

A Frantic Assembly and Drum Theatre Plymouth Production

franticassembly

DRUM THEATRE
PLYMOUTH THEATRES



STOCKHOLM

by Bryony Lavery

A Comprehensive Guide
for students (aged 16+),
teachers & arts educationalists.
By Scott Graham



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ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND

A Comprehensive Guide

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Samuel James and Georgina Lamb
Photo Scott Graham

Contents

- 3 **Why write this?**
- 4 **Stockholm syndrome**
- 5 **A love story**
- 6 **The illusion of objectivity**
- 7 **The stages of development**
- 8 **The development work:**
(from the notebooks of Scott and Steven)
 - Cuddles
 - The Stockholm Recipe
 - Kitchen kiss
 - Slava coat trick
 - Kitchen feet
- 12 **Day one**
- 13 **Kali and Todd** - what's in a name?
- 14 **Friends like these**
- 15 **Tasks:**
 - The post it notes
 - The compilation CD
- 17 **Sketching the show**
- 18 **The set:**
 - The kitchen
 - The stairs
 - The 'dangerous' bed
 - The attic
- 21 **'Us'**
- 22 **The phone**
- 23 **Scenes:**
 - Knives and forks
 - Tea towels
 - The fight
 - Putting food away
- 26 **I only have eyes for you**
- 27 **Their dance**
- 29 **The bed**
- 30 **Out of the kitchen, into the kitchen**
- 31 **The Soundtrack of their lives -
The use of Music in Stockholm**
(by Steven Hoggett)
- 32 **The image**
- 33 **Directors' note**
- 34 **Last minute discoveries**
- 35 **Suggested essays**
- 36 **Inspiration and links**

Why write this?

This is our fifth resource pack. It is written, partly, to give an insight into the work of Frantic Assembly but it is not just a tome of exercises. There will be exercises along the way but I hope that it serves to show where ideas come from and how a show is put together. The intention is to make devising theatre seem more accessible. Hopefully the reader will feel more confident in their own work knowing how we cobble things together. I hope it serves to demystify the process. It is not just about how we did it. I hope it ultimately gives inspiration to how you can do it.

If I have quoted the play text anywhere (Oberon ISBN 9781840028003) I will include page numbers in brackets. Also, if there appears to be double spaces in the text, like this...

Todd Two years ago only two years ago? (p.25)

it should be noted that this is how the text appears in the final draft. It is intentional. Bryony likes to indicate a thought or shift in thought in her dialogue.



Samuel James and Georgina Lamb and Scott Graham
Photo Sandro Martini

Stockholm Syndrome

Stockholm Syndrome can easily be researched. Any search engine will quickly provide you with links to the basic background information.

Although the syndrome has probably always existed it takes its name from a heist at the Sveriges Kreditbank in Stockholm, Sweden, on the 23rd of August, 1973. Two armed ex-convicts kept four bank employees captive for six days. What captured the world's attention was the fact that when it came the captives resisted the rescuers attempts to free them. A bond had grown between captors and the captives. One of the female captives even became engaged to one of the convicts after release.

This extreme behaviour fascinated psychologists who eventually christened this kind of human response Stockholm Syndrome. It has been applied to people in abusive relationships, in the armed forces as well as people in kidnap situations. It is obviously the domestic situation we are interested in here.

The ways in which Stockholm Syndrome can take hold are laid out in Ramit Sethi's very clear paper 'Kidnapping the Mind' Stockholm Syndrome Examined.' I have highlighted, in bold, the ways in which these stages correspond to the lives of Todd and Kali.

1. Hostages begin to identify with captors as a defensive mechanism
Because I can't stand my parents for fucks sake!
Because I hate how they treat you!
Because I want to be with just you on my birthday (p.48)
2. Rescuers become part of the outgroup
I am not going to let that mad bitch ruin our day! (p.29)
3. Personal bond grows with captors
Dearest darling beautiful wonderful thing
Do you know how much I love adore lust fantasise want need have to have must have love passionately eternally perpetually love you desire you want you? (p.43)
4. Emotional distancing and denial of situation
It's like getting to the summit of the medium-difficult climb
the violence then the after is the best bit (p.69)

...her playful punching of the six-pack she is so proud of calls forth a pain similar only to an uber-tough exercise regime (p.69)

There is simply no way of telling anyone outside of this
How attractive it is true remorse
Because it is real
She feels it from the bottom of the heart... (p.70)

It should be noted that this is all inspired by the survival instinct of the 'victim'.

What results is an alienation of the people who might be able to intervene. In Stockholm there are the unanswered messages on the home phone. The tone of each (Louise apart) suggests that the caller is aware that they risk further alienating our couple. The parents especially are walking on eggshells.

Are you alright, Todd?
Why don't you drop in? Just for coffee or something...
Bring Kali... both of you be lovely to see both of you... (p.74)

Stockholm Syndrome can leave the 'victim' with a fascinating justification for this alienation. The example Ramit Sethi gives is

'I want to live but if the FBI kicks down the door, they might shoot me or make my captor shoot me. In fact, if it weren't for the FBI surrounding this building, we wouldn't be in this situation'

This transference of blame and denial, coupled with the genuine love they must feel for each other keeps this couple coming back for more and keeps their friends and family at bay.

See Kidnapping of the Mind: Stockholm Syndrome Examined by Ramit Sethi - www.ramitsethi.com



Samuel James and Georgina Lamb
Photo Sandro Martini

A love story

Samuel James and Georgina Lamb
Photo Scott Graham



When people in abusive relationships are asked why they stay the clichéd answer is often 'Because I love him/her'. We thought that this was a loaded question. If the answer is so easily dismissed as a cliché then maybe the person asking the question is not actually interested in the answer. Maybe the question is the disguise for the suggestion 'You are an idiot for staying.'

We felt that this was unfair. What if the answer was not merely a cliché? In the light of Stockholm Syndrome it felt that we must try to take this answer at face value. If the abused believe they mean it then who are we to suggest they don't?

To truly take on this subject matter and to get within such a relationship we had to, in the words of Lyndsey Turner (a young theatre director who was working with us during one of the development stages) get a wider definition of love.

Because of this, we are desperate for Stockholm to be a love story. It is not told from an objective position after the break up of an abusive or destructive relationship. It is told from the subjective heart of an existing relationship. It is their love story.

