Contents

Introduction.................................................................3
Synopsis of Our Church.......................................................4
Meet the Cast..................................................................7
Meet the Creatives............................................................9
Thoughts from the Creative Team........................................11
Support for our audiences..................................................12
Credits.........................................................................14

This education pack was written by Lixi Chivas with contributions from Tom Elliott
Production Photographs by Philip Tull
Introduction

This behind the scenes pack has been designed to give you extra information to support your experience of *Our Church* at The Watermill Theatre.

Your feedback is most welcome, please email (outreach@watermill.org.uk) or call us on 01635 570927.

Don’t forget that we offer workshops on most aspects of drama and run regular participation opportunities, both as weekly commitments and one-off events. For a workshop menu, please visit the Outreach pages on our website, or get in touch.

I hope you find the pack useful.

Emma Bradbury
Outreach Assistant
The Watermill Theatre
Bagnor, Newbury, Berks RG20 8AE

[www.watermill.org.uk](http://www.watermill.org.uk)

The Sackler Trust, Principle supporter of The Watermill’s Core Education and Outreach Programme.
Synopsis

In a small, fictional church, somewhere in rural Hertfordshire, three church committee members are trying to start their meeting. They are hampered by the ineffective central heating. Michael and June are trying to coax the radiator into life. Meanwhile Anne is in her winter coat.

We learn that Anne’s husband, Bill, had a knack with the heating system before he passed away a few years ago.

Finally the meeting can formally start. Michael is chairing and Anne is taking minutes. There are apologies from: the church vicar, a short, Scottish woman called Beth; Margaret, who is elderly and not in good health; and the treasurer Robert, who is enjoying retirement on frequent holidays.

The committee discuss matters on the agenda. A concern has been raised by a parishioner about the nearby farmer’s cattle. Margaret is officially stepping down from her role on the committee and the group’s brainstorming about possible replacements draws a blank.

June suggests a member of the congregation called Tom. It transpires that June has already suggested Tom to Michael, Beth and Robert. Tom is a controversial proposal because he has been to prison, convicted of downloading and sharing thousands of images of child sexual abuse, and attempting to contact a minor online.

Michael is initially positive and recalls the parable of the lost sheep, which Jesus shares to illustrate God’s delight when sinners come back to righteousness. As Christians, Michael considers offering forgiveness a duty of the church. However, on reflection, Michael wonders whether attending church as a member of the congregation serves that duty already.

Anne is entirely against Tom’s appointment to the committee. She considers him dangerous and doesn’t believe abusers ever really change.

They are split so agree to leave a vote until the next meeting.

They have a tea break and Michael and June chat. June explains her husband Ben has been working in London at lot. June and Ben used to live in London. June teases Michael, who’s diabetic about his wife disapproving of him eating too many biscuits.

Starting the meeting again, June suggests a village croquet competition as a fundraiser. Anne is dismissive of the idea.

Anne makes snide comments about Tom joining the committee, and about June not having children. This is clearly a raw nerve for June and she leaves to make more tea.

While June’s out of the room, Michael asks Anne to apologise. When June returns, Anne does apologise, but for something totally different.

June interrupts the next item on the agenda to explain why she feels so strongly about giving Tom a chance on the committee. Her nephew
was imprisoned for a drugs crime and it derailed his life so thoroughly he killed himself at 23. June isn’t trying to diminish Tom’s crimes but as a Christian she believes in God’s love, mercy and capacity for forgiveness.

Anne is offended by June’s implication that because she objects to Tom joining the committee, she is not a Christian. Anne has never objected to Tom joining the congregation and is always polite to him but her priority is protecting the children who attend the church because ‘you don’t forget what-’.

It is suddenly apparent that Anne is speaking from personal experience. She leaves the room. Michael asks June to go after her.

Anne has locked herself in the toilet and won’t speak to June. Neither knew anything had happened to Anne in her childhood. June regrets suggesting Tom, given this information.

Anne returns and starts to gather herself to leave. They offer to drive her home but she declines, preferring to walk.

