoration lady. Stirling employs the strategy of the Restoration actress, lifting her skirt and setting it down again with a delicate gesture of the hands to display her gorgeous clothes and her vivacious self. She uses her fan almost as a weapon at times in her skirmishes with Worthy; at one point in rehearsals, Rachael Stirling experimented with using it to gesture horns on her head (the Restoration sign for a eunuch, i.e. a castrated man, and a huge insult to Worthy) as she triumphantly exits the stage after defying his offer to make peace with her. However, as with other aspects of the production process, historical accuracy has not been allowed to impede on practical or aesthetic requirements of the production. For example, the traditional hat for a recruiting sergeant such as Kite would have been shaped more like a mitre, but designer Lucy Osborne has made the creative choice of dressing him with a tricorne hat usually worn by officers. This choice has facilitated the action in the opening scene of the play, where Kite removes his hat and it is passed around the recruits to try on. The tricorne is also an easier hat to remove for the many reverences Kite is required to observe during the production.



The rehearsal process

Notes from inside the rehearsal room, written by Hannah Price, Resident Assistant Director (RAD)

Week one

2012. New Year, new Artistic Director, new production, new musical director, new cast, new stage management, and a brand new Resident Assistant Director.

And so start the rehearsals for THE RECRUITING OFFICER by George Farquhar. Monday 2nd of January, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, our cast and crew gather. Josie welcomes everyone and gets a cheer as she announces that she officially became Artistic Director of the Donmar Warehouse at one minute past midnight, new years day.

A meet and greet gives the cast a chance to look over Lucy Osborne's wonderful model box and costume drawings, after which we head straight into a read through. The script is quick and smart and the cast are funny, warm and already feel like a fully-fledged company. The rest of day one is used to discuss the background to the play, with Josie revealing an in depth knowledge of the Battle of Blenheim!

The week is split between work round the table and work with the band. We have a superb group of 5 actor musicians playing both the countrymen of the town of Shrewsbury and providing the wonderful eighteenth century folk music written by the Donmar's new Composer in Residence, Michael Bruce. Josie and Michael's concept is to use this folk aesthetic to highlight the rural elements of the play. The countryside is then richly and creatively drawn, and given energy, life and exuberance by the music as we move through the production. Wednesday was a day spent mainly with the musicians, and already the boys are a real band; timely, tight and musically adept, it feels like they have known each other for years, exactly as the play demands. Exploring the instrumentation on its feet transforms a dull and cold Wednesday afternoon into a playground of focused activity; who can swap instruments with whom? Can we travel the double bass up stairs?

Can our flautist drum with a wooden flute? Who can throw what to whom and at what point? At the end of the afternoon a real shape is emerging, and one that is completely and utterly engaging, hugely fun, and wonderful to watch.

Script work with the cast breathes life into Farquhar's richly drawn characters and robust plot lines: letters mislead, German doctors tell fortunes and 'rakehelly' officers become 'very husbands'. The contrast between the officers, Plume (Tobias Menzies), Kite (Mackenzie Crook) and Brazen (Mark Gatiss), is wonderfully present, with no shortage of comedic presence from all three. Our ladies, Sylvia (Nancy Carroll) and Melinda (Rachael Stirling) both provide the love interests in the play, but also give us something far more surprising and out of our usual sense of the eighteenth century; women with a sense of self, individualism, ideas and intelligence.



But what of recruiting? As the officers start to strip the countryside of its men, and therefore its music, we see what underlines the play: beyond the realms of this small country town and its innocent young men is Europe, and Europe is at war. A war that The Recruiting Officer must keep furnished with soldiers.

Week Two

Week two, and the production finds its feet.

Monday kick-starts the week with a movement session run by Jack Murphy. The cast learn to set, honour and bow to the 'presence' in the room: in our case, our Director. As the cast bow and curtsey to each other in various degrees of theatricality and seriousness, a change starts to happen: as Jack puts it, they play the action and not the style. Handshakes are analysed, arm patting (checking for weapons) added, and the status of the action explored. The cast roam the room and bow or curtsey to whomever they meet: how does Plume bow to Melinda? With more than a little sarcasm. How does Sylvia greet Kite? With an imitation rakish bow. The style of the movement, style that we think of as antiquated and out of our experience, is replaced by movement lead by intention. The affected bows of the period become natural: just another form of self-expression, as easy to read as a limp handshake, or an air-kiss.

