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**Shakespeare's Contemporaries at the New Globe (1997-1998):**

## ***A Mad World, My Masters***

**by**

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***A Mad World, My Masters (1998) – A Play by Thomas Middleton***

**directed by Sue Lefton, designed by Kandis Cook**

Sir Bounteous Progress	Jonathan Cecil
Mistress Harebrain	Tonia Chauvet
Lady Gullman, a Courtesan	Belinda Davison
Ancient Hoboy / Rafe	Michael Fenner
Lieutenant Mawworm	David Fielder
Gunwater	Leader Hawkins
Constable / Watchman	Martin Herdman
Possibility / Jasper / Knight	Paul Hilton
Dick Follywit	Wil Johnson
Master Shortrod Harebrain	John McEnery
Inesse / Knight	Guy Moore
Penitent Brothel	David Rintoul
Mother	Maggie Wells, later Anastasia Hille

**General Conception**

In the first rehearsal, Sue Lefton addressed the question of the title of the play. What is mad about this world? Who are the masters? The answer may be that no one in the world of the play is what they seem: the courtesan is interested only in money, not in sex; the jealous husband (Harebrain) is not interested in sex at all, whereas the intellectual Puritan (Penitent Brothel) is obsessed with it.

Ironically, it is the over-jealous husband who brings about the adultery he so fears. According to Sue Lefton, the play is deeply moral, it presents a society whose status quo is off-centre, where revolution is about to happen.. The play was written two years after Queen Elizabeth's death, and nobody seems to know what to believe in anymore: law, religion, gender and marriage are all held up to ridicule, and things only get worse as the play unfolds. Order is only brought back in time for the final celebration. But this is not a weak play with loop-holes where things suddenly get right for no good reason (unlike *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*).

The whole structure of the play is ironic. It is about knocking the establishment much like in the *Carry On* films. The key to making it funny is therefore to play it straight, but it is necessary to find the truth of it first. For Sue Lefton, the message of the play is that you cannot control the world, however hard you try. Follywit and the Courtesan who have both tried to do so each end up tricked by a smarter trickster.

## **Design**

When she designed the costumes, Kandis Cook was aware of a change in gender roles at the turn of the seventeenth century: men were very feminine and were losing confidence in themselves, while women were becoming far more powerful. Her concept was to apply modern fabrics and colours to period shapes and styles, the former to convey the decadent spirit of the sixties and seventies embodied in her eyes by Follywit and his gang, the latter to suggest the social yoke that still imprisons most of the characters in the play. She chose to concentrate on the quality of the making rather than on the fabrics, and designed the costumes before the rehearsals began, after having discussed them with the director.

The set was minimal: a bright yellow floor-cloth covered the Globe boards, conveying the notions of earthly passion and subversion. This brightness was echoed by the strong lighting in the Tiring House and formed a strongly contrasted backcloth to the motley costumes.

The main prop was once again a bed that served in three different scenes, covered with different fabrics, since each scene took place in a different home (the courtesan's lodgings, Sir Bounteous Progress's country house, Penitent Brothel's lodgings). Another essential prop in Sir Bounteous Progress's country house was the organ - replaced by a harmonium in this production.

It was originally planned that the edges of the stage would be raised with spikes to form a barricade between the actors and the audience. This plan was dropped

halfway through the rehearsal period, both for safety reasons and because of the sight-line problems it would have raised.

## **The Rehearsal Process**

London in 1605 was seething with city life, and Sue Lefton was keen to have actors inhabiting the stage and balcony at all times in order to give the sense of life in tenement blocks. So one of the first rehearsals on stage involved trying out different uses of the space: doors vomiting characters out, actors running around stage and balcony etc.

As rehearsals proceeded, it became clear that stillness would not work for this play at the Globe: the tension of every meeting would have to be created and maintained through movement.

The society painted by Middleton is defined above all by its hierarchical quality. Thus the first task Sue Lefton gave the actors was to create a pecking order, much in the way Malcolm McKay had done for *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*. The improvisation involved playing a game of master and servant, where the servant followed the master and was ready to obey or even anticipate his/her master/mistress's every wish, almost to the point of exasperation.

In the second group rehearsal, the master-servant improvisation was carried one step further: the masters were now Puritans, and the servants developed an urge to be bad on the quiet under the pressure of the masters' zeal and the neighbours watching.

The master-servant theme is strongly suggested by the title, so Sue Lefton was keen to create a strong world of servants, where each servant, however small his part, would have a clearly defined personality. Thus Rafe (Mr Harebrain's man) was extremely well-spoken and displayed a strong sense of propriety, while Penitent Brothel's servant was city-wise and seemed to embody Penitent Brothel's "front". Sir Bounteous's servants, on the other hand, are numerous busybodies who generally seem to take advantage of their master's bounty. Special sessions were devoted to the creation of the world in which servants move : the more loyal country servants, and the cynical city servants.

Very few props were used during the early rehearsal process, so that it became more and more difficult to bring them in the later rehearsals. The actors also knew, based on their experience playing *As You Like It*, that it is useless to fake eating and drinking on the Globe stage, because it is so exposed.. This was an important decision for the play, since there are so many scenes involving eating and drinking. The cast settled for really drinking fake champagne i.e., ginger ale. The fact that many scenes that seemed to cry out for props such as chairs or stools were actually staged without them was a result of the very physical work the actors were submitted to. The director found that every time she could do without props, it benefited both the dynamic of the play and the result on the Globe stage, which requires a great deal of motion.

One of the driving principles for the staging was that actors did not need to swiftly move off stage to make room for the next scene. On the contrary, the tendency was for the incoming characters to push the ones from the previous scene off. The decision was based on previous experience with the Globe space, where simultaneous action is made possible by the sheer size of the stage, by the openness to all sides, and by the neutrality of the locus, which only acquires specificity when the actors take possession of it. Although some actors were uncomfortable about this scheme, it conveyed a forceful forward impetus to the performance.

After the first weeks of rehearsing, and once the actors had begun to master their parts and movements, much work was devoted to a precise staging or even choreography that would make constant use of diagonals and curves, and avoid the "Valley of Death", as the line between the pillars at the front of the stage is commonly named by actors and directors working at the Globe.

