



Education Resources Pre-Production

Sydney Theatre Company
and Commonwealth Bank present

THE WHITE GUARD

By Mikhail Bulgakov



PRE-PRODUCTION RESOURCES

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PRE-PRODUCTION EXERCISES

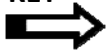
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Education Resource written by Kerreen Ely-Harper and compiled by Education Coordinator Toni Murphy

KEY



AIM of exercise or section



Extension Exercises



Download and watch



Drama Exercises



English Exercises



Play online

THE WHITE GUARD

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ABOUT SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY

www.sydneytheatre.com.au/about

ABOUT STCED

www.sydneytheatre.com.au/stced/about

CREATIVE TEAM

Director – Andrew Upton

Set & Costume Designer – Alice Babidge

Lighting Designer – Nick Schlieper

Composer – Alan John



CAST

Jonathan Biggins

Patrick Brammall

Alan Dukes

Darren Gilshenan

Cameron Goodall

Miranda Otto

Richard Pyros

Tahki Saul

THEMES

Family

Nationalism

Satire & Farce

Russian History

THE WHITE GUARD

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It is 1918 and the Civil War has broken out between the Bolsheviks ('Reds') and the pro Provisional Government forces ('Whites'). Alexei and Nikolai are preparing to fight for the White Guard. Their sister Lena tries to maintain order and civility in their Kiev apartment home as the world around them slowly descends into chaos.

Lena is anxious for her husband Talberg, the Deputy Minister of War, who is late coming home. Her brothers try to joke her out of worrying. It is snowing and drunken soldiers pass by in the streets. Viktor, a fellow White Guard arrives at the apartment and informs them they have lost the support of the peasants. People are switching allegiances from the Whites to the Reds. Larion, an uninvited and unknown cousin also arrives unannounced. Lena welcomes him in.

Talberg eventually arrives home but takes her aside privately to tell her they are losing the war against the Bolsheviks and he must leave for Germany. When she asks if she can join him he argues German trains don't take wives. Unimpressed she insists he at least tell her brothers the truth of the situation before he goes. Alexei guesses the worst before Talberg has a chance to brief him. The German leadership is abandoning the city and the Bolsheviks are moving closer to Kiev.

Unperturbed by her husband's cowardly abandonment Lena hosts a family dinner for her brothers and their soldier comrades before they leave to resume fighting duties. They drink, eat and converse on the status of the war and what it is to be Russian. In a drunken stupor Leonid, a Lieutenant takes advantage of Lena's absent husband. She rejects him but drunk also she succumbs to his advances much to her distress.

From the Turbin apartment we move to a military occupied palace where the leader, the 'Hetman' of the German-controlled puppet government disguises himself as a wounded General and escapes on a stretcher. Leonid changes into civilian clothes leaving now no one in charge except the Fyodor (footman) who he tells to 'Run'.

Things soon begin to disintegrate as the Ukrainian Nationalist Army interrogate deserters including a crying Cossack. Meanwhile Alexei and other White Guards including family friend Captain Alexander take refuge in a school hall. When Alexei tries to bring some order to the erupting anarchy his attempt to disband the regiment is met with hostile paranoia and he is shot dead. Nikolai is also shot and wounded and taken back to the family apartment. Lena is told of Alexei's death and is devastated.

Two months pass and it is twelfth night after Christmas. Lena finds some comfort in the company of Larion who has become infatuated with her. She says she can't fall in love with him as she is already having an affair with Leonid. Nikolai remains sickly while Leonid wants her to join him in Moscow where he hopes to audition for the opera. The Bolsheviks have triumphed. Viktor once a loyal White Guard declares himself a Bolshevik. Talberg makes a fleeting visit. Lena requests a divorce and is inundated with proposals from the men. Lena chooses Leonid and as they celebrate with a song and a toast to 'Freedom' the sound of the Red Army guns can be heard in the distance and Nikolai weeps for the world they have lost.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF THE PLAY

The White Guard was initially conceived as a novel. The book was semi-autobiographical. Like the characters Bulgakov had brothers who fought for the White Guard, he was a doctor who had also served in the army and his family had lost their mother unexpectedly in 1922 the same year he began the first draft. *The White Guard* was to be the first in a trilogy based on colours that traced the events of the Russian Revolution – the White Guard, the Yellow Banner and the Scarlet Strike. Even though Mikhail Bulgakov did not realize his ambition of completing the trilogy, in 1924 he wrote, “I love this novel more than all my other writings”.