Just as we need our audience to identify with these people, we also need them to believe there is love in the lives of our protagonists. This is not a cry for help. The point is that the survival instincts and the love they feel is stopping any notion of a cry for help. Their instinct is to make their bond stronger. They are compelled to get closer rather than further away.

We realised that this production had to go to some really dark places but early on we discussed how that was probably Bryony's job (bar the fight). Steven and I set ourselves the task of creating a very loving physical world. We felt that this might help achieve a balance and not tip the show over the edge into the psychotic.

Their actions appear to be a cyclical pattern of destruction but this is only because of their very human feelings of, and seduction to, remorse. This allows forgiveness and compassion for weakness, all of which, in any other context would appear to be positive values but here merely allow the pain to continue. It may sound absurd and it certainly is difficult but we have taken this as a sign that at the very heart of the play these two people really do love each other.

The illusion of objectivity

This is a couple who are as close as close can be. They know everything about each other. They have such a strong impression of the effect they have as a couple too

**They love going to matinees in the afternoon...
they are a thorough couple (p.24)**

Everybody's moved back to watch them... (p.41)

**Every time... every time they dance together...
a serried global gasp of awe (p.42)**

They appear to have a very astute awareness of themselves, their strengths and their limitations

**We have been through all this
What did we agree?
What did we agree?**

**We agreed that retro jealousy
Over past lovers was a waste of cosmic time...
Dumb
Stupid**

**That we trust one another
That our love is strong impenetrable
can
Move mountains
Ford rivers
Survive three months of Serbian builders (p.43)**

But what do they really know of each other and them as a couple? What can we truly understand when we are so close to something that it is all we can see?

While talking about this project we have relived our past relationships and noted the absolute passion we shared for some people only to see them in a different light the day the relationship failed. This seems obvious but the point is the shift of opinion is seismic. There are clearly things we can see now that we could not see before.

We talked about this as a failure of objectivity yet we also noted that at the time we had absolute belief in our ability to be objective. It was this that led us to believe that those daring to be critical of the relationship were completely wrong. In fact any attempt to comment on the relationship actually strengthened its bond and reinforced its perfection.

Once outside the relationship this seems absurd. All the things we knew about 'us' were transient. Potential objectivity was an illusion.

Within this relationship - remorse, stoicism, bravery, forgiveness are all celebrated. In any other context they should be but here they allow this agony to continue. If they could see what we could see they would not celebrate those virtues in this context.

But of course they cannot. They will not, until the day one of them actually breaks the cycle of destruction and walks away.

And this might be an overly optimistic outlook for this loving couple. The character/s 'Us' certainly think it will end in disaster rather than epiphany. (p.73)



Samuel James
Photo Sandro Martini

The stages of development



Georgina Lamb and Samuel James
Photo David Sibley

I have outlined where the idea for this production originally came from in the directors' note in the play text (and later in this pack). There were many stages before we started work on the actual production. Once we had agreed that there was a show in the idea and that Stockholm Syndrome was a fascinating area to explore we still had to find a writer to join us. Even at this early stage we had decided that it was going to be called Stockholm.

Director John Tiffany (Black Watch) thought he had the perfect suggestion. He even told this person that they were the perfect person. Luckily that person agreed. Even more luckily, after an initial and impressive meeting, we agreed. And the subject matter and the gift of our gab was enough to convince Bryony Lavery that she wanted to be part of this.

We had several meetings after that point where we talked about the world we wanted to visit and how we were desperate not to make a show about domestic violence. The next stage was to convince the National Theatre Studio about the potential of the collaboration so that they could support the project by providing us with some development time.

Having succeeded in that task they then programmed us in for two sessions of development workshops. The first session was for two weeks and the second was for one week.

For the first session we employed two dancers and two actors. We knew we were looking to create a two hander but we wanted to have the ability to set actor/character tasks as well as dancer/movement tasks. The idea was that they would all have an input into the two characters giving them a well rounded naturalistic and physical potential.

In reality we found actions were speaking much louder than words. The physicality we were exploring was opening up

such a complex and truthful world with believable and complicated characters but we were not really finding their words. Bryony was not concerned in the slightest. She was getting such a thrill working in this way, just absorbing the physical language we were employing. She convinced us she was happy with this and that it was useful so we were more than happy to just keep giving her more.

Between this session and the next Bryony, clearly inspired by the work done so far, produced her first version of Stockholm.

Thrilled by this we then had a few meetings before taking an updated version into the second session at the National Studio. This time we cast two performers as Todd and Kali and began work on the text and further physicality. It was another really successful session.

All of this gave Bryony plenty of food for thought. She then started work on a more complete version. By March 07 she had completed this draft.

One more updated draft just as we began rehearsals and we had the version you find in the printed text. The intention with this text is to give an insight into the process and the important role the physicality had in its genesis.

We have said many times that the text comes first in our rehearsal processes but Stockholm was an example of movement inspiring text first and then vice versa.

The support of the National Theatre Studio was not only crucial in the development process for Stockholm but also the development of Scott Graham, Steven Hoggett and Bryony Lavery. We learned so much in those weeks, about ourselves, each other and a truly collaborative way of working.

The development work

Samuel James and Georgina Lamb
Photo David Sibley

Stockholm is a very adult show. Even though it deals with the emotions and situations I was experiencing when I was 17 (as were others, this show is not autobiographical) it took me many years to be able to process and understand them.

This is crucial to Stockholm. Such an understanding is impossible when you are in the middle of such a relationship.

Being a complex adult show the development period was rightfully complex and adult. A lot of the techniques we employed may not transfer too well to inexperienced performers or the generally inexperienced in life! We spent a lot of time talking with our practitioners, sharing experiences and testing our empathy to the limit. This is a very difficult and provocative subject.

I will try to go through some of the more accessible exercises. They may not all break down into step by step exercises but they may be useful to adapt to your own ends.