Another new convention that was established by this production was that characters do not need to "see" the person coming on stage to greet them: both Penitent Brothel in I-1 and Harebrain in I-2 welcomed the Courtesan without having turned round to descry her arrival, simply by having heard her footsteps.

## **Characters**

Frank Gullman, the Courtesan, was seen as a daughter growing weary of her mother's control over her life. The mother, on the other hand, is worried that it is time for the courtesan to get married before it is too late. There is a sense that both belong to fallen gentry rather than to the gutter. The mother is a bright and clear-headed businesswoman. Penitent Brothel is the only character in the play who knows the whole truth about the Courtesan and her mother. The Courtesan constantly tries to avoid lying. She always uses language to remain honest. She is not interested in stealing - much to Follywit's surprise, when he discovers that she has had access to his grandfather's jewels and never touched them (IV-3). In the final scene, she is as shocked to hear that her husband is a thief than he to learn that his wife is a whore.

Dick Follywit has an exquisite knowledge of that which is likely to most hurt his grandfather. His gang is out to get money for themselves as much as to follow him. In II-4 they even show signs of rebelling against their leader. Follywit lives by his wit and has probably never been to war, whereas Mawworm and Hoboy are former soldiers, stock characters on the Elizabethan/Jacobean stage. Their relationship is the same as that between Iago and Cassio: ancient and lieutenant. They live off Follywit's wit and hopes, but lack any discipline. Each of them cheats the others as well as their collective victims. Follywit is very much an adolescent: his humour is childish and he has no knowledge of woman at all - in fact it is hard to believe how easily he is tricked into marriage by the Courtesan.

Sir Bounteous Progress is described as "no knight since one thousand six hundred", a phrase so ambiguous that one editor claims that he belongs to the old gentry, whereas another takes it to mean that he is an upstart knight. The

production chose to have him played as a "nouveau" nobleman, overeager to display his wealth and taste, and overanxious to mix with the higher nobility.

Inesse and Possibility are country boys up in town for a dirty weekend. They need each other to comfort and goad each other on, though it is not quite clear why they are pursuing the same woman. It is also difficult to guess whether they are after sex or marriage with the Courtesan, since she and her mother are playing up her innocence. Sue Lefton insisted that the two should always stay connected, not only psychologically, since they are dependent on one another, but also physically and visually, since they do not exist as separate entities, and could easily lose their collective identity on the Globe stage. The actors worked out a double act where there were constantly trying to get in front of each other, moving in curves and twists, and echoing each other's faces.

Sue Lefton was fascinated with the notion that Middleton was probably a Puritan, and was convinced that most of the characters, and essentially Penitent Brothel and Mr Harebrain, were Puritans. The hypocrisy of the world the characters live in stems directly from the new rules imposed by the rise of Puritanism.

The irony that underlies the play is apparent in the evolution of the characters: from the moment Mrs Harebrain has learned from the Courtesan, her husband begins to trust her. Mr Harebrain's obsessive jealousy encourages his wife to betray him. The tragedy of Penitent Brothel's repentance is undercut by his persistent desires: the moment he swears never to see Mrs Harebrain again, he has an erection (as testified by the unambiguous first words of the Succuba, "What, at a stand? The fitter for my company!").

For Mr Harebrain, John McEnery and Sue Lefton worked on a physical gait and appearance inspired by the character's name: a wild hare, stopping and starting, changing suddenly from very fast moves to complete stillness.

Penitent Brothel seems to inhabit two worlds simultaneously: the underworld he seems to know so well, and which fits in with his lustful obsession, and the world of the Puritans. However his Puritanism is not a mere social badge, it is a deeply interior, individual mode of being. He is not tricked by any other character, unlike the Courtesan and Follywit, who are tricked by each other. In spite of his objections, he slips into the role of the fake quack doctor without any difficulty. He is completely dissociated from the mercantile interests of the other characters: he is the only one who does not need to play tricks to acquire money yet cannot be tricked out of his. In fact, he is only tricked by his own subconscious, as in the Succuba scene. The actors came to the conclusion that he had been one of the Courtesan's customers, which is why there is such a degree of familiarity between them, and a constant game of innuendo. The language she uses with him is very different from the one she uses even with her mother. In their first scene together she is constantly turning him on sexually while underrating her own work in order to increase his desire.

Mrs Harebrain is an empty vessel only filled by other people's energy. The first impression is that she is a breakable doll, a puppet manipulated in succession by her husband, the Courtesan, Penitent Brothel and her husband again.

Thanks to Sue Lefton's physical work, all the characters were defined by their silhouette and the shape of their spines. The director was also very careful to emphasise the transitions between prose and verse which are usually highly significant in terms of characterisation and changes of emotional register. There were however tensions between the need for movements to be organic and to derive from the necessities of the text, and the feeling that some actors had of movements imposed for the sake of keeping the performance active. Some of them felt there was a risk of distraction for the audience if there was too much movement, while others bemoaned the lack of heart that was induced by an approach that seemed to go from the outside in, as opposed to the more usual rehearsal technique of exploring the psychological motivation of characters before developing their stage behaviour.

## **From Rehearsal to Stage**

One of the principles of the production was to allow scenes to overlap generously. Actors were told that they did not need to be helpful to their colleagues coming on for the next scene (i.e. to avoid pulling focus). On the contrary, the juxtaposition of situations and characters belonging to different story-lines was deemed necessary to establish the "madness" of the world portrayed.

Act I presents all the characters and plot lines, but Sue Lefton followed a now well-established convention of the new Globe: she added a musical prologue that introduced the story. The place is a tavern in London, where exuberant music and dancing leads into a fight and brawl. Follywit's chutzpah is immediately demonstrated as he takes advantage of the fight to pick a customer's pocket. The prologue made a logical transition into Act I Scene 1.