Then starts the blocking: this week we have run the entire play, minus one or two pages, on its feet. Watching the cast walk through the play is exciting, full of promise, full of play. Josie's rehearsal room is safe, open, fun. The cast play with their action, pick each other up, hurl a basket across the room to waiting arms. The production is already fizzy and alive. In amongst the entrances and exits are the bows and greetings given to us by Jack.

Discoveries are made every day: Plume and Brazen's almost-duel is enlivened by the physical proximity of Tobias Menzies and Mark Gatiss. The wide legged ease of one plays beautifully against the foppish anxiety of the other. Melinda (Rachael Stirling) sinks up to her neck in her rehearsal skirt, finding humour and vulnerability in one go. Bullock (Peter Manchester) and Rose (Aimeé-Ffion Edwards) find a wonderful brother-sister relationship, with Rose constantly two steps ahead of her well-meaning brother.

At the end of the week we revisit our band: in the week since we last saw them they have added several new pieces including a madrigal, so beautiful in its rendition of the dawn.

The play has a shape, a tone and a texture. It's been a wonderful week.

Week Three

Week three has been all about relationships. Groundwork laid in weeks one and two has blossomed into fully-fledged and satisfying connections, bonds, affiliations or aversions. Plume and Worthy have a deep and abiding 'bro-mance', centred around Plume's experience with women and his love of giving advice. Sylvia and Melinda's girlhood connection is marred by the onset of airs: airs that push one into breeches and the other to attempt a Machiavellian letter-writing manoeuvre. Kite and Plume have a quick witted, intuitive rapport in which a wink, a nod or a look can convey any number of well rehearsed patters, tricks or routines; all designed to bring '[Plume] men and [Kite] money, which is all [they] want at present.'

We have also seen a development in the relationships between our country folk. Thomas Appletree (Matthew Romain) and Costar Pearmain (Tom Giles) make an innocent pair, lured by the glamour of the officers and the gifts of ale and song. The wonderful contrast between the knowledge of the officers and the naivety of the boys is key: our world-weary officers are stealing away the same innocence that they themselves have lost.

The actor-musicians are now in the main rehearsals full time. In an extraordinary show of speed, Michael Bruce has rehearsed the band so fluidly that they are now playing without sheet music, and have added two brand new pieces to the repertoire.

The rehearsal room is full, musical and lively. More than once the room has burst into delighted laughter, brought on by a fainting Melinda, a gasping Rose, a rambling Brazen or a sardonic Worthy. But what is the most fun, the most affective and the most humorous is what happens between characters: the buff bravado between Worthy and Brazen, the malingering ambition that stalks Lucy's dealings with her mistress, the confused fondness that Plume feels for Sylvia, even disguised as a boy. The cementing of relationships between characters is the cementing of the backbone of the play. A hugely satisfying week.

Week Four

At the end of week four is a palpable sense of excitement. We have a week left of rehearsal time before we get into the space. The actors have been fitted for their costumes. The props in rehearsals are now actuals. Our mark up is starting to hold the promise of the set as opening night draws steadily closer.

This week we have been running our scenes at speed; making that difficult transition from rehearsed and familiar to taking the text into the body and making it focused and timely; verging on second nature. This has been successful in several ways: blocking is being polished, diagonals, vom lines and upstage sight lines refined. More than this: the meaning, the emotional content and the sensation of the script is being internalized, readings tied down, significance and sense developed and finalized. Amongst Farquhar's humour we are finding poignancy: Plume and Sylvia's attraction is tangible, his need for her overt, her actions contextualized by her brother's death. Kite's boredom at the repeated pattern of recruitment trickery is tempered by an enjoyment of his own intelligence, his sense of himself as clever, wily and dark witted. Balance's rail against captains and their 'aversion to timber' is given life by an extraordinary flow of grief. Sylvia's appeal to her father is matched in tone and effectiveness by Plume's sacrifice in the face of Sylvia's love. The recruiting of the boys is clouded with the demise of all they once were in the countryside.



Equally this week has created space for silliness. As the playing settles and blocking distills the production has space to breathe. This air has allowed the actors a stronger sense of ownership, and in turn given them confidence to experiment and discover additional moments of fun. These moments are hilarious, delightful and light in many ways, but they also hold a sense of humanity in them. It's completely extraordinary to see a script from 306 years ago fill a room with laughter and cross the centuries so beautifully. Josie's openness and attention to detail has allowed the actors to access the script in a wonderful way; it is very easy to forget when THE RECRUITING OFFICER was written, as the playing of the text has no archaic styling, no antiquated technique. The words are enlivened by finding reality and joy in each meaning as the actors take the piece and really make it their own.