The ‘White Guard’ literally refers to the armed forces that were anti Bolshevik. They were remnants of the former Tsarist Army and had a high level of professional and semi-professional soldiers. Initially they were highly successful in defeating Red detachments many times their size. However, as the civil war progressed disease and combat losses took their toll. In the face of growing Red successes the Whites were unable to recruit and their numbers decreased. By the end of 1920 the Whites were essentially defeated. Many soldiers were driven to fight for food and switched sides according to where they could be guaranteed a meal.

When the civil war broke out in 1918 the Reds held the country and the White armies gathered at various points. Husbands and brothers went off to fight for the Whites or the Reds. Hunger took hold in the towns and in the South many towns were captured and recaptured by competing forces. One of the White strongholds in the South was the city of Kiev that was to be the setting for the book.

Failing to secure a publisher the novel was adapted into a play entitled *The Days of the Turbin Brothers*. The play was commissioned by the Moscow Arts Theatre and performed in 1926. The authorities regarded it as an ‘apologia for the White Guard’ and Bulgakov was required to make cuts and edits to suit the censors. The play was well received and coined ‘the new *Seagull*’. Joseph Stalin was a regular audience attendee and it is recorded that he saw the production 15 times. Despite the plays success Bulgakov did not receive the acknowledgement he felt he deserved. And it was only by the efforts of his surviving third wife after his death to have the

original novel published in its entirety that the significance of his work as the author was given full recognition.

Andrew Upton has adapted the original play/novel into a new version. Upton believes *The White Guard* has a lot to offer contemporary audiences as a story about a family's desire to survive against the backdrop of war. The play 'cracks along starting at the top of the hill and rolls to disaster'. Beginning in the Turbin's apartment the action 'flies out all over Kiev'. Upton cites the key to the play's appeal is its 'juxtapositioning of family tragedy and incredible human comedy'.

Early in his career Bulgakov was influenced by Leo Tolstoy's historic themes and philosophies and this is evident by the historic-political context within which the family drama is played out in *The White Guard*. Bulgakov considered himself a political satirist and humourist. Mark Twain and Nikolai Gogol were his favourite writers. His interest in adventure fiction and satirical comedy combined with deeply held political and personal convictions continue to influence many contemporary writers and artists.

References:

Mikhail Bulgakov: the early years Edythe C Haber 1998

Mikhail Bulgakov: a critical biography Lesley Milne 2009

'Mikhail Bulgakov between Mark Twain and Lev Tolstoy' IA S Lur'e

Russian Review Vol 50 April 1991 pp230-210

Interview with Andrew Upton gives an overview of his vision of the play

April, 2010, National Theatre London

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=POut4W7hYCc>

In The Shadow of Revolution: life stories of Russian women from 1917 to the Second World War.

Shelia Fitzpatrick, Yuri Slezkine 2000

The White Russian Armies 1917- 1923 Christopher Eger 2007

<http://www.suite101.com/content/the-white-russian-armies-19171923-a32624>



Additional Resources

Andrew Upton

Metro, March 2010

<http://www.metro.co.uk/metrolife/818386-andrew-upton-on-new-play-the-white-guard>

Mikhail Bulgakov

Article on Mikhail Bulgakov's infamous call from Stalin in 1930 and the history of the production with biographical information.

By critic Will Self (William Woodard)

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/2010/mar/20/will-self-white-guard-bulgakov>

Article on Stalin's support for *The White Guard*

By Richard Goodwin March 2010

<http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/theatre/article-23815850-stalins-secret-love-affair-with-the-white-guard.do>

Manuscripts Don't Burn: Mikhail Bulgakov - A Life in Letters and Diaries

JAE Curtis 1991

Reviews of the National Theatre Production (2010 directed by Howard Davies)

MusicOHM Neil Dowden

http://www.musicomh.com/theatre/lon_white-guard_0310.htm

The Independent, Paul Taylor March 2010

<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/reviews/the-white-guard-national-theatre-london-1929801.html>

The Whingers March 2010

<http://westendwhingers.wordpress.com/2010/03/17/review-the-white-guard-national-theatre/>

The Russian Revolution



The End of St Petersburg silent film by Vsevolod Pudovkin 1927

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QYDPXtrGgt4>

Ten Days That shook the World 1928 directed by Sergei Eisenstein & Grigori Aleksandrov – silent propaganda film sanctioned by Stalin. Some of the images particularly in the beginning of the film are disturbing and require a warning prior to viewing.