The time-scale suggests late afternoon for the first scenes. Night falls and the plots start unfolding: Follywit dresses up, the Courtesan sends her man out to Penitent Brothel. During the night, Follywit robs his uncle. The next morning brings Inesse and Possibility to visit first Mrs Harebrain, then the Courtesan, both faking sickness. The Courtesan is also visited by Sir Bounteous, but above all, she harbours the meeting between Penitent Brothel and Mrs Harebrain. Meanwhile, Follywit prepares his next trick. The first part of act IV has an early evening atmosphere: Penitent Brothel is visited by the Succuba then rushes to the Harebrains' house, while Follywit tricks Gunwater then succumbs to the Courtesan's charms. Act V takes place on the following Tuesday, as specified in Sir Bounteous's invitation to the Harebrains.[\[8\]](#)

### **I-1 Introduction.**

In rehearsing Act I Scene 1, it became obvious that the characters were carrying their private dealings in a public place. It therefore became necessary to establish this privacy spatially. Sue Lefton was keen to go beyond the simple movement of

seeking the shelter of the pillar, which tends to exclude part of the audience. She suggested creating an inner and an outer space, to create an architecture by walking the corridor. She asked the actors to practise becoming private by being pulled, even sucked into the inner space when in need of secrecy.

Building up the relationship between Follywit and his accomplices involved several rehearsals where the past of the men was imagined, leading up the constitution of the gang. It was important to convey that Follywit has not fallen from grace, but that because of the hypocrisy of society, he has fallen into a form of grace which is the reality and directness of the gang. His life is dangerous but exhilarating, and he himself is a sort of firecracker, a combustible that feeds energy to his group. The actors felt that, at the end of the journey, the gang-members feel let down by Follywit's marriage and return to "good" society.

It took many rehearsals to draw a precise shape for their first scene together, the actors tending to stay together in a cluster that made it hard to see their faces from the sides. In the end, it had to be choreographed quite precisely, because of the sheer amount of information to impart, in a scene which was bound to command less attention from the audience because of the bustle created by the incoming groundlings.

During the improvisations in the early rehearsal period, the actors imagined the first meetings between the various characters, most of them seeming to take place inside or close to a church. This led quite naturally to having the first scene between the Courtesan and Penitent Brothel take place in an imaginary church created by their attitude (beating their brows, kneeling to pray, and whispering). Penitent Brothel stood quite a bit further upstage than the Courtesan, on a diagonal, as if pretending not to be talking to her. To complete the picture, a silent beadle walked past, forcing the plotters to be even more discreet. This detail was added following a rehearsal where Guy Moore had improvised the part of a busy church clerk likely to overhear the two plotters' conversation, an addition which considerably helped the actors in their search for the appropriate level of gesturing to suggest secrecy and intimacy. After several rehearsals it also became clear that the Courtesan should stay behind Penitent Brothel because she is the one who has information to impart.

The scene was gradually choreographed around large curves, using diagonals and avoiding the line between the pillars (known as the Valley of Death, because it is so bad in terms of sight-lines).

Penitent Brothel's first soliloquy presents many of the characters and one of the story-lines. Since the plot is fairly complex, it was decided that it might be useful to have the characters mentioned by the narrator cross the stage as he named them, to the accompaniment of appropriate music. This was only necessary for Harebrain and his wife, since Follywit and the Courtesan actually meet and greet Penitent Brothel within the scene.

The scene between the mother and the Courtesan was worked up as a strong confrontation of clashing energies, the Courtesan taunting her mother with her dedication to pleasure, the mother's fear culminating in a slap on the line "hold thee there girl" which leads on to the long speech in which the decadence of

London is ironically described. The scene turned out to be a mirror-image of the briefing of Mrs. Harebrain by the Courtesan, part of a long development on the real power of women.

The mother's long speech required an important decision: should it be entirely spoken to the audience, as if it was a political statement, or should it involve the daughter? The actors had a preference for bouncing off each other, since this is the crucial scene where the relationship between mother and daughter is presented, thereby providing the historical and social background for the character of the Courtesan. For Sue Lefton, mother and daughter were fallen members of the gentry, not children of the gutter, and therefore the mother is very anxious to keep a hold on her daughter and prevent her from falling any lower by playing dangerous games - which she continues doing throughout the play, in spite of her mother's pleas. But this particular speech is an important general statement on the decadence of London, and should therefore involve the audience. Both approaches were tried in rehearsal, but once the audience was present, it became obvious that the speech was made for them rather than for the daughter.

**I-2 Harebrain and the Watchmen.** In this early scene it seemed essential to convey the plot with the greatest possible clarity. The jealous husband motif was therefore made clear first by having the Harebrain couple cross the stage during Penitent Brothel's initial monologue, then by having Harebrain enter with his briefcase chained to his wrist. The problem of Harebrain's aside was solved by having the watchmen share the money he has just given them. There was a discussion as to whether the last lines of Harebrain's speech ("there is a gem...") were addressed to the watchmen or still part of the aside - initially John McEnery spoke them as part of the dialogue, but the allusion seemed too clear, so they were reintegrated into the aside, which required the watchmen to continue talking and plotting. The watchmen did not exit at the end of the scene, but stayed on stage in front of the side doors, listening and watching, thereby carrying the tension of the scene into the dialogue with the Courtesan. Two of the watchmen were played silently by stage management.

The moment where Harebrain gives the watchmen the money was carefully calculated: in a first version, Harebrain held the coins for the whole duration of his aside, with the watchmen eagerly waiting for him to stop and give them the money. In another, both Harebrain and the watchmen held the coins together. The point Sue Lefton made was that every reference to money in this play is the occasion for a joke, and the same applies to jewels, with a more overtly sexual connotation. In fact, to make the point more obvious, John McEnery added a gesture to underline and explain the pun on the word "gem".

Once the Courtesan goes into Mrs Harebrain's room, Mr Harebrain becomes the watcher, so the watchmen have to "disappear" without pulling focus. There was an attempt in rehearsal to express the "madness" of the world by having the watchmen run off the moment the Courtesan entered the house and Mr Harebrain take the leading watchman's place by the pillar, but this solution was not retained. Instead, the three watchmen walked out slowly, crossing the whole

stage along opposing diagonals, in order to establish the mood of suspicion and spying.

