

Opera
Experience



GLYNDEBOURNE
EDUCATION

Tangier *Tattoo*

Teacher's Pack



An operatic thriller

Composed by **John Lunn**
Libretto by **Stephen Plaice**

This Programme is generously supported
by the Foyle Foundation and





Preparing for a workshop

This pack contains information about the basic storyline and characters of *Tangier Tattoo* - it would be useful for your students to know something of this before the workshop. The entire pack will not take long to read.

Breaks and refreshments

There will be a break of approximately 30 minutes during the workshop, and about one hour and 45 minutes between workshop and performance at the theatre.

Please ensure that the students bring drinks, snacks and a packed meal as food and refreshments will not be available.

Parking

Please allow adequate time for parking before a workshop as workshops must start promptly (please make sure you check the start time of your workshop)

Information

Students below year 10 should not attend the workshop.

If you would like further information, please contact Glyndebourne Education on 01273 815023 or email tessa.chisholm@glyndebourne.com



What will happen in a workshop

Many of the students who will attend our workshops have never been to see an opera before. The workshop will serve as an introduction to opera itself as well as the specific opera to be seen that evening.

The afternoon will consist of:

Warm up activities

Musical exercises

Dramatic exercises

Listening to singers from GOT Company

Discussing the opera

By the end of the workshop, the students will be ready to see and hear and enjoy the opera with genuine understanding.

Students should wear comfortable clothes suitable for physical activities (if you would like to please bring a change of clothes for the evening performance).

Characters

<i>Nick</i>	An bewildered English student, fresh off the boat, seeking his own authentic ethnic journey on his gap year. He is desperate to find (or engineer).new and exiting experiences
<i>Nadine</i>	Meets Nick for the first time in a café minutes before a shooting. She introduces herself as an American tourist, but it soon becomes clear that her many tales don't quite add up...
<i>The Tattooist</i>	A shady figure, who runs the only tattoo shop in Tangier. A deserter from the American army, he has set up an alter ego in Tangier as Hassan Ash.
<i>Idris</i>	Beach vendor, nut seller, waiter, first aider, brother, husband, lover and supplier of linen and memorabilia – Idris seems to be anyone you want to make him.
<i>The Detective</i>	Hot on Nick's trail after the café shooting.
<i>Kramer</i>	Another older American tourist. He shows up in café at the start, and re-appears throughout Nick's quest, though at first we're not sure why...
<i>Samira</i>	A mysterious and exotic singer who weaves an enchanting musical soundscape throughout the opera.
<i>Ahmed and Raschid</i>	Drug dealers from high in the Rif Mountains. Dangerous men not to be crossed.
<i>Christina, Rochelle and Shelley</i>	A trio of pleasure-seeking tourists who Nadine introduces as her friends.

Setting the Scene

Fresh off the ferry, Nick sits in a café with his Lonely Planet guide trying to match the bewildering scene surrounding him with that described in his guide. He's come to Tangier on the trail of a generation of 60's writers and artists, eager to find his own adventure. A woman asks to join him at his table – she introduces herself as Nadine, an American traveller visiting Morocco. But their faltering conversation is interrupted by a violent shoot-out between drug-dealers on the next table. In the mêlée Nick and Nadine escape with a briefcase full of dollars. They hole up in a down beat hotel and count the money - over twenty thousand dollars. They could have the time of their lives.

It's clear they are both attracted to each other, but Nadine gently resists Nick's advances. They play Mosquito Truth, a truth game. During the game Nadine confesses that, the day before, she made love on the beach with a Moroccan boy, Idris, who had rescued her from the ocean. Idris had the male half of an ancient erotic tattoo, of which she herself had acquired the female counterpart in a local tattoo parlour. Together, the two halves of the tattoo meant 'Perfect Love' and allowed their owners to experience each other's pleasure. Nick initially doesn't believe her story, but when she shows him the tattoo on her breast, he is convinced. Jealous of Nadine's exhilarating experience with Idris, Nick redoubles his efforts to seduce her, but she continues to resist.

When Nick wakes in their hotel room the next morning, Nadine has gone and so has the money. Instead, a Moroccan detective is sitting on the edge of his bed. He is investigating the shooting and looking for Nadine.