Cuddles

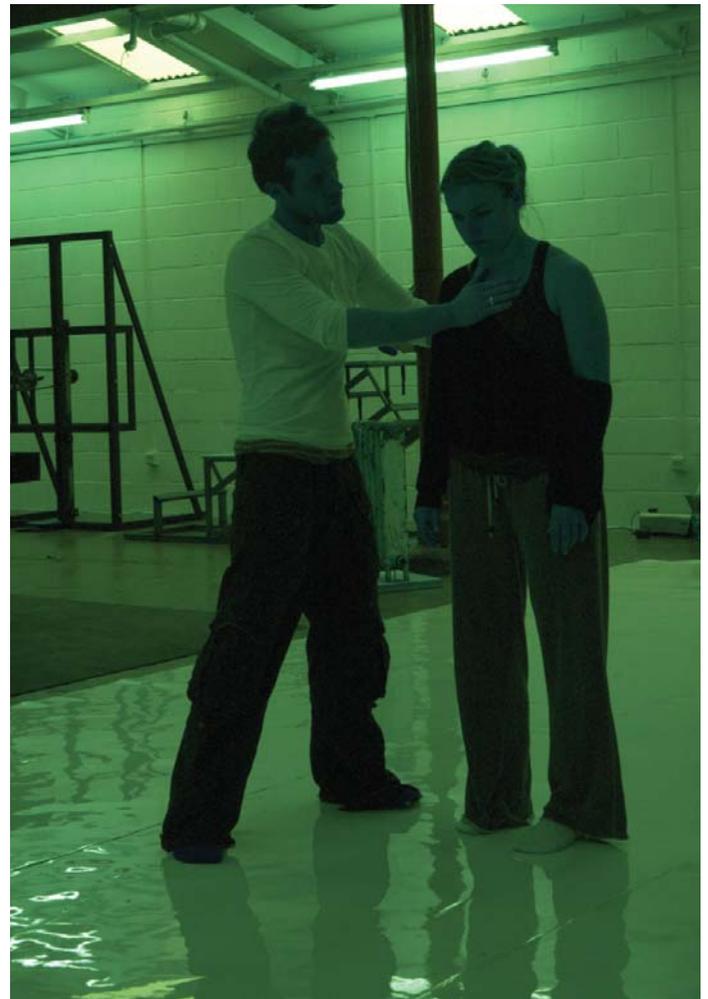
This exercise was set on the floor but the idea was that it exists in a bed. One performer is gently but insistently putting the other to bed. They caress and reassure, they manipulate and place the other exactly where they want them. They can hold them or rock them but the other does not go to sleep. They submit but they do not fully relax.

We broke this exercise into 3 parts. Each run was soundtracked with music unknown to the performers. They do not know what tune will accompany them and they must not respond to it.

1 This is the simplest version where it appears there is a real love and bond between the two. They seem to need and appreciate each other. It is simple and it is beautiful.

2 The second version has a subtle twist. The person being put to bed never takes their eyes off the other no matter what position they are put in. The eyes are alive, wary, ready. This presents a fascinating tension and makes us question the motives of the carer. Are they out to hurt the other? Can they be trusted? Does the person being put to bed want to go? Are they scared of the other? Why can't they stop them?

3 The third is much more complex. We instructed the 'caring' performer to occasionally press or squeeze too hard on the other. The other was to express panic that would have



to be met with reassurance from the 'carer'.

What developed was a weird and disturbing world of fear and dominance. The squeezing moments were palpably life threatening but were constantly addressed in this loving and reassuring manner that would allow this game to continue. It suggested a very private and possibly warped world.

We took it further. We allowed them to talk occasionally but the music was loud enough to drown them out. We could not hear them but we knew something was passing between them. This was intriguing.

We allowed the exercise to run past the end of the music track so that their mysterious words were now apparent. These were often very shocking. They offered us glimpses into sado masochistic and highly sexual worlds. One example ended with one character gently begging to be released as they needed to go to the toilet while his partner ignored him and tried to reassure him while gradually increasing the pressure she was exerting on his bladder.

We had found a very complex and disturbing world, a million miles away from the safety of stage 1. It was to get more complex however.

We repeated the above example but this time, when the music stopped she did not continue the torture. She walked away and the victim screamed at her to continue as he was not ready to stop.

All of this served to emphasise the complexities of other peoples relationships and how easy it is to make a judgement about them from the outside without having the whole picture. It also blurred the lines between victim and aggressor.

The exercise sparked many interesting conversations about character and relationships. It was never going to be in the show but it was extremely helpful and illuminating.

The Stockholm Recipe

I have just found something I had forgotten about in an old notebook of mine.

After the development sessions we felt that we had the Stockholm recipe. That is, all the ingredients we needed to place into the mix. Below is what we felt was the recipe for the dramatic arc.

It is interesting to look back now on this list and compare it to the existing show and note how true we have been to it. It was written on the 12th December '06 as an attempt to bring together what we had so far and think about it as a show.

A couple

'Us'

A day

Some events

A plea. Some demands. (An ultimatum - the deadline is reached and passed)

A recipe/A confession

A meal is cooked

The last dance

(The end of the world)

It might be really useful to think about your work in this way. Of course, you should not necessarily be reductive but devised theatre and the nature of devising theatre can often mean that we take our focus off things like the dramatic arc.

The Kitchen Kiss

We started playing with the performers moving around each other, walking about the room. They were to be fascinated in each others eyes. They were to explore what changes through proximity and distance from each other. It was a very simple stepping stone to the next stage.

That fascination now moves to the lips. Both performers are fixated on each others mouths. They still explore proximity and distance.

Now one is desperate to kiss the other but can't quite find the moment. They swap this role over so that both get a go at being the one who wants to be kissed.

Then we put them into the 'kitchen' (some desks arranged as work surfaces and sink, cooker, etc.) They set about tidying up or washing and drying. They are now both wanting the kiss but they are both conscious of being watched and know that if it is to happen it must be fleeting and almost disguised. But it is not allowed to happen.



Samuel James and Georgina Lamb
Photo Scott Graham



The final stage is that one of them wants the kiss and is confident it is going to happen. The other is conscious of the eyes that are watching. If one can convince the other or even corner them and make them feel safe or like they can get away with the kiss then it will happen. Similarly the self-conscious one can give a signal to the other that they can't kiss now but that it WILL happen. They must signal this to the other before leaving the set, leaving the other on set tidying up but safe in the knowledge that they will get their kiss.

This was a very warm, tender and funny exercise. It was incredibly sexy too. As fragile as it was it also suggested an extremely complex situation. Without words we still invested in this couple and almost cheered when they showed us that they might be leading the other to another, safer room to kiss.