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KeIn8AduwTg>

Youtube version has English text translated from the Russian and some of the original soundtrack re-worked.

Nicholas and Alexandra 1971 presents a more sympathetic view of the Ramanov family.

Burnt By The Sun 1994 directed by Nikita Mikhalkov gives an account of army life under Stalin



AIM: To understand and investigate history through dramatization and performance.

Russian Revolution

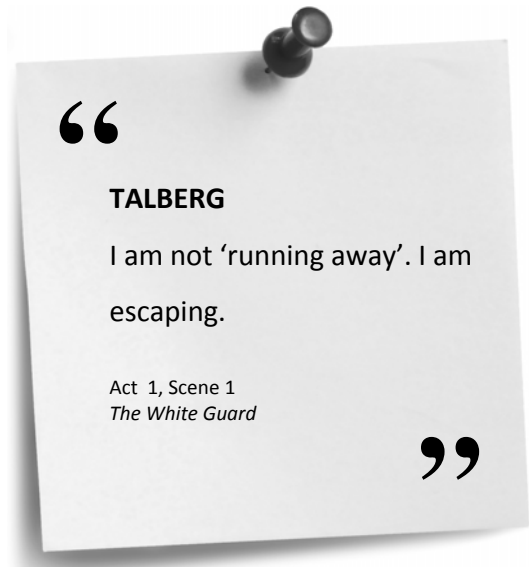


Research the Russian Revolution.

List 5 key events you are interested in or currently studying.

For example

- Embattled Russian troops on the WW1 frontlines
- Pulling down of the statues of the Tsar by the Russian citizens
- Bread riots in the streets on International Women's Day
- Shooting of the workers by Tsar's soldiers
- Arrival of Lenin in Petrograd
- Storming of the White Palace
- Arrest & Execution of the Tsar & his family
- Lenin's Victory Speech
- Civil War of 1918, Reds V's Whites



Form groups & decide who will work on which event.

Discuss & Decide what theatrical techniques you will employ to enhance the dramatic potential of your historical event.

Consider

Soundscape to create a sense of place – vocal sounds, snatches of dialogue, Russian language, live/recorded music.

Tableau – moving and still

Opera Style

Caricature Style

Slow Motion – shooting of the workers, execution of the Tsar

Present your scene

Discuss the drama techniques chosen by each group – how effective were they in bringing the event to life?

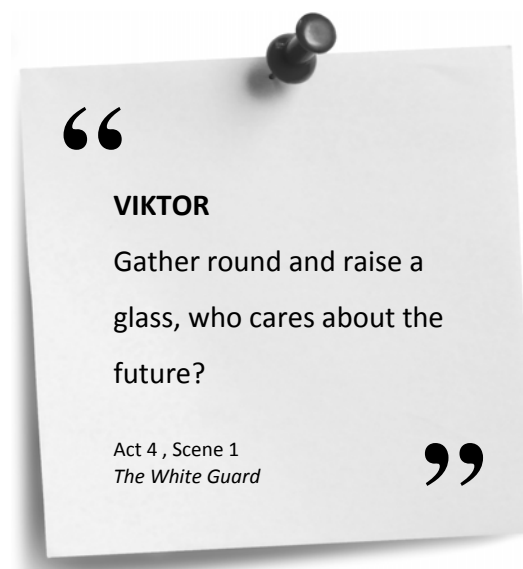
Question & Debate the interpretation of the events by individual groups.

+ **Extension:**

Re-play the scenes adding new ideas or giving emphasis to certain elements based on your discussions.

When Viewing the STC performance

How and why does the plays backdrop of the Russian Civil War move progressively to the foreground as the drama unfolds?





AIM: To introduce and examine the themes of family, nationalism and war.

Russian Dinner Party

He [Andrew Upton] loves what he calls ‘the dinner table conversation’ of Russian literature, ‘in which everyone is engaging socially and is alive with ideas and chatter’. ‘I do feel that is very rare now anywhere in the world,’ he adds. ‘People seem to find it increasingly hard to engage with the great big project of society. Great drama involves great questions.’