The section of the scene where Mr Harebrain spies on the two women was particularly difficult to stage because of the "non-literal nature of the Globe stage" as Sue Lefton put it. It was indispensable to introduce a strong physical dimension in order to bring out the irony of the dialogue. Early in the rehearsal process, Belinda Davison had tried circling around Tonia Chauvet like a spider around her prey, but that dimension was dropped in later rehearsals. Instead, the scene became a sado-masochistic ballet where the Courtesan used a stick or ruler and a book to admonish her pupil. The scene was also practised with Mrs Harebrain as the moving principal and the Courtesan trying to contain her excessive energy. But that version seemed to give too much control to Mrs Harebrain.

In a later version, Mrs Harebrain entered in a flurry, like a catherine wheel, which gave the Courtesan something to control. In fact, the Courtesan ended up slapping Mrs Harebrain, with the aim to startle her and make her come alive. It seemed clear that an excited and almost hysterical wife who then learns about cheating and manipulating would prove a more explosive and revealing character than one already poised and intelligent at the beginning of the play. The part, according to Sue Lefton, required more spontaneity than deep analysis. The Courtesan, on the other hand, has to deal with the tension of remaining very strict on the surface, yet giving a lesson in immorality. She does not allow herself to become friendly until the very last cues, with the gift of the jewel. As rehearsals progressed, less and less circling became necessary to establish the relationship. On the other hand, it was felt that the actresses should match the 'elaborate action' referred to by Harebrain with appropriate gestures. In early rehearsals, they ended up with an absurdly expressionistic show of religious zeal and passion, which they later used in a pared-down version for the final staging.

It was decided after a few rehearsals that the Courtesan should explicitly make Mrs Harebrain aware of her husband's presence behind the door - otherwise the continuous string of asides would have made less sense. In theory there was no need for the women to know the exact location of Mr Harebrain - only to make the audience aware that they knew he was watching them. The problem was solved by having Mr Harebrain hide on the outside of the pillar by which the Courtesan stood. She motioned backward in his direction and Mrs Harebrain physically acknowledged his presence (by opening a very wide mouth).

It was up to John McEnery to make it clear that he could "see without hearing" from behind an imaginary door, in spite of the proximity: in order to do so, he used his hand to figure a keyhole, and leaned forward as if he was peeping through it, standing straight again and facing the audience when it was his cue to speak. As a result, the audience looks at the scene through his eyes, which justifies the excessive gesturing of the women, but may seem out of proportion with the contents of the lesson. In fact, on one occasion, in rehearsal, John McEnery forgot to hold his hand in front of his eye, and the audience members had the feeling that he must hear some of the conversation. On the other hand, when the two ladies moved to the opposite side of the stage for Mrs Harebrain

to give the Courtesan a jewel for her lover, McEnery had to strain his body in order to show that he could no longer see them clearly.

Several rehearsals were devoted to the "lesson": for Sue Lefton, it was clear that the level of intensity should never fall, that no word could be thrown away, that the scene could at no point become confidential. She made Belinda Davison practice her lines with her, turning her face away as soon as she felt her attention flag, thereby forcing her to maintain variety and intensity in her intonation. Mrs Harebrain, on the other hand, did not need to be complicit in the dissembling at this stage, since she is there as child learning her lesson. It is only in a later scene that we see the change operated by the Courtesan's work.

### **II-1 Lord Owemuch arrives in the country.**

The first lines of this scene involve two knights who are never seen again and have to be aptly portrayed within one minute. To Sue Lefton, the point of these few lines was simply that Sir Bounteous is proud to entertain aristocratic guests. The knights were played by the actors who doubled as Inesse and Possibility. This required a completely different physical characterisation, in addition to the depiction by costume. The "elder brothers" being young, very mobile and constantly imitating each other, it was decided that the knights should use a very low centre of gravity, a stately walk and almost no movement. The first line (Sir Andrew: "You have been too much like your name, Sir Bounteous") was divided between both knights, so as to confer more solemnity to their speech, and to make clear who Sir Bounteous is.

The stage direction indicates that the knights "exeunt at one door" while the footman enters "at the other". On the Globe stage, the choice was made to have Sir Bounteous and his guests enter through the central opening, and the knights withdraw again through that same opening. A pause was introduced, Sir Bounteous advancing all the way to the front of stage, hearing his watch ring and looking at it before the footman arrived (the point being to introduce the ringing of the watch for the much later scene in which it confounds Follywit).

The section involving Sir Bounteous and the footman was staged along a diagonal, the footman effecting false exits that took him farther toward the door at each cue, then brought him back to Sir Bounteous along an elegant curve.

The section with Gunwater was solved by having the two actors tread on each other's lines, in order to keep the sense of Gunwater trying to break into Sir Bounteous's instructions to tell him about Lord Owemuch's arrival. Most of the animal jokes being obscure and therefore lost on a modern audience, it was also the only way of keeping this dialogue lively and amusing.

One of the particular difficulties of the section between Sir Bounteous and Follywit is the irony of the dialogue where the grandfather (Sir Bounteous) talks about his grandson (Follywit) to his grandson (Owemuch), offering him as a sexual plaything (a Ganymede, a cup-bearer). The classical allusion is lost on a modern audience, so the witticism became a private joke between the two characters and simply informed the manner in which Wil Johnson played the character of Owemuch: effeminate and incorporating everything that Sir

Bounteous expects of a Lord. Both actors found the scene quite difficult, especially the sudden shift in Sir Bounteous's discourse from general welcoming words to the particular suit about his grandson.

### **II-3 The Courtesan sends for Penitent Brothel.**

This very short scene made apposite use of the balcony, which had the advantage of being lit artificially, an inauthentic practice that conferred more urgency to the dialogue, since the Courtesan had to lean forward to call the servant below.

### **II-4 The Robbery.**

There was much discussion as to where the gold was hidden: in the organ, in a box or in a bag in the closet. For the shouting "within", there was disagreement on whether they should really be inside the Tiring House or involve actors bound and gagged running onto the balcony. Similarly, it was not clear whether it was a good theatrical idea to see Mawworm and the Lieutenant bound before the footman's jokes on their being "unbound already" in II-6. The final version involved seeing Gunwater shout then be bound on the balcony and the keys ostensibly taken from him by the robbers. The money was also hidden on the balcony, and was thrown down to Follywit on the words "better music", which he spoke from near the organ, directly below the balcony, playing a few discordant notes at the same time.