This was important to us. We wanted to find a way of suggesting this sexiness without it being overtly sexual. We have had a simple rule in rehearsals. It is a phrase we used to inform the actors that they have tipped over the edge from intriguing sexual potential into some pawing, demonstrative, rutting couple from hell. It is the imagined response from the audience and it worked a treat with the performers, instantly getting them to adjust their approach.

It is 'Get a room!'

Or another version...

Kitchen Kiss (from Steven Hoggett)

The actors were put into pairs and each given a kitchen environment consisting of two counters forming a corner and various pieces of cutlery and crockery. They were then instructed to both operate within the kitchen putting things away. By using a music track with the treble turned down, the couple were asked to imagine a dinner party next door that was winding down. In the kitchen, they were asked to find a moment where they might steal a kiss from each other.

Watching the exercise, it became fascinating seeing the two ways in which the kiss might come to fruition. One was in the coincidental meeting of the two bodies/mouths over the honest completion of a particular task that might necessarily bring the two bodies very, very close together. The other was in some ways its opposite, where the two actors would recklessly reach across the space to steal a kiss midway through an action that might have them at totally opposite ends of the space. Witnessing this seemingly random momentary decision between the two proved to be incredibly exciting from the outside.

The two actors were then asked to play a fear of being caught out by other people entering the kitchen. This created near misses within the exercise where the attempt to kiss was thwarted by them either losing their nerve or fearing that somebody was about to enter the kitchen. These moments were great at enhancing the erotic tension in the room as well as a very comic scenario between the two lovers. We came to the conclusion that near-miss kissing where one partner seemed to suddenly pull out whilst the other was still hopeful of a lip lock was always, always funny.

Development of 'Us'

We were interested in our couple as hostages. Not as literal hostages. Nor as being particularly conscious of their hostage status but we wanted to find a way of suggesting another force between them, around them, without them.

We played around with a particularly effective technique that we saw performed brilliantly in Snowshow by Russian clown Slava Polunin. We saw this show in 1996 and it is still doing the rounds!

To replicate our version of this stage trick hang up 3 coats close together, ideally on a coat stand or rack. Two performers then put on the outside arm of the two outside coats but they also nonchalantly put their arm through a sleeve each of the central coat. They then grab at their throats with the arm in the central coat. This coat opens up to suggest the back of a large being that has our two protagonists by the throat. The actors struggle and look up to where the figure's head should be.

When this works, it *really* works.

We tried out actors talking as hostages, as victims of this force that exists between them and renders them helpless.

We had them bark out the demands of the mysterious hostage takers talking to them. We also tried it with the hostage takers talking to us (the audience).

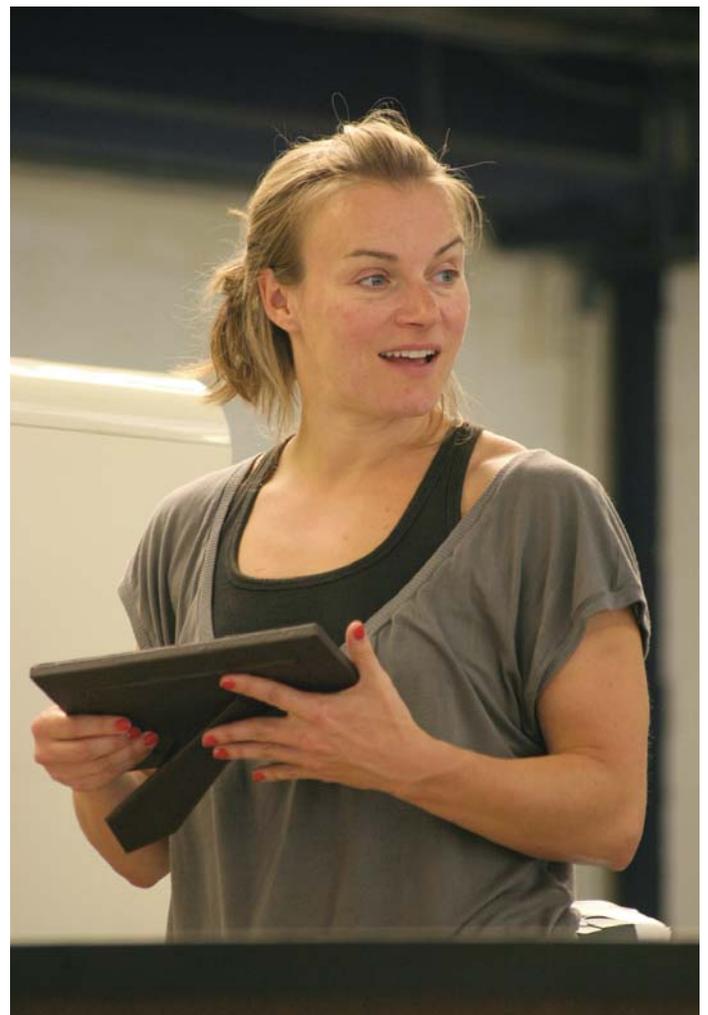
All of this was the groundwork and food for thought for the development of the 'Us' characters.

Kitchen Feet (by Steven Hoggett)

An additional exercise we ran also made use of our makeshift kitchen environment. The actors created a foot sequence that was a freestyle dance routine created in an open space that had no grounding in any formal dance style. The objective was to make a string that would seem like a selection of moves enjoyed by the individual but were seen to be personal in some way, played underneath the self rather than played out. The moves themselves were confident and known but had to retain a sense of privacy. The actors were placed in pairs and taught each other their string. From here, they repeated the exercise of putting things away in the kitchen but this time the floor pattern was made up of them recreating the foot sequence in the

kitchen. The challenge here is for the actors to stay true to the choreography from the waist down but to simultaneously stay true to the waist up exercise of putting away cutlery and crockery.

The resultant effect was of a strange physical union. It became totally believable from the outside that the couple had no idea that they were acting in unison, even when the task brought them very close together spatially. It seemed to give them a very elegant history that needed no enforcement, a synchronicity without effort and, at slower speeds, an achingly beautiful sense of being “the one” for each other.



Georgina Lamb
Photo Scott Graham

Day one

How do you make a start on a production like this?

There are a few formalities to get through on day one. This is the only day the whole production team, the admin staff, the co-producers and the directors will be together in the same room for the whole process. We start by introducing everyone to each other.

Before we commence with a read through with the two performers we show the model box of the set design. This allows everyone to see the complete design and couple that with the words they are about to hear. Although the set is in the room it is spread out around the place because there is not enough height to put it all together.

