

Under Milk Wood

Behind the Scenes



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This pack was written by **Heidi Bird** and **Emma Bradbury** with contributions from **Brendan O’Hea** and **Anna Kelsey**.

Production Photographs by Philip Tull.

Introduction

This behind the scenes pack has been designed to give you an insight into the making of *Under Milk Wood* at The Watermill. The pack is aimed primarily at teachers or students at Secondary School. Your feedback is most welcome, please email (heidi@watermill.org.uk) or call us on 01635 570927.

Don't forget that we offer workshops on most aspects of drama, and visit many schools in the surrounding area to work with students and teachers. For a workshop menu, please visit the Outreach pages on our website, or get in touch.

I hope you find the pack useful.

Heidi Bird
Outreach Director

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The Sackler Trust, Principle supporter of The Watermill's Core Education Programme.

Meet the Actors



Steffan Cennydd

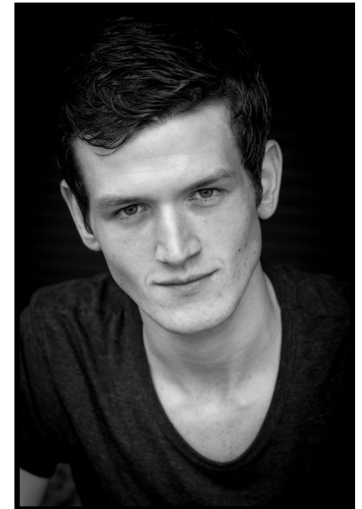
Steffan Cennydd graduated from Guildhall School of Music and Drama with first class honours in July 2017. Whilst training he won Guildhall's Gold Medal for Acting and the Richard Burton Memorial Award. In the summer he shot his first feature, *Last Summer* directed by Jon Jones.

Ross Ford

Ross Ford is a Welsh, Newport-born actor and recent graduate of Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.

Credits whilst training include: *Valerio* in *Madness in Valencia* directed by Adele Thomas and Stanley Stubbers in *One Man, Two Guvnors* directed by Eleanor Rhode. Ross also performed in Daf James' new play *All That I Am* at The Gate Theatre, Notting Hill.

Since graduating, Ross has played Les in *Bouncers* directed by Richard Tunley and Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew* directed by Paul Chesterton.



Lynn Hunter

Theatre includes: *Scarlett* (Hampstead Theatre & Theatr Clwyd); *The Terrible Things I've Done* (Invisible Ink); *Richard III* and *Things Beginning With M* (Omidaze); *Belonging* (Re:Live); *Dandelion* (Welsh Fargo Stage Company); *Say It With Flowers*, *Sherman Swingers*, *Six*, *The Snow Queen*, *Kiss On The Bottom* and *Under Milk Wood* (Sherman Theatre); *Granny Annie*, *Family Planning* and *Roots And Wings* (Grassroots); *Respond* (National Theatre Wales); *48 Hour Plays: Remembrance* (Bath Theatre Royal); *Grapes Of Wrath*, *The Druid's Rest*, *Night Must Fall*, *Brassed Off*, *Mabinogi*, *The Ballad Of Megan Morgan*, *Oh! What A Lovely War*, *Romeo And Juliet* (Theatr Clwyd); *A Letter From Sarajevo* (Colchester Mercury Theatre); *Shadow Of A Boy* (National Theatre).

TV includes: *The Collection* (Amazon); *Cucumber* and *Banana* (E4); *Casualty*, *Baker Boys*, *Casualty*, *The Legend Of Dick And Dom*, *High Hopes*, *The Story Of Tracy Beaker*, *Outside The Rules*, *Tales From Pleasure Beach*, *Care* and *Belonging* (BBC); *Stella* (Sky); *Family Affairs* (Talkback Thames); *Mine All Mine* (ITV).