Director Andrew Upton 2010



Research Russian Recipes

Design a Menu for a dinner party.



Decide who is making/bringing what food to the classroom Russian dinner party.

Write & Present a short description of your food and its cultural/historical significance.

Share & Eat!

Family Dinners?

In *The White Guard* people congregate around the dinner table to eat, drink, sing and converse. Outside their apartment the revolution is brewing and the Russian citizens are rising as the danger moves nearer.



Discuss Andrew Upton’s comment on the dinner table conversation as a rare event today.

Does your family have dinner together – if so, when and how often, if not, why not?

Write a paragraph based on a family interaction at the dinner table - at home, in a restaurant, at a friend or relatives place.



Special Guests

Imagine a dinner party where you get to choose the guests of your dreams.

Pick 5 people you would like to invite.

Write a paragraph/scene/story based on what would happen if all these people came to dinner.

Consider

Menu

Décor

Table Seating – who would sit where?

Entertainment

Topics of Conversation

Questions you would like to ask your guests.



Extension:

Add a person to the table who lived at the time of the Russian Revolution.

Add a Russian dish to the menu – Chicken Kiev, Borsch, Blini & Caviar.

Consider

Who are they – a well-known figure like Lenin, Stalin, Tsar Nicholas, Mikhail Bulgakov, or will they be someone lesser known such as an ordinary citizen, a member of the Bolshevik party, a White Guard, a wife or sister of a soldier, a member of the Women's Death Battalion?

Where do they come from – Petrograd/St Petersburg, Kiev, a rural town?

When was the event that they remember the most vividly?

What did they see, hear, think and feel about the revolution - then and now?

Which side were they on and why?



Write/Present a dialogue scene, narrative story, radio play.

OR



Enact as a role-play with a student/teacher facilitator

When viewing the STC performance

How do the characters behave in the Turbin apartment?

How does their behaviour change over the course of the play?

What is more important to the characters, loyalty to family or loyalty nation?

How do their allegiances shift and change and why?



AIM: To examine and apply the devices of satire and farce to tragic drama.

What makes you laugh?

Discuss what makes a situation funny?

Have you ever laughed at someone else's misfortune? Or had someone laugh at yours?



Meet & Greet & Part

Devise & Present a 2 minute comic scene where two characters meet & greet, something happens & then they part.

Consider

Slapstick – physical comedy, visual gags, tricks, surprises

Verbal humour – jokes, puns, word play

Exaggeration – extremes of behaviour, oddities, obsessions

Implausible plot – things happen that aren't logical, couldn't happen in real life



The Bolsheviks Are Coming

Devise & Present a comic scene entitled *The Bolsheviks Are Coming*

Employ the above techniques explored in your Meet & Greet scenarios

Discuss what makes something tragic?

When does a funny situation become a serious situation?

Repeat & Present *The Bolsheviks Are Coming* as a realistic drama.

Refer to your research on the Russian Revolution

Consider

Evidence – based on fact or historic evidence

Plausible plot – logical, believable, could happen in real life.

Consequences – based in reality, real consequences for the character both physical and emotional.



Extension

Repeat & Combine both comic and tragic drama elements in the scene.

Discuss & Evaluate how successfully the comic and tragic elements were integrated into the scene.

When viewing the STC performance

What are the devices being employed by the production to create both humour and tragedy?





AIM: To examine and explore the writing techniques required in adapting narrative fiction for the stage.

Adaptation

A play is what takes place.

A novel is what one person tells us took place.

Thornton Wilder

What is your understanding of this quote by American playwright, Thornton Wilder, on the differences between a novel and a play?

The White Guard was initially written as a novel and then adapted into a play (entitled 'The Day Of The Turbins').



Discuss the differences between writing prose fiction and writing for the stage.

Discuss the differences between reading prose and watching play (or listening in the case of a radio play)? Do you have a preference? Why?

List all the plays or films/television shows you have seen that were originally novels.

Here are some recent examples – *Harry Potter*, *Tomorrow When the World Began*, *Twilight*, *Lovely Bones*, *Stand By Me*.

Did you read the book/s first or see the film first and then read the book?

Did you prefer the novel, play or film version of the story?



Debate Harry Potter (or another favourite title), "The books are better than the films".

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Compare & Contrast the opening paragraphs of *The White Guard* novel with the opening scene of the play adaptation.