This week has also seen the nuts and bolts of the piece tighten: who is where when with what? How does the double bass end up stage left? Does that piece of music cover and embellish that entrance? We now have completed tracks for the band who move the most about the stage, entering as different characters, swapping instruments and costumes along the way. Michael Bruce has been on hand all week to tailor musical interludes to the right tone and duration. Designer Lucy Osborne, lighting designer James Farncombe and sound designer Emma Laxton have been in and out throughout the week, getting a sense of these refinements and how they effect various elements of staging, lighting and sound.

As we move into the final week the play is gelling, forming, becoming real and alive in its own right. Next week will see the play start to run; its shape solidified and made concrete. We have a play, ladies and gentlemen. Now the final push begins.

A Monday morning movement session with Jack Murphy, week three of rehearsal.

It's a Monday morning in the Jerwood's Rehearsal Space 3 and movement specialist Jack Murphy is running the first session of the new week. Josie introduces his session and assembles the members of the cast he needs: anyone who is a soldier, or who is going to be a soldier. The relevant cast members assemble on the rehearsal room floor: Mackenzie Crook (Sergeant Kite), the recruiting officers – Mark Gatiss (Captain Brazen) and Tobias Menzies (Captain Plume) – and the five band members who play the young recruits. Also assembled is Nancy Carroll (Silvia), mindful of how the session will support her finding the physical language to play Jack Wilful.

The military drill

"You might be interested to know that I've drilled the Irish Guards", begins Jack, as he commences his session on military movement. He introduces his movement recruits to the first three commands. As they mill around the space, chatting to each other, he asks them to "fall in". At this stage, they can still talk to each other, although this must instantly cease as he calls the second command, "stand at ease", which is to prepare them for the forthcoming drill by standing tall, yet relaxed, with their hands behind their backs, bringing the left foot away from



the right. This is followed by the third command, “attention” (or “at-ttt-eee-nnn-shun” as it is delivered phonetically) and they bring the left foot to the right and stand bolt upright, alert and ready for action. “The military drill is all about getting soldiers to *listen* to orders – they need to be able to listen and respond quickly in war situations”.

Jack repeats the drill, calling the group to fall in and stand to attention. He follows it with the command to move: “By the left, quick march”, which they do three times before being asked to “halt”. The halt requires a close with the right foot, which some of the cast choose to mark with a stamp. “The stamp on the close feels very modern”, observes Jack, “by all means use it in the play though, if you want to make your halt comedic. What I’m doing is giving you the canvas to play on”.

Jack gets the group to repeat the series of commands, embellishing the detail as he does so. The group mill around the space chatting, until the commands begin:

“Squad fall in.
Squad stand at ease.
Squad attention”

It’s only five minutes into the session, and already the cast have a movement language to respond to.

Jack defines the halt in more detail. “The close is the beat before bringing the right foot in to halt. The action “halt” has to be given early, on this beat, so that you have time to halt with the right foot. And don’t forget that the halt is a full stop, not an exclamation mark.” He also tells the cast to keep the walk easy, and not to swing the arms, which is an American invention, used for parade guards.

The next time the squad go through the commands and begin marching, Jack adds another command, "squad, about turn", which is a rhythmical wheel to the left to two counts, using the heel of the left foot, followed by the ball of the right as they turn. He reiterates that the squad should *receive* the command and *then* do the action. Jack then plays with the "about turn" command, calling it four times in a row as the cast make four quarter turns. "We have worked on quarter turns, but you can work half turns into the play for your own purposes if you want to."

As the cast become proficient in the drill, Tobias asks if he can lead them in the commands, as they are Captain Plume's men. Jack relinquishes control, and 'Plume' takes over:

"Squad fall in.
Squad at ease.
Squad attention.
By the left, quick march.
About turn.
Quick march.
About turn.
Quick march."



There is invariably one recruit who turns to the right when commanded to turn to the left, and the entire assembled company collapse with laughter.

Jack observes Plume's drill, and reminds the squad that they must keep the rank and file, i.e. keep in line. He then develops the drill to practice this, asking the squad to stand in two files, i.e. lines. The general rule is to line up from the left, which entails taking your cue from the soldier to the left of you. He advises the soldiers in the rear line to take their eye gaze over the back of the head of the person in front. His final drill with the newly formed squad concludes with a new, playful command, "By the left, double time". As the squad turn to the left and scramble to double the pace of their marching, they come to a bumbling halt: one of their number has misheard the command "double time" as "right turn". The laughter once again takes over.

