



Yellow Dress



LOTTERY FUNDED

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**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



**Esmée
Fairbairn**
FOUNDATION

*...Weakened with age
a flower worn chair
Kneeling to a corner
comfort scraped bare.*

*A broody red curtain
scarred with a break
lets through a soft wind
lighting air's lake.*

*A grey haired lady
short and subtle
limps through the room
a smile never wrinkles*

*Holding a dress
She slides on cracked floors
oak brown creaks
died in the wars...*

*"Could not find powerful enough words to say
how great it was..."*

Donna Aldridge – Learning Support Assistant

*"Beautiful writing, well read – I'm encouraged
to find and read more Romany Poetry..."*

Mercury Theatre Colchester

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find and read more Romany Poetry..."*

Mercury Theatre Colchester

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The project

27 Romany and non-Romany participants took part in the project which was a mix of group-training sessions and tutorials on creative writing, devising, performance, sight-reading and poster & programme design. Some of the work created by the participants formed the substance of two rehearsed readings, a theatre work in progress and a BBC radio drama. This accredited learning course was led by tutors from the BBC, Royal Court Theatre, the Gate Theatre and custardfish design.

The first reading took place at the Mercury Studio, Colchester, and the second at the Wolsey Studio, Ipswich. These public performances were a mixture of original Gypsy poetry, drama scenes and a short story. The radio drama was based on one of the original poems about an older Gypsy woman's experience in the Second World War. This story was later developed through workshops held at the Royal Court Theatre, before taken into rehearsals at the Tricycle Theatre in London. Then the 45 minute theatre work in progress was performed at the Hat Factory Arts Centre in Luton to members of the public and invited industry professionals.



...Weakened with age, a flower worn chair. Kneeling to a corner, comfort scraped bare.

Profiles

Romany Theatre Company (RTC) have created original work and performed nationally for the last ten years. RTC have also nurtured new Gypsy talent who have gone on to work in Theatre, Radio, TV and Film for organisations including the BBC, Endermol, the Arvon Foundation, the Royal Court, Bristol Old Vic, Soho Theatre and Universal Studios, as well as collaborating with international artists from Eastern Europe, Brazil, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and the United States of America.



Dan Allum

Dan is the Artistic Director of the Romany Theatre Company and he created and was lead writer on the 36 part BBC radio drama series Atching Tan broadcast between 2008 - 2010. His first Radio 4 play was shortlisted for the BBC Imison and Audio Drama Awards 2011. His latest Radio 4 play was broadcast earlier this year and he also adapted the book, The Diddakoi, for Radio 4 Extra in 2012. Dan is currently under commission to the Royal Court Theatre, BBC TV and Radio 4.



Ellen McDougall

Ellen is Associate Director at the Gate Theatre. Her previous directing credits include How to Think the Unthinkable/The Man with the Disturbingly Smelly Foot (Unicorn Theatre - nominated for an Off West End Award 2012); Telling Tales (Almeida Theatre Projects); Ivan and the Dogs (ATC/Soho Theatre/Rustaveli Theatre Georgia - nominated for an Olivier Award 2011); A Kind of Alaska (JMK Award Runner Up/BAC). Ellen trained as an assistant director to Bijan Sheibani, Katie Mitchell, and Marianne Elliott. Ellen is Associate Artist at Company of Angels.



Achieving our aims

Advancing the education of Romany people in performing arts and theatrical production by provision of opportunities and training.

Advancing the education of the public in issues relating to Romani persons and their culture through the provision of theatrical productions and workshops.

Improving the creative writing and performance skills of 20 Romany and non-Romany participants as part of an accredited learning programme.

Devising rehearsed readings the substance of which will be feed into radio and theatre productions.

Giving two rehearsed public readings.

Creating a radio drama production.

Creating a short theatre production based on the experiences of Romany Travellers in the Second World War.



The writers

Andy Lamb,
Candis Nergaard,
Dean Loveridge,
Damian Le Bas,
Kenny Lamb,
Sarah Jane Miller,
Rachel Drazek,
Alex Austin,
Catherine Jones,
Tessa Dixon
Luke Flateman

Workshop leaders

Paul Ashton
John Donnelly
Ian Pointer
Ellen McDougall

Other participants

David Somes
Patricia Keegan
Ruth Somes

(from Making Tracks)

Jason Brooks
Kristy Foy
Marcel Foy
Josh Garnham
Callum Laflin
Keeley Laflin
Shaun Moye
Leroy O'Neil
Chili Patterson
Ronan Polley
Tao Simon
Bradley Tilley

Sound Engineer
Andy Cross

Photographer
Claire Haigh



A broody red curtain, scarred with a break, lets through a soft wind, lighting air's lake.

Audience reaction to Yellow Dress

"Intriguing, interesting and lovely story line."

"I actually loved it! I want to see it on stage please, or as a short series on BBC TV if possible. That would be great!"

"A beautiful portrait of a faded romance."