Consider

Layout	Dialogue	Character	Writer’s Intention
Language	Rhythm	Action	Audience
Imagery	Narrative	Sound	
Description	Structure	Emotional Tone	

The White Guard, Mikhail Bulgakov – the novel

Great was the year and terrible the Year of Our Lord 1918, the second since the Revolution had begun. Sun had been abundant in the summer, snow in the winter, and two stars had risen particularly high in the sky: Venus, the Evening Star; and Mars, red and quivering.

But in years of peace and blood alike the days shoot by like arrows, and in the hard frost the young Turbins had not noticed the onset of shaggy white December. Oh, Father Frost, sparkling with snow and happiness. ‘Mama, radiant queen! Where are you now?’

A year after her daughter Elena married Captain Sergei Ivanovich Talberg, and the same week her elder son Alexei Vasilievich Turbin, following difficult campaigns, military service, and misfortunes, returned to Ukraine, to the city, to the family nest, a white coffin with his mother’s body was carried down steep Alexeyevsky slop toward Podol and the little Church of St Nicholas the Good, on the Embankment.

The White Guard Mikhail Bulgakov – the play

Act One

SCENE ONE

Nine p.m.

The Turbins’ apartment, evening. The clock strikes nine.

Nikolai is strumming a tune, Alexei is working quietly.



Nikolai

That's not a clock, it's a loaded gun.
Chamber your shells, boys, and get along.
Load 'em up faster, click, clack, clack,
Time's a machine gun, a-rat-a-tat-tat.
Hurry up, Petyura, come, do your worst
We are the boys you'll have to face first.
Hurry, men, hurry one, raise up a din.
Petyura's a-coming, to pay for his –

Alexei Nikolai? For God's sake. You sound like a –

Nikolai What? I wrote it especially.

Dear fellow: a song's a song's a song.
The voice's the thing might pong.
Are you saying – my brother –
It's nails you'd rather –

Alexei Yes, Tonight/ particularly.

Nikolai All I can say is? You're wrong.
Sorry. Alexei, really. I may not have the creamy richness of
your Shervinsky, say, but I do have a voice. Dramatic.
Shapely. Comely. Lena? Lena? My singing? Lena?

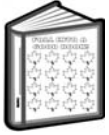
Lena (*off*) Awful.

Nikolai What's up with her?

Quiet.

*Note: the punctuation symbol / indicates the next character begin speaking their line, creating the effect of overlapping dialogue.

Act 1, Scene 1



Adapt a paragraph from your favourite novel into an opening scene of a stage play.

Consider

Story

Actors

Staging

Audience

Write an outline of the story.

List the main action and points of tension in the story.

What setting will your characters (or single character) first appear to the audience?

Can you use lighting, and different parts of the set, or props?

Remember you are dealing in space, illusion and sounds of voices.

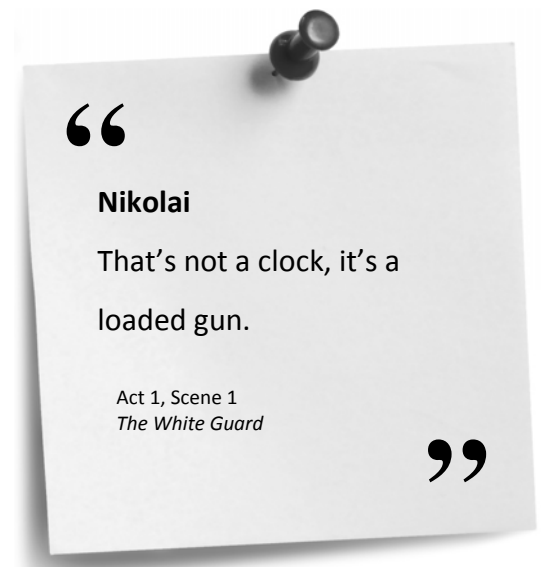
Write out the scene in detail

Add the stage directions



Extension

Adapt an excerpt from *The White Guard* novel into a scene for the stage.



References:

The White Guard, Mikhail Bulgakov, novel, translation Marian Schwartz

The White Guard, Mikhail Bulgakov, playscript, version by Andrew Upton

Writer: A Working Guide for New Writer’s Graeme Kinross-Smith

Engineer of Human Souls



AIM: To understand the theatre conventions associated with Russian realism and socialist realism in *The White Guard*.