Salutations

Jack progresses to working on salutations with his soldiers. "A salutation is a greeting, therefore you would raise your hat; this is the form at the time of the play – the headdress would definitely be removed. The hat is raised with the right hand, as in the handshake." Mark Gatiss notes that his hat might be pinned to his wig as Brazen; Jack's solution is for him to symbolize the salutation by touching his hat. For those characters greeting someone when not wearing a hat, Jack advises that the blade of the hand should be brought to the head – but straight lines should be avoided, as they look too modern. "For some salutations you may want to lift your hat and move it to your heart". The symbolism here meant that you had nothing under your hat, and, by moving it to your heart, you would be showing that you honoured the person whom you were greeting. "Remember, when you learn the pure form of each movement you can then take it into your character." Jack can't stress enough the fact that he doesn't want the audience to respond to the movement in the play by thinking, "this is how it was done in the eighteenth century", rather "this is what this character is doing." You can see the cast's minds at work, instantaneously cross-referencing this morning's work in relation to their own characters. "When Brazen meets Plume for the first time, would there be a formal, soldier to soldier greeting first?" enquires Mark. Yes, there would, responds Jack. The form would be to stand at ease, then attention, therefore creating a space for the action of lifting the hat. Tobias recalls one of Kite's lines, "He says 'off with your hats' which is a military salute – this is what he's asking his men to do, isn't it."

Men who were good friends might kiss and embrace in public as a form of salutation. However, from the way this salutation is used in many plays – particularly THE RECRUITING OFFICER, we may suspect that a joke was intended. For example, in Act II, Sergeant Kite's attempts to kiss Silvia cause her great embarrassment – 'What, men kiss one another?' Jack advises how two officers should approach greeting each other with a kiss, "don't think kiss, think poundage," i.e. grabbing the biceps. As Josie points out, the company need to find the masculine language of kissing, "in this period, to be foppish was not to be effeminate or gay: it's peacock display."



Reverences

This is the third movement session that Jack has run with the cast. Last week he worked on physicalising the eighteenth century reverence, and he moves the session onto a refresher of this previously covered ground. The rest of the cast joins the group for this part of the session.

Jack reminds the actors that they will need to practice the pure form of the reverence before they can take it into their characters. He invites them to come into the space and spread out, standing at ease in the body, feeling that the line of the body is broken. He then takes them through the following exercises:

Lower your head; have a person in mind, i.e. your son, mother, sister, and imagine they are out there in the space in front of you.

Now lower your eyes as a mark of honour to them – this is a tiny movement – and then lift the eyes back up.

Lower your eyes again, and this time take your head in front of them, thinking of the person whom you are honouring all the time. (It is why these bows are called reverences).

Jack reminds the actors of the timing of the reverence, taking it down for two counts, and coming up for two counts, keeping the length of the spine straight and stopping at the level of the heart of the person you are honouring; it is important for the actors to remember that the reverence lies outside of them.

The reverence for women is taken in first position. As they see the person they are honouring, the knees move downwards towards the feet with the reverence, again, with the spine in a straight line. Once they have practiced the reverence in it's purest form, the actors start experimenting with different styles. For example, by letting the head fall to one side, the move becomes affected.

The actors are then taken through the following exercises to practice their reverences:

Form a circle. Reverence to someone across the space. Note: don't move the spine, or make this a movement about the arms – it is about the person you are greeting. For the gentlemen, the left foot should move back as you bow; don't bend too low, but stay looking up, say at the level of the clock on the wall. See it, then reverence it – so it's all about the person who you are giving reverence to.

The key to the reverence is: if you, the actor see it, the audience sees it; if you make it about yourself – it will not work. Note: the action of the reverence should be in slow time, and then the actor should move quickly out of it. The rhythm for the male actor is: move back in space, then forward in space, then back in space to move out of the reverence.

Find the tempo/rhythm of the reverence. Slow 1 2 3 4 and quick to come out of it.

Jack was keen to communicate the form of the reverence to the actors: "remember, we are cutting Prada, not Primark – that is the quality of the form."

The actors are then taken through the reverences they will need to give to the audience at the end of the performance. "Take the centre of the stage – it's like being on centre court at Wimbledon – and honour the audience by first stepping to the left, and then the right; you can honour the gallery with your eyes. Take in the whole 'court' as you turn, musically, taking four counts to move from the left to the right, and four counts to turn." The actors are made aware that the turn should always be to the left, because their heart is on the left, and they need to mean the reverence.

An interview with Mark Gatiss (Brazen) and Rachael Stirling (Melinda)

The genre of THE RECRUITING OFFICER is Restoration Comedy: from your exploration of the play in rehearsal so far, what are the key elements of the genre that have come to light, and need to be considered in preparing the play for production?