"Sad / profound."

"Enjoyed & felt I entered a world I knew nothing about."

"Beautiful Lyrical songs."

"A wonderful, moving account of one gypsy woman's life and the story of a century."

"It came together very powerfully."

"It was a very artistic piece that give a good story."

"It's a touching tale."

"Tender & Poetic, a fully paced tragedy."

"A unique perspective on a Gypsy woman's life."

"It was a really nice story and I liked how all the characters interacted."

"Emotional, clever and well acted. Well Done."

"Deep / Powerful."

"Moving."

"A powerful reading that should translate well to the active stage. V. Good."

"Excellent."

"Charming."

"A love story where one mistake sentenced Jess for Life."

"The Yellow Dress is a fantastically written piece of text which despite being simplistically performed, presents a range of emotions - it was brilliantly performed. Well done! I loved it! I think it would be amazing on stage and fully performed with movement."



Selection of 8 poems

1 When nights begin to fall
And owls begin to call
In a lane,
A Gypsy flame
Is once again reborn.
The light begins to glow
And orange blossoms flow
From twig, to branch, to log
Until the sparks begin to blow...

2 A fair kid: they hoped he'd be dark.
Dark eyes looking backwards;
Black hair to get lost in...

3 'I find you beautiful. You, beautiful'.
A tear rolls from my left eye and onto his chest
I kiss the tear and remove my emotion
I want to look sexy but look more like love
His big green eyes want to hide, but he's captivated
I would die in his eyes, if he'd let me
I do I think when we touch.

4 Alone in the dark, with my lamplight on,
I can't sleep, I can't move, because I'm scared when you're gone,
My brains telling me things I don't want to know,
And I believe it because I've not heard a word
I want to sleep with my lips on you, so I can kiss you forever when its dark,
To dream that you're mine, and sleep in the aura of your heat when you're gone.

5 You're a calm within me, a calm that I'm missing.
it moves me and i cant grab hold of it to stop,
it's a crave that cant be satisfied, its constant,
and I'm constantly reminded of you.
You're in every good song, every good film, everything beautiful.
and the passion in your eyes I could die
and the love I have makes me cry
tears that bleed out restlessly.
Close my eyes and kiss them.

6 All i got is this land I'm walkin' on,
This dirt I'm standin' on
The grass i lay across
The stars i rest dreams upon.

Yea' this land is my home
Holdin' peace across my chest
Stained by the country dress
My only lust, to be alone.

I pass a town every now and then,
Gazing at the heavy herds,
Glad to be without concrete feet,
I am a feather from the wing of birds.

No love to dig my grave
No hate to push me in
I will die in footsteps,
To stretch is my sin.

8 'Do you still love me?'
I know he does but something is wrong
His eyes flicker with sadness a dark tunnel
I listen to his breath
And understand he will not live to be old...

7 Time has been kind
fate has been broken
laying to rest
in a flower worn cushion

A woman alone,
grey and old
finds no comfort
in hope, only cold

Resting in the chair
silent, still,
a piece of string, waiting
for a dream to fulfil

Gripping the past
Scratching distress
Clutching for warmth,
From loves cursed
yellow dress

A grey haired lady, short and subtle, limps through the room, a smile never wrinkles

Yellow Dress

Casts and crew of readings at the Mercury Studio Colchester, and the New Wolsey Studio Ipswich.

Performed by Romany Travellers: Candis Nergaard
David Soanes
Ruth Soanes

Dramatized and directed by: Dan Allum

Production Assistant: CJ Bignell

Cast and crew of BBC radio drama

CHARACTERS:

Older Jess: Patricia Keegan
Young Jess: Candis Nergaard
Child Jess: Ruth Soanes

Dramatised by: Dan Allum
Director: Charlotte Riches
Production Coordinator: Amber Molyneux
Editor: Alisdair McGregor

Cast and crew of Hat Factory Arts Centre performance

CHARACTERS:

Older Jess: Lin Clifton
Young Jess: Candis Nergaard
Child Jess: Lia Saville
Tom/father: Jason Maza
Boy/Newsreader/Soldier: Damian Le Bas
Musician: Sarah Jane Miller

Production assistants: Eva Van Breugel and Jane Bignell

With special thanks to

The Mercury Theatre, The New Wolsey Theatre, The Royal Court Theatre, The Tricycle Theatre, Making Tracks, Zoo Audi, The Hat Factory Arts Centre, BBC Writersroom, custardfish web design and The Meadows Community Centre.



Holding a dress, She slides on cracked floors, oak brown creakes, died in the wars...

Do you want to know more about Romany Theatre Company and their projects?

www.romanytheatrecompany.com

www.atchingtan.com

www.gypsies-wish.romanytheatrecompany.com

www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/writersroom/posts/Atching-Tan-A-Gypsy-Wife

A Gypsy Wife script available on BBC Writersroom homepage & is being tweeted about at:

www.bbc.co.uk/writersroom