Nick's search for Nadine and the other half of her mysterious tattoo will lead him on a dangerous journey into a world of betrayal, confusion and subterfuge as the tale twists its way to the final conclusion.



Articles

Finding yourself in Africa

Hazel Gould, Assistant Director

We meet *Tangier Tattoo*'s protagonist, Nick sitting in a café 'hanging out with his lonely planet'. Any guide to Morocco will tell you immediately that Tangier is a place to arrive in and leave from, but not a place to stay. Nick clearly feels differently. He has read that Tangier is dirty and dangerous, but rather than heading straight to the traveller friendly haven of Chefchaouen, he stays to find adventure. He wants to have a *real* experience. As a young western traveller he is under the shadow of his hippy-trail ancestors who journeyed into Africa without the help of the Lonely Planet, or the comfort of an internet café.

I first went to Morocco with three girlfriends in the summer of 2002, all of us wanting to see the world and work on our tans. It was the friendly face of backpacking: sufficiently different to remind us that we were in another continent, but with enough European influence to make us feel at home. We could even wheel out our GCSE French to order our café au laits. We had a great time, lots of laughs, a few adventures and far, far too much cous cous (I can only now look at a bowl full without feeling weary.) We came home healthy and happy and with bags full of sequined slippers.

But just like Nick, and, I think, western travellers across India and South East Asia, we look to the original backpacked pioneers with jealousy and admiration. We feel like we're cheating because it's all so easy. They really had to work at it – to understand the food, the money, the people, to find somewhere to stay. They wrote the book that we're reading, and we imagine they did it all in the back of a camper van. In 2005 if you want to drive through Africa, you book from London on the Internet.

Nick stays in Tangier because he wants to set himself apart. He doesn't want to make friends with a group of students from Leeds University, he wants to find the latter day Paul Bowles and William Burroughs who are no doubt getting high in a café just around the corner. He'd rather swap a poem or a painting for dinner than use his Visa. He wants to get lost, and he wants to find himself.

Several friends of mine have come home from Thailand, horrified to have seen a Starbucks on the island of Koh Samui. My guess is they discussed globalization whilst sipping a skinny latte, and I don't blame them, we are conflicted by our now-small world, we want to buy an all-inclusive ticket from STA, but we want to be the only ones. We want to be the first ones to go to the hot new destination: Is Budapest the new Prague? Is Krakow the new Budapest? Is Tangier the new Marrakesh?

There is hope amongst young men and woman like Nick, that in travelling away from home, somewhere we will find the corner of the world that hasn't yet been co-opted by the corporations. In searching for something new, Nick finds himself bought up and sold off again by the biggest corporation of them all.

The Fat Lady has left the Building: Why did we write *Tangier Tattoo*?

Ask a group what springs to mind when they hear the word 'opera' and most people will describe fat ladies, Viking helmets, ridiculously drawn-out death sequences and singing loud enough to shatter glasses. Dispelling the myth of these stereotypes has long been a priority for Glyndebourne, and since the establishment of the Education Department in the 1980s, creating greater access to great opera has been central to the company through workshops, residencies and new commissions.

In February 1997, Glyndebourne premiered *Misper*, an new opera for 5 professional singers and supporting cast of 120 9-13 year olds. The opera provided an unforgettable experience for the young people involved - its success was phenomenal, and was loved by critics and audiences. Following its huge success *Misper's* creative team – John Lunn (composer), Stephen Plaice (librettist) and Stephen Langridge (director) were commissioned to write a second opera, this time cast with young people aged between 16 and 20. Like *Misper*, the content of this opera was based on research undertaken in local schools and colleges. The result, *Zoë*, premiered in 2000 and was subsequently made into a film by Channel 4.

Tangier Tattoo has been commissioned from John Lunn and Stephen Plaice and again raises the target age for both performers and audiences. Following a similar research process, talking to students and young people in the work force, *Tangier Tattoo* treats the concerns of people in their 20's and in the early 21st Century. Travelling, looking for adventure and 'finding yourself' provide a background for the story, which develops into a filmic thriller, with music drawn from across the world and across genres.