Mark: I think it's hugely about connection with the audience; the plays are incredibly celebratory and connected. Right from the start, it's like "we are all in this together". And I think one of the most exciting things about preparing this play for production is making this connection – it's not just about making the odd aside which is only one moment of connection – what we are trying to do is develop this, by having more little looks to the audience, and even turning some of the dialogue into additional asides because it feels like a natural way of having a quick word with the audience.

Rachael: And it's important to remember the historical context of the plays – that they come out of post-puritanism; the Restoration comedies are all about the rediscovery of play and fun and joy – the art of 'silly'. That is what is really important about them; if you were an actor who took themselves too seriously, I don't think you'd do a piece of Restoration comedy.

Mark: Restoration Comedies have the reputation for being a bit stuffy, which is amazing really because they are so knockabout. The plots can get very meandering and Josie has tried to cut the script down a bit to try and make more sense of it. You can get to 'lose the plot'! It's much more about stock scenes and, to a large extent, stock characters – they have such emblematic names. It's just such fantastic fun.

There are elements of Brazen that appear to spring from the stock character type of the fop, yet on the other hand he is a Captain who has seen active service. How have you gone about capturing that mix when interpreting the role of Brazen in performance?

Mark: Well, it's interesting, because this is one of the few Restoration comedies that isn't a city play; it's set in the country, and the visitors are bringing all this sophistication with them. It's an interesting experience for me, playing Brazen, because he is such a foppish character, but as you say, operating within this supposed military discipline. He's an idiot, he's definitely a peacock, and I'm certainly playing the idea that he's probably never really fought anywhere because he was too busy having breakfast – the generals would have huge open breakfasts as part of the display, before they even thought about shooting and battle. So, I think it's all talk with Brazen.

Outwardly the play has a strong physical language of performance, with the reverences, and language of the fan etc. Are there any strategies you've used to develop the 'inner' elements of your characters?

Rachael: In amongst all the physical interaction, from what is in the text, you can find what Melinda's basic 'want' is, but there isn't an inner '*Hamlet*-esque' element. We haven't found it necessary to create much backstory, for example, where a character has just come from when they make an entrance. In relation to the language of the fan – I've decided that Melinda makes it up!

Mark: I have absolutely no inner life whatsoever. I'm Brazen, that's what I am!



What understanding of eighteenth century culture have you found necessary to get inside the attitudes of the characters and the play?

Mark: We've talked a lot about the Battle of Blenheim, which came at an interesting time during the short reign of Queen Anne, not long after the Glorious Revolution. So the country had gone through a state of flux, and there had been a lot of wars; European wars seemed to be on and off all the time.

Rachael: The whole fabric of Europe looked different – it is totally unrecognisable as an entity compared to what it is today.

Mark: We were talking the other day about Plume giving up his commission at the end of the play. At this time, during an ongoing war, I'm sure that would have been virtually impossible. But then the army was still quite a ramshackle thing, this amazing thing for example that they all wore red coats; there is no sense of this being a strategic choice – it's almost a war of display. It's been very interesting to look at the historical period, and see where all these elements from the play slot in.

Rachael: I suppose we've had to unlearn certain assumptions we have in the twenty-first century about how men and women behaved towards one another; the language of sex and our understanding of it. In the early eighteenth century, they were rather more open about sex, than even we are. In the pre-Victorian age, boys kiss boys, and boys lie down with boys; girls kiss girls – it's part of a physical language, because I suppose people didn't have as wide a vocabulary as we have, so physical interaction was a greater form of communication than it is today.

Mark: Ultimately it's a play about people and their lives in Shrewsbury, and the historical research we've discussed can only ever be background to the play. Quite early on in the rehearsal process, we learnt that what the soldiers represented to these people was glamour. And soldiers still turns heads in that way. In the Shrewsbury of eighteenth century England, this was a world where people probably didn't go London; their entire world view was so narrow, then along come these people with amazing stories about France and Germany, and they are completely gullible, and the soldiers use these stories not just to recruit the men, but to seduce the women. It's very hard to get your head around the idea of how intoxicating that must have been.

Rachael: Sylvia has that wonderful line, after Melinda says to her that if she had been a man, she would have been "the greatest rake in Christendom", and Sylvia replies, "I should endeavour to know the world, which a man can never do thoroughly without half a hundred friendships, and as many lovers." It's difficult to comprehend how narrow their spectrum of experience was; it was so shallow. Someone like Melinda had absolutely nothing to do during her day, except practice her fan action and find bits of lace to sew while she waited for something to happen! There was nothing pro-active for them to do. Just think how narrow their experience would have been, what was there for them to do with their day?