INTERVAL
On a Saturday morning Anne is alone, arranging flowers. Tom comes in, to shelter from the rain. He’s out for a walk with his dog. Tom chit-chats and Anne replies tautly. She uncomfortably accepts his offer of help to position her arrangements around the building. Anne says her son will arrive soon to fetch her and Tom will have to leave so she can lock up.

Tom spots a painting of the church and asks about it. It was painted by Anne’s uncle who was a local teacher.

Tom brings up the idea of his joining the committee, expressing his eagerness to help in any way he can, for example with the croquet competition. Anne dismisses the idea of the competition.

Anne asks if Tom has always believed in God, even when he committed his crimes. Tom doesn’t reply, but leaves to use the toilet.

While Tom is out of the room, Anne takes a tumble and hurts her ankle. When Tom returns and finds her injured on the floor he helps her to a chair and decides to wait until her son arrives.

Tom haltingly addresses his past offences, explaining what happened and promising he has changed.

Anne tells Tom to carry on with the flowers. They reminisce about gardening and families. Tom is estranged from his son and daughter-in-law. Anne encourages him the family may need time. She suggests he makes them some tea.

Anne talks about her childhood. She reveals that her uncle, Jack, abused her. She has never told anyone else. Tom says how sorry he is that the abuse happened, and that it wasn’t her fault. She asks Tom not to join the committee, but to still attend church.

Anne’s foot is swelling and Tom thinks they should go to hospital. Anne admits her son is not coming. Tom goes to fetch help.

While she’s alone Anne sings a hymn to herself. Tom returns; the local farmer is on his way and will take Anne to the hospital.

As he leaves, Tom suggests to Anne that she get rid of the painting of the church that her uncle Jack painted.
Meet the Cast

Kirsty Cox
Theatre includes: *Crimes on the Nile* (New Old Friends); *Apple John, The Boy Who Climbed Into The Moon* and *Olive and the Dream Train* (Theatre Alibi); *The Odyssey* and *Medusa* (Bristol Old Vic); *The Macbeth Curse* (Prime Theatre/Bolton Octagon); *The Last Post* (Kilter Theatre) and the one woman show *Stalin’s Daughter* (Blue Brook Productions). She is a regular performer with street theatre company, The Naturals, and the comedy improvisation group, Instant Wit. She has recorded several audiobooks and also radio drama for BBC Radio 4. Her film and television experience includes *Trollied* (Sky TV), commercials for Toolstation and Visit Wales, and several independent feature films.

Robert East
Theatre includes: *The Fairy Queen* (Glyndebourne); *Henry IV Parts 1 & 2* (Peter Hall Company); *Look Back in Anger* (Northern Stage); *Amadeus, The Clean House, Lear* (Sheffield Crucible Theatre); *Stuff Happens* (National Theatre); *The Tempest* (Old Vic).

Television credits includes: *Innocent* (TXTV); *The Witness for the Prosecution* (Agatha Christie Productions); *Hunted* (Kudos); *Heartbeat* (Yorkshire Television); *Peak Practice* (central Independent Television); *Doctors, SPOOKS, Holby City, The Last King, Canterbury Tales, Trust, Screen Two, Dangerfield, ‘Allo ‘Allo, The Play on One, Yes, Prime Minister, Bread, Terry and June, The Black Adder, Yes Minister, The Kenny Everett Television Show, Goodbye Darling, Rentaghost, Coming Home, Kelly Monteith, Potter, Dave Allen at Large, Grandad, One-Upmanship, A Woman’s Place?, Warship, Happy Ever After, Churchill’s People, Emma* (BBC); *Rumpole of the Bailey, Spooky, Ladykillers, ITV Playhouse, Bill Brand, Moody and Pegg, Napoleon and Love, The Mind of Mr J.G. Reader* (Thames Television); *Drama 61-67*.

Feature Film credits include: *Across the Lake; Elveszett ilziok* (Objektiv Film); *Brothers and Sisters* (BFI); *Seagulls* (Wardissimo Films).
Susan Tracy

Susan Tracy was a member of the Royal Shakespeare Company between 1979 – 1983 and then again from 1995 – 1999. Roles included ‘Anna’ in Anna Christie, ‘Natasha’ in Trevor Nunn’s production of Three Sisters and ‘Dame Purecraft’ in Bartholomew Fair. Other productions with Trevor Nunn include The Wars Of The Roses at The Rose Theatre, Kingston A Chorus of Disapproval at the Harold Pinter Theatre, Richard II and Inherit the Wind at the Old Vic, Gone with the Wind at the New London Theatre and Anything Goes at the National and Theatre Royal, Drury Lane.