Mikhail Bulgakov: *Engineer of Human Souls*

Joseph Stalin desired art to promote the cause of socialism and the artist to be 'the engineer of human souls'.

The aim of Socialist Realism was to portray reality through the lens of 'the undoubted victory of communism'.



Stalin greatly admired *The White Guard* for its sympathetic portrayal of the White Guard in the face of the inevitability of the Bolshevik victory.



Write a letter by Joseph Stalin in first person to Mikhail Bulgakov, as an 'engineer of human souls' after the opening night of *The White Guard* at the Moscow Arts Theatre in 1926.

Despite Stalin's personal admiration, Bulgakov struggled to have his works passed by the Soviet government censors. In 1930 out of despair he wrote to Stalin personally requesting he be allowed to emigrate if the state were not in need of his writing services. Stalin called him directly by phone to discuss his future, offering him a job at the Moscow Arts Centre.



Write & Present a telephone dialogue scene based on the call made by Stalin to Bulgakov on receiving his letter.

See: Will Self, *The Guardian*, Saturday 20 March, 2010 www.guardian.co.uk/culture/.../will-self-white-guard-bulgakov

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Realism to Socialist Realism

The photographic replication of facts and real life character observations and philosophical reflections was a feature of Russian realism and writers such as Anton Chekhov and Maxim Gorky.

Larion I have a shirt. I wrapped my Chekhov in it. What I really need is – Well, you can imagine. After eleven days. What I need? Is ...?

Act 1, Sc 1

The White Guard



Discuss this reference to Chekhov.

What comment is Bulgakov making about Chekhov and or Russian realism in general?

Socialist realism was dominated by the artist's socialist agenda. At worst socialist realist literature was didactic and driven by ideology.

Although Bulgakov remained within the parameters of the conventions of socialist realism he saw it as more incidental than deliberate.

I am very interested in the Russian intelligentsia's way of life. I love it; I consider it a very important, although a weak stratum of the country. It's fate is close to me, the experience is dear to me. That means I am able to write only about the intelligentsia's life in the Soviet Union. But the turn of my mind is satirical, so the things that come from my pen apparently touch social-communist circles.

Mikhail Bulgakov



Discuss this statement in the light of the renewed interest in Bulgakov's work.

Why has his work survived when other writers of the period have not?

Post-Performance Reflection

Identify three socialist realist elements in the play.

How relevant is *The White Guard* to a contemporary audience?

List three important messages you have taken away from the STC production.

The Satirist

Mikhail Bulgakov became a colleague of the director and actor, Konstantin Stanislavski where they both worked at the Moscow Art Theatre. Although they were believed to be personal friends they argued over approaches to performance. Bulgakov pushed for more abstracted elements in keeping with his love of comedy and satire, whereas Stanislavski argued for more carefully observed characters based on real life studies.

Bulgakov's novel *Black Snow* (or 'The Theatrical Novel') satirized Stanislavski through the character Ivan Vasilievich. Ivan Vasilievich was the name of the sixteenth-century czar, Ivan The Terrible. Ivan Vasilievich is portrayed as a great actor, but his famous acting "method" involves actors having to do ridiculous and tedious exercises.



Stanislavski's Tree Exercise

Close your eyes and imagine that you are a tree.

Define your species – see the shape and colour of the leaves.

How old are you – see how thick is your trunk, how high are your branches?

Imagine where you grow.

Choose a moment from your real life and create it imaginatively as the tree.

What was the weather like? The time of day? What could you feel? See? Hear?

What event occurred beneath your boughs that day – a historic battle, or romantic lover's tryst?



Write/Present a dialogue scene between Bulgakov and Stanislavski debating the value of the tree exercise for actors.

Post-Performance Reflection

Describe the style of the actors' performance in the STC production.

Define your understanding of realism in performance.

How realistic (or non-realistic) are the actors' individual performances?

References:

Stanislavsky's System: Pathways for the actor, Sharon Marie Carnicke

Is Comrade Bulgakov Dead?: Mikhail Bulgakov at the Moscow Theatre, Anatoly Smeliansky

The Modern Russian Theatre: a literary and cultural history, Nicholas Rzhevsky

Bulgakov's Novel 'The Master and Margarita' and the subversion of Socialist Realism, Anastasia Vladimirovna Yurchenko



AIM: To understand and appreciate the director's role in creating and executing a vision.