In Melinda's opening speech, you welcome Silvia back to town, saying you envied her retreat in the country, is that because she has been actually doing something, and has been away?

Rachael: No, Melinda's much happier in the town. She's just playing with Silvia!

It's the most wonderful, bold opening scene. What background to Melinda do you sweep into the room with?

Rachael: A very simple one, really. She's without both a mother and father, so she's self-governing to a degree, and she's come into her inheritance of £20,000 during the year – and she's nearly been seduced into becoming Worthy's lover, until her money came to her. I think she's very lonely, and quite bored, and not the most brilliantly well read creature, or curious for that matter. And she's not very good at communicating; she doesn't have Silvia's self-confidence. She doesn't have that domestic cushion that her cousin has – that wonderful relationship that Silvia has with her Dad, which is so beautifully written, is enviable to Melinda, who is on her own. Life props up a million defences, be it her fan, or her affectation, or her dress. She's a lonely woman, but she's a naughty one too, I don't feel sorry for her!

What have you learnt about her relationship with Worthy through the scenes you have rehearsed together?

Rachael: It's childish! They are both as childish as each other and incapable of being honest with each other. I do think she is in love with him, in so much as she sees him as a reflection of herself. They are both deeply childish and deeply spoilt, and the sillier we are with them, the better their scenes seem to work. When we play the scenes stripped down to our ten year old selves, they seem to make sense.

To what extent are the elements of Restoration staging impacting on the rehearsal process, in relation to playing the piece in the Donmar space?

Mark: It's exactly the right space to be staging it in. I did a workshop a few months ago with Selina Cadell on the play *Love For Love*, and her theory is that you have to perform these plays in the type of space they were written for, spaces without the fourth wall. And when the audience get over the initial fear that you are going to drag them up on stage, you should be able to look at them, gesture to them, shrug at them – and bind them into the piece. So, it seems to me that the Donmar is the perfect space to be performing THE RECRUITING OFFICER in. It's intimate, and we need intimacy for the play to work. It already feels like that in rehearsals: we've set the chairs up either side of the acting area in the rehearsal room, and when you're watching the scenes you're not in – you keep catching a little glimpse from people, or a little wink.

Rachael: I haven't been playing my asides to anyone I know – it's too dangerous at the moment!

To what extent has Farquhar's language helped you to find the scenes, and to have fun with them?

Mark: All I would say is that it's very clear and direct. There is the odd historical reference which is lost to us, but overall it's very pithy and conversational, which is why it is so funny. There is a very modern flow to it. The scene where Kite is enlisting the two country boys is like a sketch, really, because they don't realise that they've been given the queen's gold and that they are now joined up. Kite's strategy works, which makes it a funny scene; there is nothing overly intense about it.



Rachael: There are these brilliant sentences that you come across, which mean something totally different to a modern audience; the language can sometimes feel like it has a totally modern twang to it. It has one meaning for the period, and a new meaning today – and rings twenty-first century. I think you need to go with all that, and let the modernity creep in where it does. And going back to the style of the play, if you forget a line in performance, there is no point in pretending it hasn't happened, just turn to the audience and admit it; there is no art of illusion.

There's a moment isn't there, where Kite invites the men to come and join his crew.

Mark: Yes, that's one of those moments. Then there is a moment when Worthy refers to me as a 'tangerine', and tangerine actually means a type of pirate ship, but because I have a ginger periwig by coincidence, it works. It's just a funny word.

Rachael: These moments in the language are an absolute joy when you come across them.

Mark: "Extravagant coxcomb" is another example. No one says coxcomb any more, but you know completely the intention of that line is "what an idiot"; it comes across because you play it with that intention, regardless of what the word coxcomb means.

What have you discovered about the two recruiting officers, Plume and Brazen, during your scenes together?

Mark: Plume is the real thing – he's the real Captain, and although he plays a game, he's the one with the serious intent. I don't really know how to recruit!

The way I'm playing Brazen at the moment, is that his tall stories are being found out. It comes across in the duel with the pistols with Worthy: I don't really want to fight the duel and keep making up excuses to get out of it.

So would you say that Plume has come across as having a different energy during rehearsals, being the one with serious intent?

Rachael: Yes, it's indicated in his emblematic name, Plume, he's as upright as the ornamental plume on his uniform headdress – he's definitely the straightest character.

What background to the genre of the piece, and to the period, would you say would be beneficial for young people to have in order for them to get the most out of the production?