Other extensive theatre credits include A Dream of Perfect Sleep, Variation on a Theme both at The Finborough Theatre, Playhouse Creatures, The Deep Blue Sea and Rattigan’s Nijinsky all at the Chichester Festival Theatre; The Old Country in the West End and on tour; Eurydice at the Whitehall Theatre; Les Liaisons Dangereuses at the Ambassadors; The Secret Rapture at the National; A Passage to India at the Lyric Hammersmith and on tour, and Much Ado About Nothing at the Open Air Theatre, Regent’s Park.

Most recently Susan has appeared in About Leo at Jermyn Street Theatre, Cyril’s Success at The Finborough Theatre, and A Day By The Sea at Southwark Playhouse.

Select recent screen credits include: The Death and Life Of John F Donovan (Entertainment One), Piss Off, I Love You (YouTubeRed), The Trial (Channel 4), Silk (BBC), Casualty (BBC), New Tricks (BBC), Doctors (BBC), Lewis (ITV) and Midsomer Murders (ITV).
Meet the Creatives

Marietta Kirkbride - Writer
Marietta is a Bristol-based playwright and dramaturg. She is a co-founder of Bucket Club (produced by Farnham Maltings) and has worked with the company as dramaturg on all of their shows, including the award-winning Lorraine & Alan and Fossils (59E59, New York). She has also worked as a writer for Travelling Light Theatre and the Berlin based collective Theater Am Tisch, creating Getaway for BE International Festival at Birmingham REP. As a playwright, her other plays include: The Arrivals (The Egg, Theatre Royal Bath); The Long Trick (Vault Festival); The Orator (Theatre West); Sitting with Thistle (Theatre West); and Firecracker for Radio 4.

Nik Partridge - Director
Nik is a Bristol-based director, who has worked extensively within the South West. He has collaborated and produced work with organisations such as Bristol Old Vic, Travelling Light, MAYK, the egg, Strike-A-Light, Theatre Royal Plymouth and Tobacco Factory Theatres. Further afield he has made work for the Royal Court, Traverse, Oran Mor, Barbican and Galway International Arts Festival.

He was Director-in-Residence at Tobacco Factory Theatres for 2014-15 and Staff Director at Theatre Royal Plymouth from 2016-2018. He is currently a JMK Director Practitioner for the South West region.

He trained on the National Theatre Studio Directors Course and at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School.

Nik was a BBC Performing Arts Fellow for 2014 and is a recipient of the Equity John Fernald Award.

Anna Orton - Designer
As set and/or costume designer:
Messiah directed by Tom Morris (Bristol Old Vic Theatre/Bridgewater Hall Manchester/UK Cinema release); No Kids (Theatre Ad Infinitum & tour); Make More Noise directed by Lisa Gregan (Bristol Old Vic Theatre); One Small Step directed by Toby Hulse (Oxford Playhouse BT/Tour); Scene Stealer directed by Tamsyn Russell (Dance Base Edinburgh); The Last Queen of Scotland directed by Jemima Levick, Stellar Quines (co-produced NTS and Dundee REP) (Edinburgh Festival/Dundee REP); Tinsel Toon directed by Lisa Keenan (Tron Glasgow); Trojan Women directed by Sally Cookson (Bristol Old Vic Studio); Elixir directed by John Walton (Underbelly Southbank Centre/ Edinburgh Festival/Tour); Divine Chaos of Starry Things directed by Sasha McMurry. Stepping Out (co-production, London) (Best Design Nominee: OffWestEnd); Meadows to Meaders directed by Lisa Gregan (Bristol Old Vic Young Company); Champ directed by Jesse Jones (Tobacco Factory); A Play a Pie and a Pint Bristol; All That we Found Here directed by Sarah Bradly (The New Theatre
Dublin); *King Lear* directed by Tom Morris (Bristol Old Vic Theatre Royal); *Still Here* directed by Sarah Bradley, co-design (Zoo Edinburgh Festival); *The Tracks* directed by Katie Storer (Bristol Old Vic Young Company) *Falling* directed by Sarah Bradley (Octopus Soup Theatre Company Limerick); *The Human Ear* directed by Arni Kristjansson (Alma Tavern Theatre Bristol).