### **II-5 The Courtesan tells Penitent Brothel of her plan.**

This very short scene involved two difficulties: creating a sense of urgency and one of "camaraderie" without sexual connotation between the two characters. The actors had to exit via the central opening in spite of the presence of the bed ready for thrusting out, because Sir Bounteous and the Footman required the side door for the following scene.

### **II-6 The morning after the robbery.**

Sir Bounteous came on blindfolded and it was planned that he would stagger all the way to the very edge of the stage where he would be caught by the footman. In the final version, however, for safety reasons, he stopped a couple of feet away from the edge.

In the first rehearsals, the bed was very close to the central opening, and Sir Bounteous had to walk backward toward it, hiding his face in shame. After the first run, however, it was decided that the bed would be pushed on by "servants" simultaneously with Sir Bounteous's blindfolded entrance. This made it possible to have the angry part of the dialogue with Sir Bounteous at a distance from the bed, standing transfixed by a pillar, then go up to the bed to unbind Lord Owemuch on the cue "This comes from keeping an open house", rather than having a long static dialogue by the bed.

With the bed once again occupying the centre of the stage, it was possible to make use of it for simultaneous action. When Lord Owemuch rose to get dressed, he did not exit or disappear into the discovery space, as the stage direction « curtains drawn » would suggest. This version was tried, but it was

found to be more dramatically efficient to keep Owemuch on stage almost until the end of the scene. The "Lord" stood with his back to his host in front of the Tiring House with the bed. This forced Sir Bounteous to be "discreet" in handing the money over to the Lieutenant, while making explicit the complicity between the Lieutenant and Follywit. Lord Owemuch was dressed in very slow motion, emphasising the fact that the whole process was an "act". On the cue "should it come to his ear, I should hazard my undoing", Follywit and Mawworm exchanged a glance of acknowledgement. The staging was coherent with the sense of watching one another that pervades the play and this production in particular. Once Owemuch had left, the Lieutenant demanded his "double fee", thereby also cheating Follywit, which was coherent with the equally pervasive theme of the cheater cheated.

### **III-1 Mrs Harebrain begins to trick her husband.**

In order to maintain the feeling of madness and speed, the brothers gave a loud knock on the door at the very moment when the Lieutenant left, simultaneous with Harebrain's entry, as if returning home. Rafe was therefore on stage from the very beginning of the scene (his entry is not specified), which was the pretext for a gag, since he was already standing behind Harebrain when the master called the servant.

When Inesse and Possibility come in, they press Harebrain out of his own space with the weight of their money. However, they are never really let into his world, while he soliloquises in their presence. The first aside ("I will observe her carriage...") is interrupted by Possibility, and Harebrain is so startled that he himself interrupts Possibility in return.

The joke in lines 36-40 had initially been cut, but it was reinstated for two reasons: in order to break the long soliloquy, and because John McEnery found a way of making it more explicit through his gestures. The very obscurity of the joke was a cause for discussion in rehearsal: were the brothers supposed to understand it, or merely to laugh politely, thereby displaying their stupidity or Harebrain's obsessiveness? In the final version, they looked at each other in bafflement, as it were forcing Harebrain to change the subject.

The actors were all puzzled by the unexpected series of jokes made by Harebrain in connection with death and the ague, which he takes very seriously. Even more puzzling is the fact that, although a Puritan, he becomes a spokesman for a *carpe diem* philosophy ("Fools then are maids to lock from men that treasure / Which death will pluck and never yield 'em pleasure").

Once Inesse and Possibility are ushered into the other room, they are forgotten in the text, no exit is specified for them. This was used to create a comic effect: they ran up to the balcony and eavesdropped on the Harebrains' conversation, then ran out in order to arrive before them at the Courtesan's house.

The actors assumed that Inesse and Possibility had come to visit the Harebrains at the Courtesan's suggestion, and/or to find out whether the Courtesan has the pox or the plague. They are presumably reassured by Harebrain's many references to her as a virgin. But the staging did not lose sight of the latent fear

of disease that is apparent in much of the dialogue in the play: from the moment the "ague" was mentioned, the brothers seemed to have only one desire: to flee contagion.

### **III-2 The lovemaking scene.**

The bed was brought on by the Courtesan herself, with Penitent Brothel in physician's costume but out of character. In order to establish character, David Rintoul used a pestle and mortar and wore spectacles. He also spoke with a Scottish accent when playing the physician.

The stage left door was used to figure the door of the Courtesan's lodgings: all the visitors arrived and left through that door. The energy of the asides was increased when David Rintoul swept across the stage to speak them. This involved quite a lot of circling around the bed for all the characters. David Rintoul also used the device of removing his spectacles for some asides.

For Inesse and Possibility's arrival, two tricks were tried out: in one, they marched in taking no notice of the doctor, in the other, they were not allowed in, and tried with all their might to pass the door. The second solution was the one retained, because it created more tension once they were finally allowed in. The first lines, with the reference to blood and scabs, were deemed too obscure and were eventually cut. This had the advantage of shortening the holding back time at the "door".

In the course of rehearsals, gestures underlining the sexual innuendoes present in the dialogue were added both in the section with Sir Bounteous and the section with Inesse and Possibility, especially for the lines associated with money. In several improvisations the actors had poured money onto the Courtesan's bed, most aptly Jonathan Cecil, since it is clear from the text that, as in the case of Jove with Danae, his money is a substitute for real sex. However, the classical allusion was dropped in favour of more spectacular throwing around of leather purses, that seemed both easier to handle as a prop and more suggestive to modern audiences.

For the lovemaking it was clear that the sounds accompanying the Courtesan's monologue could not be improvised and needed careful orchestration. Claire van Kampen suggested that the Courtesan's words all echoed a homonymous word or sound uttered by Penitent Brothel or by Mrs Harebrain. As a consequence, Belinda Davison also changed the pitch of her voice in order to alternately match the voices of David Rintoul and Tonia Chauvet. Once the sounds had been orchestrated, it became clear that it was not necessary to see anything: a canopy was placed over the bed, and once the lovers had entered it, all was concealed save some suggestive movement. The Courtesan sat at the front of the bed, while Harebrain stood on the outer side of the stage left pillar, this time making clear by his body language that he could hear but not see.