The Writing of Tangier Tattoo Stephen Plaice, librettist

No one questions the efficacy of the thriller in the novel and on film, even in straight theatre, but can it ever work in opera and music theatre? There is, of course, *The Turn of the Screw*, that could be considered a psychological thriller, or the gothic intrigue of *Phantom of the Opera*, or, more recently, *The Woman in White*. But a thriller with the genuine pace, suspense and sinuousness of plot that has come to characterise the genre in modern cinema, isn't that well beyond the scope of the musical stage?

John and I both have backgrounds in TV drama as well as in opera-writing, so we felt we had the experience to attempt a synthesis, and to try to produce a genuine musical thriller. This was no mere technical exercise. Our brief was to produce a page-turner for 'the lost generation', to include the missing tranche of audience between 20 and 30 who rarely pass through the doors of a theatre, let alone an opera-house. So we

wanted to find a form in which this audience would already be visually and musically literate.

The first task was to create a cinematic thriller structure for the libretto. We decided the story should be contemporary. The Cold War had been very fertile ground for the thriller. It had prospered in Berlin and Vienna. These were the cities, on the edge of the two power-blocks, places where both sides could operate clandestinely while maintaining a public façade. We looked for such an environment in the post 9/11 world.

I had always loved this dualistic multi-national atmosphere in the film *Casablanca*. I had read somewhere the inspiration for the screenwriters of the film was not *Casablanca* at all, but Tangier (it was actually shot in California and Utah), and this led me to the idea of setting our thriller in the city. Tangier had been an International Zone until the mid 1950s. What activities would now take place in a city hovering between the European and the Islamic worlds, one moreover, where thousands of would-be migrants flock every year trying to find passage to Europe?

I also knew that the production of marijuana (kif) was still huge in the Rif mountains to the east of Tangier, and that much of this crop found its way up into Europe. What, I speculated in the libretto, would be the result (in much the same way that the paramilitaries took control of the drugs trade in Northern Ireland). It was only after we had returned from our visit to Tangier, some two years after beginning the piece, that I saw a report on *Newsnight* that described the gradual take-over of the kif-trade in the Rif by jihadists. This was reported in the aftermath of the Madrid bombing, for which Moroccan suspects were arrested. The suspicion also was that this attack had been funded by Moroccan drugs trade out of Rif. A spooky coincidence, perhaps, except that it was entirely predictable politically. I had simply been following the same logic in the story, as the jihadists had in reality.

One of the central ideas behind the piece is the way in which we project ideas of romance and adventure onto foreign places. The 19th Century took this as far as projecting their own eroticism onto the East and seeing it safely reflected back to them. I'm not sure if this projection has not continued subsequently in much contemporary travel writing. Tangier had also been one of the focal destinations of the Beats. So I thought that one of the central characters should be a starry-eyed young Englishman on his travels, affecting the life-style of the beat generation, reading Burroughs and Bowles in situ, long after the circus had moved on. The adventure that Nick becomes embroiled in Tangier is much more serious than he bargained for, and Nadine, the American woman he falls in love with, not at all the romantic stranger he dreamed in his student flat.

Nadine, by contrast, is coming from the opposite direction, a woman involved in real danger who finds her duty to her country suddenly conflicted with her love for the over-eager, idealistic Englishman. The Tangier Tattoo they both acquire is the symbol of this projection – the wish for the true and perfect love that only seems to exist elsewhere, in exotic foreign places, among strangers, which we want stamped on the body so that its otherness becomes part of us.

Biographies

John Lunn - Composer

My first major musical influence came from my father. He was a sax player and we used to listen to jazz a lot in the house when I was growing up. At first I wanted to play the cello, but there were only vacancies to learn the double bass, so I took that up instead, and my father and I started playing together. So as soon as I started making music, I was improvising, which is something that a lot of classically trained musicians never do, so I'm really grateful to my father for that.

Pretty soon I started learning piano and eventually went to Glasgow University. I wanted to avoid a narrow music college education focussed on reproducing what other people had written. Instead I wanted a broader musical education and while I was there I learned to write in just about any musical style you could mention.

After university I came down to London. I was in a band called *Man Jumping* with my composer friend Orlando Gough. We did some work for a lot of dance companies including the London Contemporary Dance studio. Once *Man Jumping* split up, I carried on writing for dance, which led into writing for TV and eventually film.