Rachael: I saw my first Restoration comedy only the other day! I'd say just come and experience it and enjoy it.

Mark: I'd say read a bit around the historical period, because it's fascinating. One big thing is to understand that it's very close to the interregnum, when theatre, and Christmas, was banned – it was an extraordinary period. I'm a great fan of Cromwell, don't get me wrong, but there was such a vitality about the Restoration period that came after the interregnum: the first ever actresses were appearing on stage, instead of boys playing women's roles. There was an amazing fecundity of ideas that had been suppressed. And even though, with THE RECRUITING



OFFICER we are past the period of Charles II, we still get the flavour of this, “let’s all have a good time.”

Rachael: Anything that you’ve had to give up for a long period of time, when you go back to it you do so with an insatiable appetite. Give up chocolate and then rediscover it – that’s what I think is going on here – the relish at the joy of it all. Yet Farquhar tempers this with the truth of the situation, with the young male recruits who are being taken off to war.

Mark: It’s been surprisingly moving to see this develop in rehearsals. The music is a fantastic element to the production. It really does shift quite a lot, when you least expect it. Although these boys have been recruited through amusing and duplicitous ways, they are all going to die – because, at the end of the day, it is still a play about war.



section 4

Practical work



Printed below is the opening scene of *THE RECRUITING OFFICER*. Read through the scene and, as a group, briefly discuss what you think the scene is about.

ACT I, Scene i

Drum beats 'The Grenadier March'

Enter Sergeant KITE, followed by the MOB

KITE *(Making a speech)* If any gentlemen, or others, have a mind to serve Her Majesty as a soldier, and pull down the French king; if any prentices have severe masters, any children have undutiful parents; if any servants have too little wages, or any husband too much wife; let them repair to the noble Sergeant Kite, at the sign of the Raven, in this good town of Shrewsbury, and they shall receive present relief and entertainment. – Gentlemen, I don't beat my drums here to ensnare or inveigle any man, for you must know, gentlemen, that I am a man of honour. Besides, I don't beat up for common soldiers; no, I recruit only grenadiers – I' list grenadiers, gentlemen!

Pray, gentlemen observe this cap. This is the cap of honour; it dubs a man a gentleman in a shot. *(To CHARLES)* Sir, will you give me leave to try this cap upon your head?

CHARLES Is there no harm in't? Won't the cap enlist me for a soldier?

KITE No, no, no more than I can. Come, let me see how it becomes you.

CHARLES Are you sure there be no conjuration in it, no gunpowder plot upon me?

KITE No, no, friend; don't fear, man.

CHARLES My mind misgives me plaguily. Let me see it. (*Going to put it on*) It smells woundily of sweat and brimstone.

JOSEPH Pray, Sergeant, what writing is this upon the face of it?

KITE Let me see – why that talks of 'the bed of honour.'

JOSEPH Pray now, what may be that same bed of honour?

KITE Oh, a mighty large bed. As big as a battlefield. Ten thousand soldiers may lie in't together, and never feel one another.

CHARLES My wife and I would do well to lie in't, for we don't care for feeling one another. But do soldiers sleep sound in this same bed of honour?

KITE Sound! Ay friend, some sleep so sound that they never wake.

JOSEPH Wauns! I wish again that my wife lay there.

KITE Say you so? Then I find, brother –

JOSEPH Brother! Hold there, friend, I'm no kindred to you that I know of as yet. Lookee, Sergeant, no coaxing, no wheedling, d'ye see?

KITE I coax! I wheedle! I'm above it. Sir, I have served twenty campaigns. But sir, you talk well, and I must own that you are a man every inch of you; a pretty, young, sprightly fellow. I love a fellow with a spirit, but I scorn to coax; 'tis base, though I must say that never in my life have I seen a better built man. How firm and strong he treads; he steps like a castle! But I scorn to wheedle any man. Come, honest lad, will you take a drink with me?

JOSEPH I'll spend my penny with the best he that wears a head; that is, begging your pardon sir, and in a fair way.

KITE Give me your hand then. And now, gentlemen, I have no more to say but this: here's a purse of gold, and there is a tub of humming ale at my quarters – 'tis the Queen's money, and the Queen's drink; she's a generous Queen, and loves her subjects. I hope, gentlemen, you won't refuse the Queen's health.

ALL MOB No, no, no.

KITE Huzza then, huzza for the Queen, and the honour of Shropshire!

ALL MOB Huzza!

KITE Beat drum!