Film includes: *Miss Peregrine's Home For Peculiar Children* (Tim Burton Productions); *Submarine* (Warp Films); *Arthur's Dyke* (Quirky Productions); *Very Annie Mary* (Dragon Pictures); *House* (House Productions); *Restoration* (Miramax).

Radio includes: *Ten Days That Shook The World* and *Frank And The Bear* (BBC Radio 4); *A Child's Christmas In Wales*, *Station Road*, *Spoils Of Victory*, *The Mark Of Zorro* and *Skeletons* (all for BBC Radio).



Alistair McGowan

Alistair McGowan, is an impressionist actor, writer of plays and sketches, stand-up comic, singer, host, presenter and pianist. He is fondly remembered for the BAFTA-winning, TV show, *The Big Impression*. He was nominated for an Olivier Award for his role of the Dentist in *The Little Shop of Horrors* and worked at the RSC alongside Judi Dench and Simon Callow.

He has twice played Professor Henry Higgins in *Pygmalion* and received huge critical acclaim for his performance in Jonathan Maitland’s highly-controversial play *An Audience with Jimmy Savile*. In his 25-year television career, Alistair McGowan has featured on *Who Do You Think You Are*, hosted *Have I Got News For You*, acted in *Bleak House* and *Mayo* and appeared on *Live at the Apollo*, *Tonight at the Palladium* and numerous other stand-up shows.



Charlotte O’Leary

Charlotte graduated from the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama earlier this year. Winner of the Sarah Hiddons Award for acting.

Theatre credits whilst training include: *Three Sisters*, *The Two Gentleman Of Verona*, *Dying For It*, and *Three Days In The Country* (Richard Burton Theatre Company).

Recent radio includes: *Torchwood* (Big Finish Productions directed by Scot Handcock). This is her first professional job since graduating.

Caroline Sheen



Watermill credits include: *Crazy For You* (2016).

Lead roles in theatre include: *Kiss Me Kate* (Kilworth); *Only the Brave* (WMC); *City of Angels* (Donmar); *Putting it Together* (St James); *Rags* (Lyric); *Les Miserables* (Palace and Queens); *Mary Poppins* - Helen Hayes Award (UK/US Tour); *The Light in the Piazza* (Curve); *Dick Whittington* (Barbican); *Once in a Lifetime* and *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (NT); *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* (Palladium); *The Witches of Eastwick* (Drury Lane); *Mamma Mia* (Prince Edward); *Into the Woods* (Donmar); *Grease* (Cambridge/Victoria Palace).

Film includes: *Les Miserables*.

TV includes: *Henry VIII Mind of a Tyrant*, *Doctors*, *Torchwood*, *Hotel Babylon*, *Cariad@iaith*.

Radio includes: *Friday Night is Music Night*.

A Interview with The Director

How much preparation do you do before starting rehearsals and how much do you discover during the rehearsal process?

One of the best directors I've worked with is Steven Pimlott. He'd always know exactly what the actors should wear, how they should say their lines and the thoughts behind the lines. Then, on the first day of rehearsals, he would leave that all outside the rehearsal room and see what the company of actors came up with. For me, that's the best approach; do your homework and then be open to what happens in the rehearsal room.

This play is different because we only had two weeks to rehearse. With 60 characters and only six actors, I had to do my preparation. I've done the play twice before, so I know it extremely well- and absolutely love it – but I knew I had to work fast.

What's been the biggest challenge?

The time constraint. Although, I was never under any illusions. I knew from the outset the budgets, the time frame and limitations of the space. Once you know, you just work within the parameters.

I'm lucky to have a fantastic cast. They're all very kind people who look out for each other. Personally, I think the collective is more important than any number of individuals and hopefully the audience will see that.

What do you enjoy the most about being a Director?

You don't have much autonomy as an actor. You get told what to say, often where to stand and usually what to wear. As a Director you get to see the bigger picture. I'm nosy and I like to see how the everything works. When I was an actor I was never interested in just reading my own particular part, I wanted to know about the whole play and how my part fitted into the context of the play.