Then it is the read through. This is a bit nerve-wracking for all. Bryony has not heard Stockholm read before. Sam and George (the performers) have not met until this point. Everyone is looking to see whether there is chemistry and whether the torturous casting process has been worth it!

After the read through we have a quick chat and the room empties out. From then on it is just the production team and it is time to get on with it.

Even then we decide to have a bit of play time. After a warm up we look at some contact devising techniques. As the two performers have never worked together and one has vastly more physical experience it seemed like

the right thing to do to let them play for a while. It also allowed us to see how they worked together and to gauge how we should progress.

We used a technique we call 'Round - By - Through.' Here the performers are given the task of making a short string of material that is inspired by the title words of the exercise. They can move round, by or through their partner. They might take turns to do a couple of moves and set these. They should have around 12 moves.

Once they had this and could repeat it smoothly we then set them various new tasks to adapt these moves. They were to squeeze the space out of the moves so that there was much more contact between them.

We also looked at techniques that will allow you to lift your partner safely in a way that does not rely on strength. We went through exercises that helped identify when a lift was possible and how to safely integrate such moments into the string of material already set.

None of this would go into the show. It was merely training and an attempt to get the performers to get to know each other and develop the trust they will need to work together and attempt much harder things.

The point is that we did not rush into the creation of the production. We knew we had to all get to know each other and explore potential in a fun way rather than meet what could be an immovable object full on.



Steven Hoggett and Scott Graham
Photo David Sibley

Kali and Todd - what's in a name?

Type Kali into a search engine and you will find the reason behind Bryony's thinking. Kali is a Hindu Goddess of destruction and annihilation. Not that this has any real bearing on the production. It is merely Bryony's play with words.

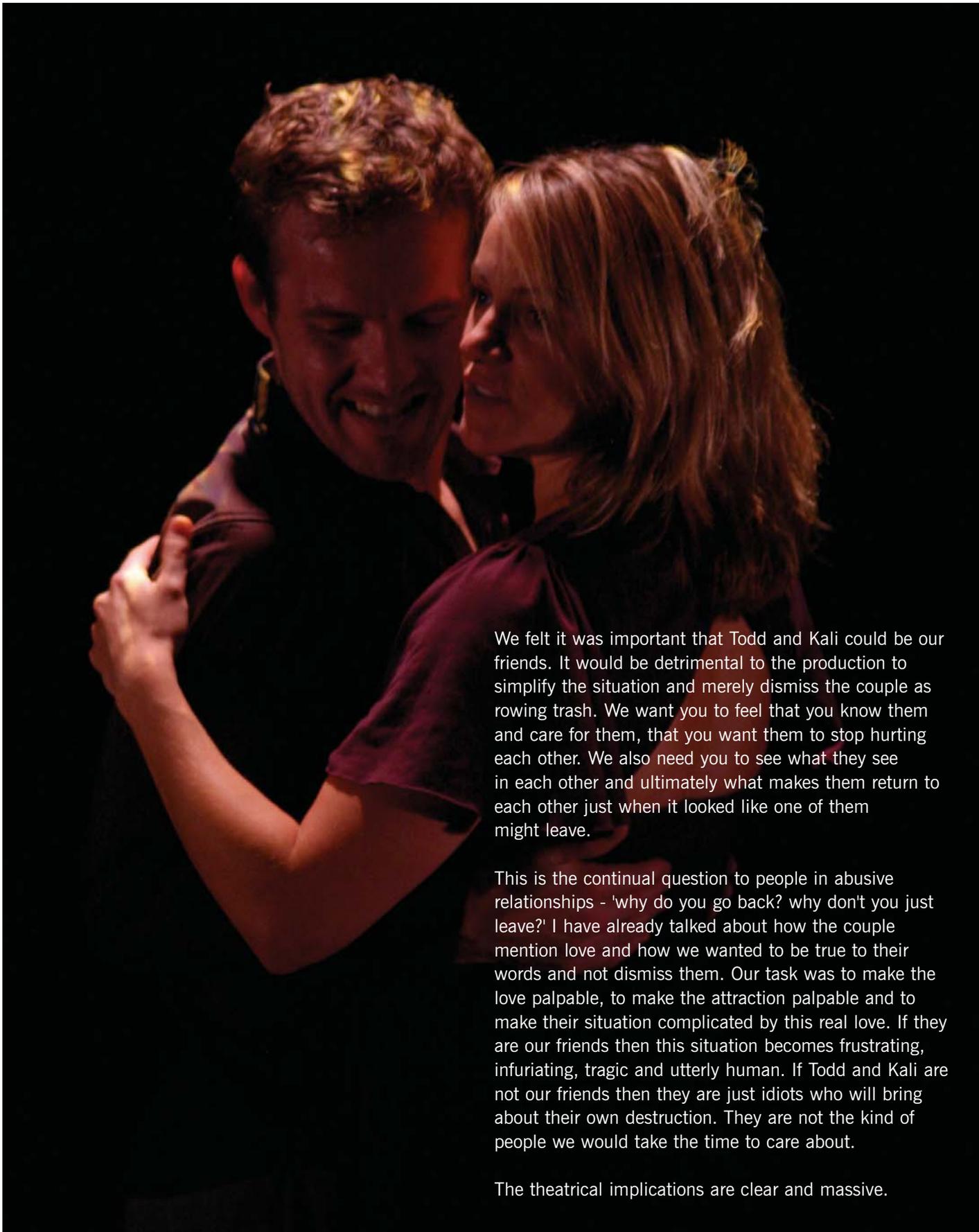
Similarly Tod (minus the extra 'd') is German for death.

If there is any significance here it is in the coming together of these two names, Death and Destruction. The idea being that there is a combination of personalities that may inspire this kind of situation. This may not be psychologically correct but it is an interesting thought that as soon as Todd (Death) introduces himself to Kali (Destruction) in the restaurant, their future is set.



Georgina Lamb
Photo Scott Graham

Friends like these



We felt it was important that Todd and Kali could be our friends. It would be detrimental to the production to simplify the situation and merely dismiss the couple as rowing trash. We want you to feel that you know them and care for them, that you want them to stop hurting each other. We also need you to see what they see in each other and ultimately what makes them return to each other just when it looked like one of them might leave.