Vision and Approach

Andrew Upton describes *The White Guard* as a play that 'cracks along starting at the top of the hill and rolls to disaster'. Beginning in the Turbin's apartment the action 'flies out all over Kiev'.



Describe how the set and production design reflect the director's vision of the play.

How does the set change throughout the performance and why?

Describe the costumes.

What do they reveal about the world and the character's circumstances?

The White Guard is a 'juxtaposition of family tragedy and incredible human comedy'.

Andrew Upton



How successful is the director in achieving this juxtaposition of tragedy and comedy?

List three comic moments in the production. What made you laugh?

List three tragic moments. What made these moments tragic for you?

How did you feel at the end of the performance?

How did the audience respond during the show?



Write down all the things you liked about the STC production.

What changes would you make to the production if you were directing?

What elements would you keep from the STC production?

Consider

Set & production design

Casting & Acting style

Music & Sound design

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In the Director's Chair

Form groups of three – one director and two actors.

You are directing Scene One, Act Four from *The White Guard*.

You will play the role of Lena or Larion.

Two Months later. Eight p.m. on Twelfth Night, 1919.

It is evening in the Turbin's apartment. Elena and Larion are taking down a Christmas tree.

Lena It's very quiet out there.

Larion It's the end.

Lena We don't know that.

Larion I'm an expert on the sounds of civil war now.

I can tell the progress of a battle just by listening: it's all in the length of the intervals and the type of gunfire. This one is nearly done. The Bolshevicks will have Kiev and Petyura will be hung for breakfast.

A burst of machine-gun fire. It rattles them.

Lena I hate that gun the most.

Larion Yes, so ...unforgiving. This star makes me/think ...

Lena Don't fall, don't fall. Come down if you're going to start expostulating.

Larion It's always sad, taking down the tree, but. This year especially, with all the fighting and ...home-Zhitomir – feeling so far away, I've loved Christmas, it's

made me feel little again.

Here of course it's much better than being young or at home. No. I can never leave here. I would sit under this Christmas tree for a hundred years... if you were there with me.



Apply Stanislavski's rehearsal techniques.

Given Circumstances: The Facts

'The best way to analyse the play is to take action in the given circumstances.'

Konstantin Stanislavski



Carefully Read the scene excerpt together

Assess the Facts - where is the action taking place?

- when is it happening?
- who are the characters?
- what is happening in the scene?
- why are the characters behaving the way they are?

Look up any words or references you don't understand.

Analyse the text – what is the significance of the scene in relation to the whole play?

Text Improvisation



Improvise the scene using your own words.

Incorporate any facts you remember

Re-Read the scene

Compare it with what happened in your improvisation.

Did you retain the scene's basic dynamics and sequence?

Repeat the improvisation again, and again check your work against the text.

Continue this repetition until you come as close as you can to the scene without actually memorising it.

Add something specific from the scene, with each improvisation – images, phrases, lines as written.

Memorise the scene for performance.

Overlapping Dialogue

There is a lot of overlapping dialogue in the play.

A burst of machine-gun fire. It rattles them.

Lena I hate that gun the most.

Larion Yes, so ...unforgiving. This star makes me/think ...

Lena Don't fall, don't fall. Come down if you're going to start expostulating.



Perform the scene with the overlap – Lena begins her line after Larion's 'me'

Re-perform the scene without the overlapping dial – Lena begins her line after 'think'

Repeat this exercise a couple of times.

Which do you prefer? Why?

How does overlapping dialogue effect the scene?

Change of Tone & Rhythm



Re-read the scene – where are the shifts in action, tone and rhythm?

Perform the scene without any shifts in action, tone, rhythm or pace. Feel the limitations and the desire to change. Notice where you most feel the desire to break the monotone and lack of rhythm.

Perform the scene responding to the inherent shifts and logical actions of the characters.

Staging and Performance



Rehearse the scene for presentation to an audience.

Consider

Staging & Choreography

Costume

Audience

Set

Lighting

Props

Sound

Present

Compare & Contrast different directorial approaches taken by the groups.

Extension

Rotate the roles so that everyone in the group gets the opportunity to direct the scene.

Compare & Contrast the different approaches and visions

References: *Stanislavsky's System: Pathways for the actor*, Sharon Marie Carnicke

“

Larion

I'm not a poet. I'm a, a – I'm
a clown

Act 1, Scene 4
The White Guard

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