At the conclusion of the scene, the Harebrains met by the side-door that figured the entrance to the Courtesan's lodgings, then circled the whole stage, passing in front of the bed, as if they were now outside the house. Even before they had left the stage, David Rintoul reappeared for his last lines, then picked up a

trombone and joined the musicians for a boisterous act-closing jig that had the Courtesan dancing on the bed as it was removed from stage.

The interval was placed after III-2, in conformity with the structure of the play, and in order to allow some time for the psychological progression between the lovemaking scene and the apparition of the succuba. Initially, there was some discussion as to whether the interval should come before or after II-3. The constraints of the Globe however soon made it clear that the lovemaking scene should close part 1, since it had such a boisterous dimension. It would also have been very difficult to begin with the soul-searching of Penitent Brothel, for the beginning of the second half at the Globe is always very noisy. Therefore III-3, which brings very little new information in the first twenty-five lines, provided a better means of recapturing the audience's attention.

### **III-3 Follywit dresses up as a woman.**

The scene begins as a recapitulation of the robbery, a moment in which Follywit once again needs to reassess his authority over his accomplices. In rehearsal the gang sat on the floor around the bag, which felt wrong, because the scene is clearly indoors. This was the first time that the actors felt the need for more props in the space, such as stools. In order to compensate for this, they briefly considered whether to create the feel of a tavern, by introducing "whores", stools and bottles. The actors invested the space by one of the pillars to make a more intimate space, which worked well in rehearsal. However, this version was dropped because it was lacking in dynamic, especially once it was decided that the scene would mark the beginning of part 2. Instead, Follywit use the ledge of the pillar to raise himself above his gang and chant his own praises, then launch into a "political" diatribe. The main difficulty of the scene was the change of mood in Follywit's speech from gloating to worry about his grandfather's "quean". This was acted out bodily, with a sudden drop of the actor's upper body on the word "o", then a very slow rising up on the following lines.

### **IV-1 The Succuba scene.**

The scene starts with a long speech where Penitent Brothel goes through the different stages of repentance. The speech was left uncut, as both director and actor were convinced of its importance for the character and the moral message of the play. David Rintoul noted that the Succuba is conjured up out of the character's own mind, as is made clear by the stichomythia: they are one single person. He also pointed out that after the first few cues the Succuba stops speaking in iambic pentameter to move into the devilish 8-beat, into which she draws Penitent Brothel too, thanks to the stichomythic dialogue. The apparition is in fact conjured away through his return to iambic pentameter.

In the original staging, it is likely that the Succuba would have emerged from the stage trap amid a puff of smoke. But in accordance with the idea that she is a creature of Penitent Brothel's imagination - his nightmare, as the word suggests - it was decided that the scene should take place in bed, and the Succuba would emerge from under the covers. In fact, after several attempts to stage the throwing off of the blankets, it was decided that the Succuba would appear with her head between Penitent Brothel's legs. The finale of the scene had both characters dancing on the bed, before the Succuba danced her way off stage.

By the end of the scene Penitent Brothel is not sure whether he has been visited by the Devil or by the real Mrs Harebrain. In fact, it gradually became clear to the actors that the Succuba is a representation of Mrs Harebrain's hysteria: it materialises Penitent Brothel's fears but it also expresses the suppressed desires of "honest" women in a Puritan society. The devil can only take on Mrs Harebrain's shape because of her desire, as is made clear by the lines in IV-4:

Mrs Harebrain: What shall become of me? My own thoughts doom me!  
Penitent Brothel: Be honest; then the devil will ne'er assume thee.

Because of the difficulty of the scene, for several rehearsals and some of the early performances, Tonia Chauvet played the part of the Succuba in French (using a translation written ad hoc by Chantal Miller-Schütz). The idea was to use the seductiveness of the foreign language while at the same time creating distance and strangeness. Penitent Brothel kept his lines in English. Once the atmosphere had been established and the character more clearly defined, the English lines were reinstated, for the benefit of the audience.

During the first half of the scene, Penitent Brothel is clearly still under temptation: he does not immediately reject the Succuba. On the contrary, he embraces her, then suddenly realises what he is doing and pushes her away.

After the Succuba's exit, Penitent Brothel summons Jasper and lectures him energetically, hammering on his chest. Sue Lefton felt that it was necessary for him to exit slowly and solemnly, in contrast with the fast running off of the Succuba. In order to increase this effect, he took the long way off, crossing the whole stage to exit via the opposite door.

#### **IV-2 -3 Stealing Sir Bounteous's jewels.**

Cushions were laid on the floor to figure the boudoir in which Sir Bounteous receives his lady-friend. After he discovers the theft, Sir Bounteous throws himself on them, in a tantrum that Gunwater mistakes for sexual action.

Creating the intimate space involved a ballet of the servants, sending naughty glances to one another and placing the cushions on the part of the stage visible to the greatest part of the audience, since most of the scene is played very close to the floor.

#### **IV-5 Penitent Brothel and Mrs Harebrain repent.**

The part of Servus was conflated with Rafe, played by Michael Fenner. This meant that being Harebrain's man, rather than an anonymous servant of the household, it would be very unlikely for him to leave Penitent Brothel and his mistress alone. In fact, the stage direction "exit Rafe" is not present in the original. Nor does he re-enter when Mrs Harebrain arrives, so that the staging was changed to take these difficulties into account: the servant went out to get his mistress through one door, and she entered simultaneously through the Discovery Space, as if alerted by the loud knocking at the beginning of the scene.

Mr Harebrain later entered through the central opening, walking almost all the way up to the repenting lovers before they noticed his presence, yet seen by the audience from the very beginning. This was a remarkable example of the use of the depth of the stage for dramatic irony.

Towards the end of the rehearsal period, some stage gesturing was added to suggest that in fact this was a sublimated sex-scene. The scene ended to the sound of organ music, as the two men solemnly left together, leaving the sobbing Mrs Harebrain to follow them out.