As artist/performer:
*Messiah* directed by Tom Morris

*Ortonandon* productions include; Platform, Jupiter Artland, Summerhall, Talbot Rice, Leipzig, The National Museum Scotland.

**Harry Armytage – Lighting Designer**

Harry studied at the Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts, graduating in 2014. Whilst at LIPA he designed a production of *Punk Rock*, amongst others, and credits since graduating include *A Doll’s House* at Barons Court Theatre, and two seasons for the Dorset Opera Festival; *Un ballo in maschera, l’elisir d’amore, Macbeth* and *Eugene Onegin*.

For The Watermill, Harry has lit *Burke and Hare, Nesting, The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Terry Pratchett’s *Maskerade*. Harry has created *Our Church* alongside his work as The Watermill’s Assistant Production Manager.
Thoughts from the Creative Team

A note from Nik Partridge (Director) on Our Church:

‘I’m really excited to be directing Our Church. Marietta Kirkbride is a fantastically talented, Bristol-based playwright who in Our Church, has written a powerful and nuanced play that invites us to question what our capacity for forgiveness as a society is and how we move forward, collectively and individually, from acts of trauma. What is even more interesting is that we will be taking the show into community venues as part of the tour. As a play that concerns itself with how we respond and react as a community to such events, I hope it will act as a useful vehicle for provoking meaningful thought and conversation. It is a beautifully observed play, with humour, lightness and humanity. I think it offers much to audiences and I look forward to sharing the story with them.’

A note from Marietta Kirkbride (Writer) on the story:

‘Our Church is set in a fictional village in the West Midlands. The whole play takes place in the village church - a treasured building for many in the community. The story is about the local people that look after this church, grappling with the challenge of how to do the right thing. A newcomer, Tom, would like to play an active role in the community. However, Tom has a criminal record and not everyone agrees on how far he should be allowed in. Just how much of a second chance does Tom deserve, and who should be responsible for giving it to him?’

Marietta Kirkbride on the importance of touring to rural areas:

‘I grew up in a village but didn’t really have access to theatre at that time – at least not right on the doorstep. It could be that we were just unaware of it, but we always felt we had to travel to a city to see a play – especially a contemporary play about the world as it is now. Since I’ve become aware of plays performed in villages halls I have travelled from Bristol, where I live now, to see them. There is always something very warm and intimate about theatre that happens in these places. I love it.

‘It feels right that this play will be performed in villages, because the physical building and place where the play is set is profoundly important to the play’s characters. Village halls and churches have a special status – they are buildings that are full of local history that mean different things to different people. It feels exciting that Our Church will be performed in one of these spaces when the importance of community is a key theme of the play.’
Support for our audiences

Our Church, Your Thoughts

We would like to welcome all audience members to an open workshop called *Our Church, Your Thoughts* to discuss and explore the play in greater depth. *Our Church, Your Thoughts* will be at The Watermill on Saturday 20 July, 4.30pm to 5.30pm. Places are free but we ask people to book with The Watermill box office. More details to be announced soon.

We are aware that *Our Church* contains themes of a sensitive and potentially distressing nature. We are committed to supporting our audiences and have put together the following information. Please see the next page for useful links to organisations whose work addresses the themes discussed in the play.

Survivors of sexual abuse

Safe Project [www.safeproject.org.uk](http://www.safeproject.org.uk) SAFE! has been established to provide support to young people between the ages of 8 and 25 years old in the Thames Valley who have been hurt by a crime or bullying.

Trust House Reading [www.trusthousereading.org](http://www.trusthousereading.org) Trust House Reading is a Rape Support Centre based in Reading and serving the wider Berkshire district.

Berkshire Women’s Aid [www.berkshirewomensaid.org.uk](http://www.berkshirewomensaid.org.uk) BWA provides advice, support and refuge services to victims of domestic abuse and provides information and education on the subject to make the case for effective action against domestic violence, intimidation and psychological abuse and for policies that support victims of abuse.