Meanwhile, I was also doing a lot of education work for Glyndebourne, English National Opera and London Sinfonietta working in schools, colleges and prisons. Doing this work taught me how to write very fast – there's nothing like working with a group of prisoners to focus your song-writing skills! I simply couldn't do what I do now if I hadn't done all that education work.

That education work with Glyndebourne led to *Misper* and *Zoë*. And I think that what made them work out so well was my experience in TV – we approached those operas like we were making a film. Just as when I'm working on TV or film, I made sure that the music always suited the characters rather than me.

I wrote the music for Shane Meadows' film *Once Upon a Time in the Midlands* which was premiered at the 2002 Cannes Film Festival and have done a lot of music for television. Most recently, I wrote the music for *20,000 Streets Under the Sky* and I'm currently doing the music for *Bleak House*, a 16 part BBC series which comes out this autumn. *Tangier Tattoo* draws on all of my experience writing for the screen together with a team of people I first worked with in Lewes Prison in the 1990s – fusing both strands of my work. It builds on what we started in *Misper* and *Zoë* into what we hope will be a totally new genre of music theatre.

I started writing as a teenager short stories for the school magazine (mainly about love and murder!). In my twenties I wrote novels (fortunately unpublished) under a solitary lamp and watched the night develop through purple curtains. I was already working as a translator for the theatre, turning out English versions of foreign plays (I'd studied languages at university). I think that taught me a lot about dramatic structure.

I started writing poetry seriously in my late twenties. It was a very romantic existence, and kept me poor and true, but my relationships in life never matched up to my expectations and invariably ended badly. I thought I had to pursue my art at the expense of my life, because that's what I had read in Yeats and Rilke. But later, when I looked deeper, I thought again.

I got a job as writer in residence at Lewes Prison, where I worked for seven years. That gave me a completely new agenda. I met more heartbreak and more murder than my earliest stories could ever have imagined. Inevitably I began writing about crime. A play about the Brighton trunk murders in 1934 brought me some critical success, and I was head hunted by *the Bill*. I wrote over twenty episodes based on my experiences at Lewes.

When Glyndebourne was invited to work in the prison, I turned my hand to libretto writing for the opera. I found I was suited to the medium because of my combined experience in theatre, narrative and poetry. Opera allows for the development of huge and extraordinary ideas, which could never be commissioned for TV.

I still write poetry, but you have to earn that from experience, before the Muses speak to you. I got the life eventually too. I didn't marry until my mid forties, and then it was to an opera singer! We now have three children. But I think I was right to wait. My dad once said to me ~ writers don't earn any money till they are forty. He was right, but I've had an amazing life so far, and I'm doing what I always wanted to do.

Stephen Langridge - director

I studied drama at Exeter University. It was a very practical and wacky course – three years of experimenting and devising. During my third year I saw a performance which persuaded me that I needed to get involved in opera: Omar Ebrahim (who plays the Detective in *Tangier Tattoo*) played Mr Punch in Birtwistle's *Punch and Judy* with Opera Factory. It was the most passionate committed performance I had ever seen – and exactly what I thought theatre and opera should be. I wrote to David Freeman, the director of Opera Factory, and asked if I could get involved somehow. I worked for the company for the next few years first as a volunteer (I took Thursday mornings off to sign on the dole) then as assistant director, co-director and finally as director. Inspiring times. Some shows were brilliant, some appalling – but I count myself as very lucky to have been involved with such a wonderful, crazy bunch of artists.

The other crucial strand of my work is devising music theatre work with non-professionals: in prisons, schools, hospitals, South African townships, with disabled people, with elderly people... This so-called education work has taken me into very unlikely places and has fed back into my other work. For instance: Stephen Plaice, John Lunn and I first worked together in Lewes Prison developing pieces with groups of inmates – this is where we forged our working method.

These two strands have come closer and closer over the years – through large scale community productions like *Misper* and *Zoë* at Glyndebourne, and through using the skills gathered in community work in developing fully professional work. *Tangier Tattoo* is a continuation of those experiments with the art form called opera – a form which I believe can express the dreams, emotions and fears of contemporary life just as well as has at any time since 1600.