There are lots of marvellous directors but there are some not very good ones (I think), who don't empower actors enough. I think the director's role is to be a conduit between the author and the audience. For me, if a play doesn't look directed and the audience go out

talking about the writing that's when it works best. You can't put a play on without an actor and an audience, and it's hard to put a play on without words, but you can put a play on without directors, scenery and lighting. I believe it's all about the three A's; audience, actor and author.

What would be your advice for any budding young directors?

Immerse yourself in theatre. I've come the acting route but there's lots of ways you can get into directing. Don't cut a narrow path because everything feeds into directing – you need to know the stage manager's role and how the lighting works because everyone contributes to the process. If you take your eye off one component, the whole thing can fall like a deck of cards.

Also read plays, and read things beyond plays and see art. One thing I was told at drama school is "that it's not all about acting, it's about music, dance, psychology, it's about taking in the whole of life and bringing all of that to the theatre".

One of my favourite quotes by Nelson Mandela is "Don't judge me on my triumphs, judge me on failures and how I get up again". I think that's really important - you learn more from failure than you do success. You have to pick yourself up from knock backs and deal with the rejection. Go out there, cultivate curiosity, learn and be openhearted because it'll all feed into your work.

An interview with The Designer

Can you briefly describe your concept for the design of *Under Milk Wood*.

We wanted to keep the design very simple because *Under Milk Wood* is primarily a play for voices. Brendan and I didn't want to distract from the text by having a complex set and too many costume changes. We felt a poetic response to the piece worked better than a literal one, so I started experimenting with ways to create a landscape that wasn't specific to any particular location. The torn cloths could represent many things including, waves, hills, clouds and dreams. We wanted lighting to play a big part in changing the mood and the time of day. By keeping the set quite pale in colour, Wayne's lighting design was able to change the colours of the set to help take us through from night, into day, and back to night again.

What have been the biggest challenges in creating the design?

When you design something that is so simple it is very important to choose each prop, each colour and each costume very carefully. It took us a while to decide what the best props to use would be. For a long time there was going to be a bed in the middle of the stage. We also considered having a mirrored floor! Minimal can be very tricky to get right because everything has to work together harmoniously.

Can you explain the use of costumes to represent different characters in the show?

There are around 60 characters in *Under Milk Wood* and we had 6 cast members so it would have been hard to find that many different costumes. There also wouldn't have been time for the cast to change their costumes between each character - sometimes they have 2 characters within about 10 seconds of each other! Therefore I decided the best approach was to arm the cast with a costume 'tool box'. I wanted the costume to be used in clever ways; a scarf becomes a hankie, and an apron becomes a shawl etc. We wanted the change in character to be subtle and mainly achieved through how the performer changes their voice or posture.

How did you become a designer?

I studied Theatre Design at The Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff. Whilst studying there I learnt about model making, scenic painting, prop and costume making and much more! I had the opportunity to work on theatre productions put on by the college allowing me to learn about what the role of a theatre designer involves and it gave me the practical experience I needed to work as a designer professionally when I graduated.

What's your biggest tip for someone who'd like to go into theatre design?

Get involved! The theatre is an amazing place to work and it is all about team work. The best advice I can give is to get involved in a theatre group in any capacity, either as an actor, musician, stage manager, back stage crew, painter...because what is most important is an understanding how theatre works.



Lynn Hunter on The *Under Milk Wood* Set

The Design Process

Research

The first step in creating the set is for the Designer to research the era of the piece. Often the Designer will create a scrap book of images, materials and textures that may inspire their design. Initial ideas are discussed with the Director to make sure they fit with the Director’s overall vision. Anna Kelsey was influenced by the work of Cristo and Jeanne–Claude.



White Card

The White Card is an unpainted model of the set which is sent to the production team who make sure it fits the space and the budget that is available.