This is the continual question to people in abusive relationships - 'why do you go back? why don't you just leave?' I have already talked about how the couple mention love and how we wanted to be true to their words and not dismiss them. Our task was to make the love palpable, to make the attraction palpable and to make their situation complicated by this real love. If they are our friends then this situation becomes frustrating, infuriating, tragic and utterly human. If Todd and Kali are not our friends then they are just idiots who will bring about their own destruction. They are not the kind of people we would take the time to care about.

The theatrical implications are clear and massive.

Tasks:

Steven Hoggett
Photo Scott Graham



The post it notes

The performers were instructed to write 10 post it notes to their partner. These could range from the mundane to the earth shatteringly important but had to be the kind of thing you would commit to a post it note and leave for your partner to find.

What would they have written? At what stage in their relationship were these notes written? What would have prompted them?

One performer then leaves them for the other to find around the set. They then leave and the other performer enters the empty set. When this performer finds them they must respond appropriately for the next 10 seconds. This is not a great big theatrical response. Just a moment of thought.

When they have found all the notes they then leave their written notes for the other performer to find and we repeat the process.

This is all about the effect the other has on them when they are not even there. It is about memory and intimate personal history. (Look (if you are old enough) at the effect of the editing in the sex and post sex scene in *Don't Look Now* by Nic Roeg.)

Examples

We need to talk about last night

Order paint!

Washing up?!?!

I bought you something. Be wearing it when I get home



Samuel James and Georgina Lamb
Photo Scott Graham



The compilation CD

Each performer compiles a track list for their partner. These are the songs they feel they might share and hold dear. They both create two separate lists and swap them. The results can be shocking and illuminating. You can discuss them and fight for your reasons for inclusion.

The CD's might be the choices of the individual character or they might be the soundtrack to their love. Either way they should cast a light on what one performer thinks about the couple or their relationship. You may find that both performers have vastly differing views. It is then up to you whether they should work their way to a definitive couple cd or leave the exercise there.

It should be noted that this is not 'our' choice and we might be horrified by some of the songs but that is the point. It is a character exercise for the performers. An opportunity to throw up some surprises.

Sketching the show

This was about giving the performers a chance to live the show naturalistically before they get bogged down in our slightly ad hoc approach. There would be days that the performers would be set such difficult technical tasks that it would be easy to lose sight of this as a performance piece. They had to contend with the repetition of the dance, the manipulation of the set, the handling and execution of all the food and cooking. The 'sketch', while taking up a bit of precious time, was a crucial process. The performers had to hold onto the journey they experience through the piece. This would hopefully make sense of the many head wrecking tasks we would set them.



Georgina Lamb and Samuel James
Photo Scott Graham



Georgina Lamb and Samuel James
Photo Scott Graham

The set:

Stockholm has several domestic settings. These areas were suggested through the development sessions at the National Studio. Each area has a naturalistic logic to it but also has the potential to suggest the battlegrounds that can exist in relationships. The kitchen and the bed seemed particularly potent. Other areas, especially the attic space suggested by the computer equipment and gadgets, seemed places of escape or momentary isolation. The late reference to the unfinished cellar points to the stuff they are suppressing. It is this unfinished area that 'Us' suggests will betray their ultimate destruction (see 'Us').

The kitchen

Why a kitchen? Because it is said that the kitchen is the heart of the home. People tend to gravitate to it.

A kitchen is also a highly charged arena. It is a place of creation and of tension. It is hot. It is where the alcohol is. It has boiling water. It has flames. It has knives. It has unforgiving, hard, sharp edges.

It is the perfect arena to play around with a story that has the potential to flip from romance to violence. The room itself suggests blood and the carving of meat, the processing and disposal of flesh.

Yet this is where this modern couple choose to present themselves. Because they are brilliant in this space. They put away the shopping with a flourish, they entertain, they cook ambitious meals. They set out to have the perfect birthday meal yet are surrounded by the tools of destruction. This, to us, was a delicious tension.

We were fascinated about how the kitchen could so quickly and easily transform from a place of creation to a place of destruction. In one of our development sessions we played around with an Anthony Warrell Thompson recipe for meat. We presented a performer talking to an unidentified person. Using a recipe for leg of lamb with apricots we asked her to change the details so that everything was in the past tense. Every instruction was something she had done, e.g.

'I sliced the tendons... revealing the softer, darker flesh. I removed the flesh from the shin. I sliced a small onion and browned the meat for about 5 minutes'

Far from sounding like Delia Smith, her steady, impassionate, flat tones, directed towards the mystery figure became a thoroughly chilling confession of murder. It was clear she had methodically disposed of a body. And here she was, spilling all to a policeman.

Georgina Lamb and Samuel James
Photo Manuel Harlan



The stairs

We placed their sex scene on the stairs as this made it seem more wild, more daring. It seemed to be the kind of thing the really enthusiastically in love would do!

This also serves to present a part of their house to the audience while holding something back. If it appears to be the total of the set then the audience are in for a surprise as there is much more on the other side of the revolve.

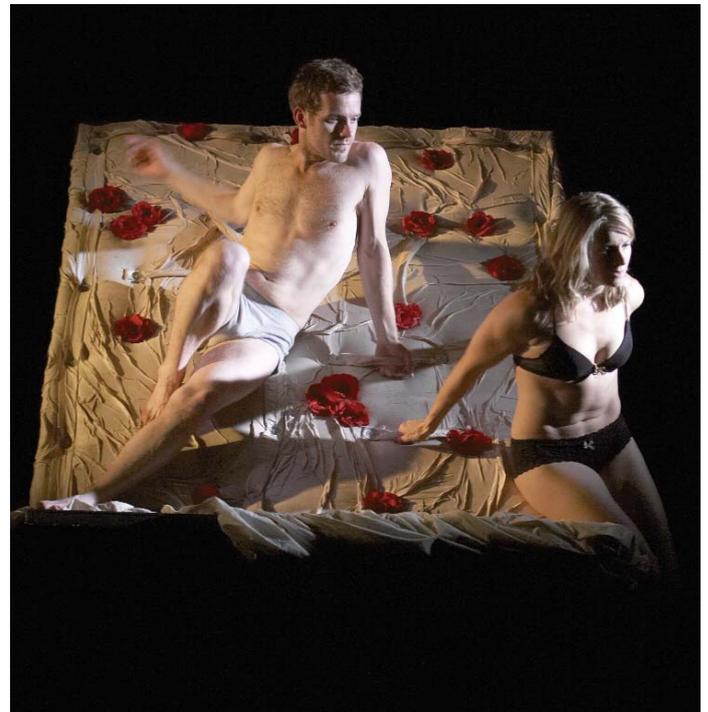
Todd and Kali appear to present themselves to us at the start. It is a very measured and secure presentation

Todd They like to go to matinees in the afternoon (p.23)
They are a thorough couple (p.24)

but just as more of the set is revealed more of this couple is revealed and it is beyond their control. We are being taken deeper and deeper into their world and they are losing control of the presentation.