#### **IV-6 Follywit meets the Courtesan.**

This is one of the longest and most detailed scenes in the play, and it reveals both the weaknesses of Follywit and the new power of women. The trickster is tricked by mother and daughter because he is only an adolescent braggart who understands very little about women, and openly confesses his fear of the Amazonian type that is gradually replacing the docile wives embodied by Mrs Harebrain. His diatribe against the new woman could well be spoken by a twentieth-century man, and it was decided that Wil Johnson would address to the men and women in the audience. To the actor, this was the first scene where the naiveté and earnestness of the character is revealed. Yet, in spite or because of his fears, he is tricked into a "modern" marriage, one where the wife has an equal power and even brings a dowry she has earned rather than inherited.

Belinda Davison and Maggie Wells were interested in the prehistory of such a scene: it is not clear whether the Courtesan and her mother were playing a usual game, with the intention of selling yet another maidenhead, or whether it was a set-up to catch a husband from the outset. It is surprising that they should not know Follywit since they live in the same underworld, but the dialogue suggests that they were not aware of his identity before he offers marriage.

The mother-daughter "act" provides a mirror scene for the lesson given by the Courtesan to Mrs Harebrain in Act I, being also a sham and a display of power and female solidarity. In rehearsal, Maggie Wells used a whip to establish her authority, and in early rehearsals the pitch of violence became quite high, and Belinda Davison had to find a level of acting that made it clear for the audience that she was not broken, that it was an "act", while remaining believable (and seductive) for Follywit. However, after Maggie Wells was replaced by Anastasia Hille (following an accident after the first preview), the scene became less physically violent. In fact, Anastasia Hille confessed that she hates being violent on stage, and always apologised to Belinda Davison after performances.<sup>[9]</sup>

#### **V-1 Guests and actors arrive in Sir Bounteous's house.**

One important decision regarded the type of actors that were to be satirised: early modern actors (about whose technique and idiosyncrasies very little is known) or present-day actors. The choice was to target modern actors for their general behaviour. However, for the play within the play, Wil Johnson chose to use camp, old-fashioned acting, making lavish use of pseudo-baroque gestures.

The main difficulty of this act is the sheer number of characters on stage. For the greetings, it was decided to make use of the movements of the hay, a Renaissance dance which the actors had practised in rehearsal.

For the play within the play, it was finally decided that the "audience" would sit in chairs at the very front of the stage, with their backs to the yard. As a result, Follywit had to stand on a chair for most of his extemporised "play" in order to be visible from the yard. The acting space, or inner stage, was delimited by the pillars. For their asides, the "audience members" (e.g. the Courtesan) were able to stand and turn to the real audience.

The difficulty for Belinda Davison was to determine which face of the Courtesan she should play, now that she was presented with an assembly comprising people who knew both her identities.

The scene culminated in a general outbreak of laughter when Follywit presented her as a virgin, because everyone else on stage apart from Mr Harebrain knows that she is nothing of the kind.

The laughter was orchestrated by Jonathan Cecil (Sir Bounteous), who began it, then made it stop in order for the dialogue to continue.

## **Runs, Previews and Performances**

The first full run took place on 12 July in the rehearsal room. It lasted two hours twenty-two minutes without music, but Sue Lefton felt quite confident that the running time could be brought down to under two hours. She noted that some scenes were too dark and deep, and that it was necessary to find more lightness. She felt that the exploration of all the characters' passions had been useful in that it was now possible to follow everyone's journey through the action of the play.

The links between the scenes needed to become stronger and stranger, with less and less concern for the need to make way for the incoming characters. The servants' world still needed some building up, because it is the reflection of the world of the masters. At this point, only the more substantial characters (Jasper and Rafe) were well drawn, and the other (anonymous) ones needed more filling in.

It became clear that each part needed to begin and end with a musical piece involving dance or group movement. Some more *mise en scène* could be introduced, e.g. with characters appearing as observers on the balcony at eloquent moments in the score. The following two weeks before previews would be devoted to balancing the scenes against each other, with particular focus on the fine-tuning of the acting. The final scenes especially required more precise shaping.

Claire van Kampen, who was still an observer at this point, since the music was not integrated into the first run, was impressed by the way the actors had

managed to create a hard, bad world with a dangerous edge to it, in stark contrast to the amiable romp that *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* had become the year before.

After the run on 21 July, Sue Lefton noted that the actors were still finding movements that needed to be preserved, but that only the ones that tell something really work. Pure gags, disconnected from the text and the story, were sure not to work on the Globe stage. Movements need to be bold and generous. The actors also needed to remember the choreographed movements, for naturalistic movements cannot work once the mannered style has been established.

After the run on 23 July, Sue Lefton asked the actors to keep a distance towards their parts, in a quasi-Brechtian approach, especially Penitent Brothel, who has a sense of humour and an objectivity that make him akin to the Medieval "Vice". She added that they needed to stay in control rather than yield to the hysteria, madness and wildness of the play.

In response to this, Tonia Chauvet noted how each character's first line defines their nature, almost like a Brechtian banderole (e.g. Mrs Harebrain: "fain would I meet the gentleman"; Follywit: "call me your forecast"; Mr Harebrain: "She may make nightwork of it").

The music cues were practised on 28 July. The band comprised three trombones, one tenor saxophone and a trumpet. The music was a humorous jazz score with a number of references, such as tritons (the interval from hell) being played when the Succuba appeared, some Wagnerian chords before Penitent Brothel's repentance scene, harmonies close to Kurt Weill, the composer who collaborated with Brecht on the transposition of *The Beggar's Opera* into the twentieth-century *Threepenny Opera*. A harmonium figured the precious organ in Sir Bounteous's house, but the music for the scene where Lord Owemuch arrives was played on authentic instruments (sackbuts, a cornet and a drum). Later, the servants sang a four-part pseudo-Hollywoodian romance to accompany Lord Owemuch in the goodnight scene. The transition from Act IV into

Act V involved a can-can danced by Belinda Davison, expressing the Courtesan's joy at having caught a husband. Claire van Kampen compared her approach to Kandis Cook's: buried in the music were themes from Playford's *The English Dancing Master*, which had been used in rehearsal, just as doublet and hose, corset and bum formed the sometimes invisible structure beneath the outrageous fabrics of the costumes.

The band mostly played from the central bay of the balcony, and the musicians took part in the action when they were not playing, mostly as active onlookers. In the lovemaking scene it was originally planned that they would stay on as "voyeurs", but they needed the time to come down from the balcony and prepare for the finale, so they withdrew as soon as the canopy came down and covered the bed.