Model Box

The designer then creates a model box. This is made on a 1:25 scale to give the team a clear picture of the set. The production team use the model for the building process, ensuring that the final set replicates exactly the designer’s original model.



Scale Drawings

The designer then draws a ground plan of the model box to the scale of the theatre. This gives the carpenter the exact dimensions to work from.

Building The Set

The carpenter then starts to make the set. At The Watermill the set is built off-site in a large barn and then brought to the theatre and constructed during the weekend before the show opens.



Alastair McGowan on The *Under Milk Wood* Set

The Final Set

The final set is fitted into the theatre. During the fit-up the designer will work with the production team to ensure that all the final details are perfected on the set before the show opens.

Costume Designs

The wardrobe department are in charge of finding or making the costumes and then adjusting them to fit each actor. They also have to make sure that the costumes are perfect for each performance, which means that they must repair rips or tears.

Our wardrobe department will meet the designer a long time before the performance so that they have plenty of time to see the designs and get the costumes ready.

Below are some costume drawings for Under Milk Wood:



The Designer provided a costume 'tool box' to help the performers create different characters very quickly.

Rehearsal Report

UNDER MILK WOOD

Rehearsal Report #2

Date: Tuesday 10th October

General

Work began on staging the play today. We reached pg 25 by the end of the day.

Set

No notes.

Production

Thank you very much for putting the swing in rehearsals. It seems to be working well.

Is it possible to use the fire escape in the auditorium Down Stage Right (DSR) as an entrance during the performance please?

Design

No notes.

Wardrobe

The cast will require shoes in their night time wear as they will be entering from all around the auditorium and may need to cross outside for their next entrance.

Miss Hunter will have the quickest change out of her nightwear into daywear from leaving the stage after Mary Ann Sailor's line '...frock that brushes the dew.' on pg 18 to her re-entrance as the voice of a guide book on pg 19.

Lighting

No notes.

Sound

No notes.

Stage Management/Props

No notes.

Risk Assessment

At present, it is thought that Miss Hunter and Mr McGowan will be using the swing.

Thank you,

Vitoria Horn

Credits

Under Milk Wood

By Dylan Thomas

Director Brendan O’Hea

Set and Costume Designer Anna Kelsey

Lighting Designer Wayne Dowdeswell

Sound Director Gary Dixon

Musical Director Olly Fox

Cast

Steffan Cennydd - Mog Edwards, Mr Pritchard, Revered Eli Jenkins, Dai Bread, Willy Nilly, Mae Rose Cottage, Organ Morgan, Butcher Beynon, Sinbad Sailors

Ross Ford - Myfanwy Price, Mr Ogmores, Mr Pugh, Nogood Boyo, Cherry Owen, Mr Waldo, PC Atila Rees, Jack Black

Lynne Hunter - Captain Cat, Lily Smalls, Mrs Organ Morgan, Mrs Dai Bread Two, Gwennie, Mary Ann, The Sailors, The Voice of the Guidebook

Alastair McGowan - The Voice

Charlotte O’Leary - Mrs Ogmores-Prichard, Gossamer Beynon, Mrs Willy Nilly, Mrs Dai Bread One, Mrs Cherry Owen

Caroline Sheen - Polly Garter, Ocky Milkman, Mrs Beynon, Mrs Pugh, Bessie Bighead, Rosie Probert, Evans the Death, Lord Cut-Glass

For The Watermill

Production Manager Lawrence T Doyle

Company Stage Manager Kerrie Driscoll

Assistant Production Manager Harry Armytage

Theatre Technician Chloe Dougan

Deputy Stage Manager Victoria Anne Horn

Assistant Stage Manager Ruth Hills

Wardrobe Supervisor Debbie McGregor

Wardrobe Assistant Louise Patey

Trainee Stage Managements and Production Assistants Eden HARRY and Laura Parks

Lighting Programmer Liam Tranter

Set Construction DSH Carpentry and Design

Production Photography Philip Tull

National Press and Publicity Jan Ferrer