Exeunt, drum beating 'The Grenadier March'

In small groups, get the scene on its feet and begin exploring how it works in performance. You might want to consider the following questions as you work:

- What impact do you want to make as the scene opens, and how can this be achieved in performance?
- What is KITE'S intention behind his opening speech, and what style of delivery do you think this intention warrants?
- What is the significance of KITE'S cap in the scene, and why does he want to draw the mob's attention to it?
- How do the men in the mob respond to KITE? On a scale of one to ten, how interested are they in KITE? Similarly, how fearful of him are they? How does KITE engage their interest and dispel their fear?
- To what extent do you think KITE enjoys recruiting, and how does this come across?
- At what point does KITE decide to move away from addressing the whole marketplace and focus in on CHARLES. Why does his attention subsequently shift to JOSEPH?
- What obstacles does KITE encounter in recruiting CHARLES and JOSEPH, and how does he play the scene to overcome these obstacles?
- What is KITE's objective in the scene, and does he achieve this objective by its close?



Once you have worked on the scene, you might like to read some of the discoveries that the cast and director made during week 3 of rehearsals, and how these discoveries impacted on creative choices they made for playing the scene:

- The 'mob' is played by the actor/musicians, and they open the scene with a lively, folk inspired number. The rehearsal begins with working out the timings for the band's closing bars of music as KITE unobtrusively makes his entrance. The idea is for the band to cross the stage area, adding confusion to the central stage area as KITE takes his place upstage centre, and is discovered in situ, ready to begin his opening speech.
- Mackenzie Crook discovered that KITE needs the energy of his arrival before going into his drum roll,⁹ clearing a space on the stage and in the audience's mind – also a naturalistic moment that he's pulling a crowd into the market square. It's a military peacock display – then he goes into his sales pitch. So, it needs to be something fancier than a drum roll – a piece of "tarty military brilliance", as Josie references it, "a counterpoint to the sales pitch".
- The speech is a call to different groups, 'is there anyone here who has got this, that, etc.' KITE needs to allow himself time to locate these people. The showy sell – "Shrewsbury I'm here". Tonally, he needs to give himself space to call these different people."
- The cap is KITE's lucky cap; he can look at the hat and inject it with all his heroism – it was with him at the Battle of Blenheim.
- Cap in hand, his instinct is to move away from addressing the whole of the marketplace to something more personal: who is he going to choose from the mob to try the cap on?
- The men's reactions to the object range from interested to fearful. KITE is Indiana Jones – it's a hero's cap, he needs to play it as "I'm prepared to let you try my cap on."
- KITE needs to present his enjoyment of recruiting; a flavour of control, partly a show-piece, and partly to get CHARLES involved; he plays off the men to pick one. He deals with the fear by dispelling it – makes it a game, i.e. hypnotises, binds, befriends, entices the men. That is his intention.
- The rhythm of the banter with the men is about KITE enjoying the playfulness of it. By the time he has got CHARLES telling the gag about his wife, he knows he is eight out of the fifteen steps towards recruiting him.
- Josie works with laser type precision to ensure each actor explores the nuances of the text: KITE's line, "Say you so? Then I find brother-" is cut short by JOSEPH. "What is the end of the line?" she asks Mackenzie, "...you are exactly they type of man we are looking for" is his razor-sharp response. JOSEPH needs to come in quickly to block the rest of the line.
- The level of KITE being scandalised by this is really high. He is a man of honour, and plays the injury. This is the impulse he needs to move away from JOSEPH, i.e. "This is hurtful and offensive, but you are a handsome, good looking man." He shames JOSEPH, which is the energy that draws him away. It is the trickster in him. He physically pulls himself out of the scene, and enjoys going back into it. Josie supports KITE'S decision to pause at this moment: "The text is so dense, you can feel bad as an actor if you take a beat – but go ahead and take it; a contemporary playwright would have put a beat in to note the changes."
- JOSPEH is finally won round, and responds to KITE putting his hands on his shoulders.

The mob discover they need to play the switch at this stage, "Oh, there's no-one here who's a traitor". "Fantastic", KITE says, "then we'll all go down the pub."

The scene closes with the triumphant beating of the recruiting sergeant's drum. "It would be cool if JOSEPH has the hat and the drum on by the end of the scene", says Josie, as a fruitful session comes to a close.¹⁰

9 To aid KITE'S energy of arrival and enable him to go straight into his opening speech, at the production's preview stage, it was decided that percussionist Chris Grahamson would both wear and play the recruiting drum throughout the scene.

10 See Ibid



Primary sources

THE RECRUITING OFFICER, George Farquhar, Donmar rehearsal script.

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