Samuel James and Georgina Lamb
Photo Sandro Martini



The 'dangerous' bed

We wanted to explore how their bed could work as a metaphor for their relationship. They are an intensely loving yet volatile couple. The bed seemed to be a place of reconciliation and communion. It is the place where they reassert themselves as that loving couple. The insular and exclusive nature of the lovemaking strengthens the bond and reminds them that they are one and everyone else is on the outside.

But we wanted more from the bed. What if there were moments of doubt in the bed? What if it did cross someone's mind, in the middle of the night, that all is not well in this relationship?

Our suggestion to Laura Hopkins (designer) was that it should be a dangerous bed to reflect a dangerous predicament. It might be a bed suspended high above the stage. One that is capable of hosting the most beautiful love making but also by its nature presents an immediate peril.

We wanted the bed to be just like the relationship. It must be wonderful and dangerous. It must be dangerous to be in (a destructive partnership) but also dangerous to leave (the drop to the unknown). Such a physical dilemma would add weight to the controversial decision to stay. It would clearly suggest that leaving is not the easy option.

The attic

We needed a place for Kali to escape to. It would be a place that would suggest a great view out onto the world, presenting the possibility for knowledge and objectivity but would ultimately turn to taunt Kali for her inability to see. It needed to be a place separate from Todd where Kali could fall victim to her brutal insecurities.

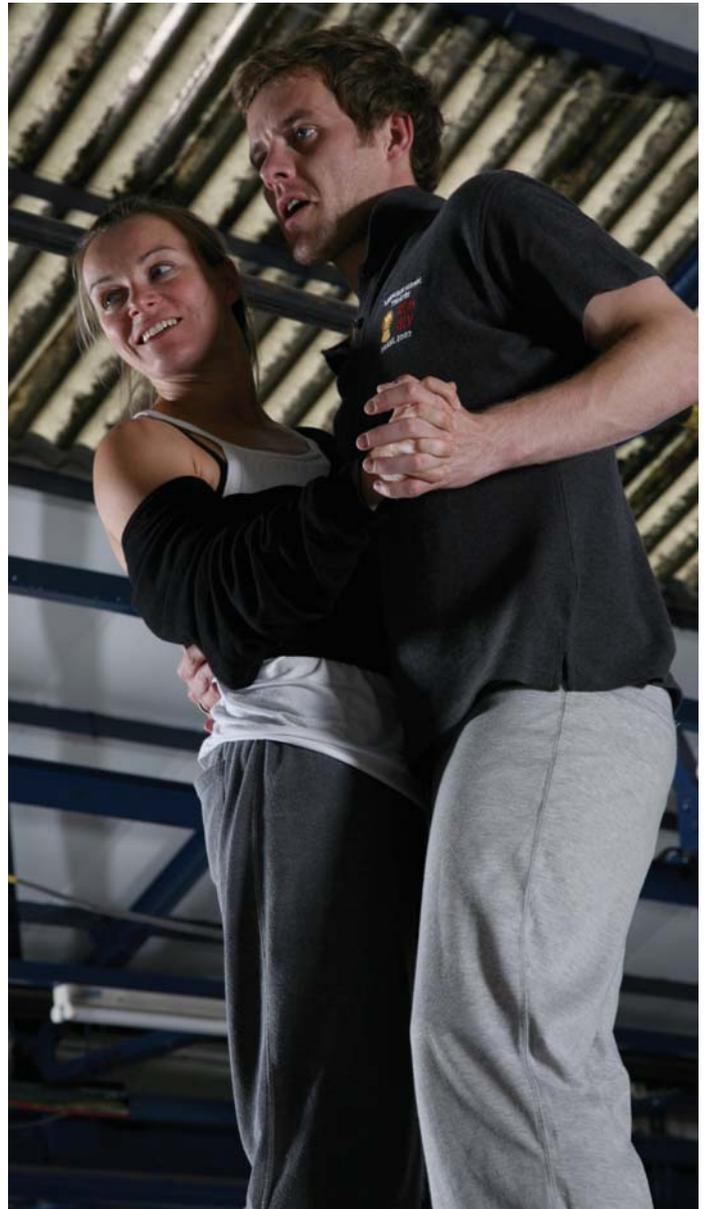
Just like the kitchen and the bed would turn on the couple we wanted the attic to do the same. Laura Hopkins ingeniously designed a 'dangerous' desk that would pull Kali in and terrify her. This involved creating the illusion of a solid desk that was actually filled with water. It has a working laptop apparently resting on it along with a mug and angle poise lamp. Then, inexplicably, it pulls Kali into itself.

It is a very exciting effect. It adds to the notion that 'Us' are desperately trying to tell them something. Does it also suggest that 'Us' is the house? Is 'Us' not just the suppressed personal knowledge of the protagonists but also the knowledge of the only continual observer, ie the house? It is an interesting thought. (see 'Us')

If this is so then this house that they built,

Todd The house that love built (p.30)

is not buying into this notion of the perfect relationship. It knows too much. It has seen too much. Like 'Us' it also knows where it will end.



Georgina Lamb and Samuel James
Photo Sandro Martini

'Us'

The biggest theatrical task set by Bryony has been how to present and make sense of the presence of 'Us'. They are never referred to on stage as Us but that is Bryony's name for them and this may provide insight.

Their ('Us's) language is brutal and uncompromising. They have demands and deadlines. They appear to be the hostage takers keeping our protagonists captive.

But surely in a relationship it is the lovers that keep each other captive?

When you look closely at the words of 'Us' you are reminded that an actual hostage taker's real intention is to get their way and ultimately get out of their predicament. 'Us' actually sees through the cosy world that Todd and Kali believe they live in.