The fact that the band was composed of five brass instruments (i.e., very loud instruments) sometimes made it hard for actors to hear their cues. As a result, some music cues had to be shortened. In the few scenes that were spoken to an accompaniment of music (e.g. the moment where Penitent Brothel and Mrs Harebrain finally meet), the actors had to speak at the top of their voices.

During the technical rehearsals in the week of 30 July, a number of points became clearer thanks to the time spent on stage. Penitent Brothel, who is a character derived from the Vice, at least until he repents, was originally played on the front fringe of the stage in order to make contact with the groundlings. But David Rintoul and Sue Lefton felt that he needed to involve the whole of the audience, since he is the character who has information on all the members and levels of society. Therefore, during his first soliloquy, he ended up moving from the front to the "power position" under the Heavens trap, following a circular route that made it possible for all audience members to see him well at one point of the speech. After the dress rehearsal, it was decided that it would be more efficient to interrupt the soliloquy while the Harebrains crossed the stage, which gave Penitent Brothel an opportunity to come back to the front of the stage and hide behind a pillar to observe them.

Much of the technical rehearsals was devoted to timing music cues and entries - usually to make them earlier, so that the pace became faster and images preceded text, in order to enhance comprehension (e.g. when the Harebrains cross the stage as Penitent Brothel names them in Act I Scene 1). The general shape of the choreography was moved more upstage and onto diagonals, so that sightlines were improved. Some scenes were completely re-staged into the central area rather than on the fringe, others shifted out of the all-protecting line between the pillars.

In the Succuba scene, the staging had to be changed because Tonia Chauvet became visible from the sides when David Rintoul got into bed. She no longer emerged from between his legs but on the side, and rose up over the bed-post like a snake. Finally, for the dress rehearsal, the scene was re-centred to become more his dream than hers, and the original text was reinstated so that the audience could understand what the scene was about. Instead of appearing from the side, the Succuba was concealed under the pillows, where she was least visible. Her apparition was preceded by her hands emerging like snakes from under the sheets.

Another important addition was a silent cue in IV-6, the scene where Follywit is seduced by the Courtesan. In order to make it clear that the whole scene is a set-up, mother and daughter each appeared simultaneously at one of the side doors and made a sign of complicity. Each one was accompanied by a musician (the saxophone for the Courtesan, a trombone for the mother). Then, during the first part of the scene, the mother appeared in the Discovery Space, as if spying on the scene and preparing to enter at the appropriate moment.

Act V became easier to stage in the vast space of the playhouse. During the part of the scene where the guests arrive, the actors were instructed to keep moving "viscously" throughout, so that the tableau should remain alive. However, it also

became clear that none of the tricks that had been thought of to simulate the ringing of the watch in Sir Bounteous's and then Follywit's pocket would work: if something rang from the balcony, the distance was too obvious; if it was really in a pocket, it was not audible. The problem was solved by having a stage manager playing a servant with a broom come close to the actor in whose pocket the watch was supposed to be ringing, sweeping the floor behind them, while activating a bicycle bell.

During the play within the play, the stage audience had to learn to physicalise their participation and enjoyment of what they think is the show, rather than vocalise it, so as not to cover the dialogue. This involved acting with their backs, since they were all sitting facing the *frons scenae*, all the more so after several asides were cut to improve the readability of the scene.

After the first previews, work was devoted to getting the actors to bounce off each other more, and generally to making movements bigger and more generous, especially in the gang-of-four scenes.

The major change, however, was the need for Anastasia Hille to take over the part of the mother, following Maggie Wells's accident in rehearsal.

The director's notes after the first previews were that each actor could take some of their lines out to the audience - she likened it to a flower opening, in spite of the hard, unfamiliar language. She reminded the actors that we don't always gaze at each other in conversation, so that sharing with the audience is not even anti-naturalistic. She warned them against falling into proscenium-stage acting, and encouraged them to be bold and come forward, and go upstage and play to the sides.

Because of laughter and applause, some cues had been lost. Sue Lefton advised that there is no room for being tentative in this space, and that it would be better to wait a few beats and come on when the applause had stopped.

## **Conclusion**

In one of my final discussions with Sue Lefton, we came to the conclusion that this production, though ostensibly modern and iconoclastic, shared many features with baroque and Renaissance shows, because it placed so much emphasis on movement and dance, on stylised gestures and curves. Although the actors were mostly reluctant to keep in perpetual motion, the production showed how much movement the Globe stage can take without generating an impression of too much movement and consequent messiness.

The play was well received, although some critics once again pointed out that the darker sides of Middleton's satire were sacrificed to the more farcical dimension. Most, however, agreed with Robert Butler, who wrote in the *Independent on Sunday*, "Here verbal comedy joins hands with physical comedy in an unpompous way that seems not to have dated".

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## Footnotes

1. Based on the synopsis published in the Globe programme
2. Inigo Jones built a "state" for the King and Queen in the middle of the audience when he transformed the Tudor Hall, Whitehall, for the presentation of *Florimène* in 1635. See R.A.Foakes, *Illustrations of the English Stage*, p.77
3. Lysippus says: "Throw him the blank", I.63
4. See interviews of Nicholas Le Prevost, Geraldine Alexander, Polly Pritchett, Anna-Livia Ryan and Jonathan Slinger.
5. At the end of the Masque, Michael Gould, who played Boreas and wore a very suggestive costume, ran amok into the audience, climbed onto the King's rostrum, then ran out of the auditorium.
6. In the scene where Melantius takes the fort, he is accompanied on the balcony by his brother Diphilus and by the commander of the fort, Calianax.
7. cf Globe Research Bulletin 10, Findings from the 1998 Season: As You Like It
8. scene by scene : I-1 Friday mid-afternoon; I-2 very early evening, ie before dusk; II-1 evening; II-2 night (going to bed); II-3-4-5 middle of the night; II-6 Saturday morning; III-1 mid- morning; III-2 late morning, III-3 afternoon; IV-1 to IV-5 evening; IV-6 Sunday morning; V Tuesday
9. See Interviews of the Red Company actors in the 1998 season.