A2Dominion [www.a2dominion.co.uk](http://www.a2dominion.co.uk) a residential property group with a social purpose, reinvesting 100% of their profits into building new homes, managing existing homes, and supporting local communities. A2Dominion’s Domestic Abuse Services in Oxford (ODAS) and West Berkshire (WBDAS) offer emotional and practical support for victims suffering or fleeing domestic abuse.

Victim Support [www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk) Victim Support work towards a world where people affected by crime or traumatic events get the support they need and the respect they deserve. They help people feel safer and find the strength to move beyond crime. Their support is free, confidential and tailored to your needs.

Victims First [www.victims-first.org.uk](http://www.victims-first.org.uk) Victims First is dedicated to making sure that all victims and witnesses receive the support they need to cope and recover from the impact of crime.

Samaritans [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org) Samaritans is a charity dedicated to reducing feelings of isolation and disconnection that can lead to suicide. Every year, Samaritans answer more than 5 million calls for help by phone, email, SMS, letter, face to face and through their Welsh language service.

Childline [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) Childline is there to
help anyone under 19 in the UK with any issue they’re going through. Whether it’s something big or small, trained counsellors are there to support you.

Rehabilitation of ex-offenders

Circles UK [www.circles-uk.org.uk](http://www.circles-uk.org.uk) Circles build safer communities through local volunteers working with sex offenders to minimise alienation, support reintegration and so prevent sexual reoffending.

New Leaf Project [www.newleafproject.co.uk](http://www.newleafproject.co.uk) New Leaf provides help and support to offenders who plan to settle in Oxfordshire, Berkshire or Buckinghamshire including Milton Keynes.

Alana House [www.pactcharity.org/alana-house](http://www.pactcharity.org/alana-house) Alana House use a holistic approach to ensure that women can access the best possible support and tools to achieve their goals.

Berkshire Care Trust [www.berkshirecaretrust.org](http://www.berkshirecaretrust.org) The Trust provides financial assistance by way of grants, loans or emergency cash payments to people under the supervision of the Probation services in Berkshire.

Browns Community Services [www.brownscommunityservices.co.uk](http://www.brownscommunityservices.co.uk) Browns Community Services breaks trans generational cycles and transforms lives by reducing reoffending, tackling substance abuse, domestic violence, mental health, wellbeing and employability skills.

**West Berkshire Christian and Christian-led Organisations**

Christians Together in the Newbury Area [www.ctnablog.wordpress.com](http://www.ctnablog.wordpress.com) The aims of CTNA are to provide means of communication between the churches, to facilitate common witness to Christ by member churches and organisations, to work and pray for Christian unity and to represent Christians within the community in Newbury.

Street Pastors [www.streetpastors.org/locations/newbury](http://www.streetpastors.org/locations/newbury) Street pastors are trained volunteers from local churches who patrol Newbury town centre each Saturday night, from about 10.30pm onwards, to care for, listen to and help people who are out on the streets, equipped with pockets full of lollipops and Lovehearts, bottles of water and a bag of flip-flops.

Heart for Truth [www.heartfortruth.org](http://www.heartfortruth.org) Heart for Truth is all about encouraging and teaching Christian leaders and those who care for others struggling to cope with the effects of trauma.

Loose Ends [www.looseendsnewbury.org](http://www.looseendsnewbury.org) Loose Ends is a drop-in centre in Newbury serving food to the homeless and vulnerable.
Credits

The Watermill Theatre presents

OUR CHURCH
by Marietta Kirkbride

Directed by Nik Partridge
Designed by Anna Orton
Lighting designed by Harry Armytage
Sound designed by Joe Nicholls

Cast:
Michael and Tom Robert East
June Kirsty Cox
Anne Susan Tracy

Production Manager Lawrence T. Doyle
Company Stage Manager Kerrie Driscoll
Deputy Stage Manager Ruth Hills
Assistant Stage Manager Natalie Toney
Wardrobe Supervisor Emily Barratt
Set Construction DSH Carpentry and Design
Production Photographer Philip Tull
Tour Marketing Tom Elliott