'Us' Not good enough. Just not good enough! (omitted from play text but reinstated in performance text)

So do they know something about Todd and Kali that they do not themselves? They seem to know Kali's insecurities. When she is desperate to be able to see into Todd's head, when she is trying to deal with a rising paranoia about his possible unfaithfulness, 'Us' come straight to the point

**'Us' You're a blind girl
You're a deaf girl
You have learning difficulties
You are mind impaired...**

**...We are very disappointed to discover
you still do not
Realise this!** (p.53)

Near the end of the production Todd and Kali's bed is presented vertically and it appears 'Us' observe from above.

**'Us' They'll find in this cellar
Their children
cold cocoons
which they know won't be breathing
will be still as dolls
smothered** (p.73)

Where does this startling and harrowing vision of the future come from? How do 'Us' know this? Just who are they? It has been the biggest question of the creative process.

For me, a breakthrough was coming to the conclusion that 'Us' represented the knowledge that Todd and Kali, any intelligent person, would have if they could achieve any objectivity about this relationship. But of course they cannot. Being in the relationship is an entirely subjective experience. Therefore 'Us' represents the voice, the knowledge, that is suppressed until the day the relationship ends. It is what they know about themselves and each other but can't see from within the relationship.

The future 'Us' presents is not necessarily a supernatural understanding of what will be. It may simply be the logical conclusion to the world they continue to inhabit. There is a truth in the couple who cannot hurt each other anymore resorting to the diabolical action of hurting the thing the partner loves. This can manifest itself in many ways. Suicide. Destroying property. Destroying pets. Bryony was particularly fascinated by the couple where one of them decides to sacrifice themselves with the children.

There was a recent news story of such a case where a husband had argued with his wife and then gathered his young children and jumped with them from the top of his apartment balcony. The children died. The husband survived. It seemed like the most tragic conclusion possible.

Samuel James and Georgina Lamb
Photo Scott Graham



The Phone

From the beginning Todd and Kali establish their world. It is a home of renovation and investment. It is a nest to live a life together. It is insular and exclusive.

Suddenly the phone rings

Kali Do you want to get that?

Todd No.

This is sacred holy 'us' time.

Do you want to get it? (p.44)

There is the suggestion that the phone going is an intrusion into their lives and answering it would be a betrayal of their quality time together. The lines above sound like a challenge, a test of faithfulness. It appears there are two worlds. The inside and the outside. You cannot be faithful to both. We have already seen this in Todd's refusal to open the birthday card from his mother and in the reward he receives for not doing so.

Kali My Good Boy.

My Wannabee Orphan (p.29)

When they argue Kali quickly cuts off any avenue of communication when she cleverly confiscates his mobile phone.

**Kali And now he can't just call or speak or text or email
Because she knows he won't dare use the landline and she's got this and she's going on the computer so all he can do is sneak out the door...**

Todd I'm just popping down to the shop!

Kali See? (p.49)

Once she has done this she goes in search of another betrayal

**Kali Who has he been phoning?
Who has he been texting? (p.57)**

Kali Hello?

A number she doesn't recognise...

But has been expecting...

A Mystery number (p.52)

Finding this evidence is enough to set off her insecurities. This, the retro jealousy, the drink, and her apparent anger management issues all conspire to kick off one hell of a row. Once it has become physically violent and he finally lashes out at her she changes her tack in her attempt to destroy him.

**Kali Call the police.
He's going down
Where's her phone?
Where's her fucking phone? (p.67)**

This apparent attempt to call the outside world is met by Todd's fascinating response as he takes the clock off the wall, smashes it and declares

**Todd this is the exact time
this thing is over
the time this ends! (p.67)**

What he does next is crucial.

(stage direction) He hands her his mobile

**Todd Here. Use mine
Call somebody
Anybody (p.68)**

This is a direct challenge/plea to engage the outside world. To make that call for help. To break the cycle of destruction. Tragically she denies the offer, instead opting for apologies and affection. It is the seductive quality of this remorse that pulls Todd back into the loving unit and the moment to ask the outside world for help is lost.

Their relationship with the outside world goes a long way to define them as a couple. It is them against us. The phone is the conduit for this other world and is constantly viewed with suspicion and fear

**Kali She can't bear phones.
She's probably phone-phobic that's probably...
Available you're so fucking available these days...
Fucking phones. (p.44)**

Scenes:

Samuel James and Georgina Lamb
Photo Manuel Harlan



1 Knives and forks

We wanted to show the immediate and surprising sexual chemistry that exists between Todd and Kali. Their meeting does not start well but once they drop their guards they soon ignite each other.

We gave the performers a knife and fork each and got them to consider carving up their partners body, finding all the fleshy juicy parts. This was choreographed and placed on the cooker island (doubling as a table in a restaurant) to emphasis the carnal indulgence of the movement, the carnality of the meal they consume in the reality of the moment and the suggestion of the sexual carnality that will follow.

Our intention being to show this sexual frisson we were careful not to be sexually obvious. We felt it was more interesting to suggest how much they might have wanted to consume each other as that language often surfaces when depicting passionate love, ie. 'I love you so much I could eat you'. It was important to us to suggest something that was just beginning but would develop into this kind of passionate love.

The music was identified early on and the material created was then shaped to fit the music best. As the performers became more confident with the material the matching to the idiosyncrasies of the music became more detailed. Some only appeared by accident as we watched runs. It is always, we feel, important to allow time for the inspiration that only comes from taking a step back from your work and seeing if it works and if it can work better.

2 Tea towels

This came from exploring devising techniques early in rehearsal. It actually first surfaced during the development workshops (see **The Development Work**). We were looking at creating a string of material where one person would push or move their partner and almost immediately stop them and send them off some where else. This relationship would change and swap over continuously. It looked like a semi willing game. It has a complex sexiness to it as one partner would submit to the physical commands of the other and then instantly switch to dominance.

Once our performers had created a good string of material we looked at changing the quality of it. First we made it slower and more tender. This allowed for eye contact which made the moment of the switch from domination to submission really alive.

We placed this on the set (the kitchen). We re-choreographed it so that it took in the whole kitchen.

We then looked at changing the dynamic of certain moments. What if some moments retained their original snappy feel? What if others were genuinely quite rough?

What emerged was a possible transition from the remaining anger of their first minor bust up to the resurrection of their big birthday evening (**'Best meal ever?'**).

We still had to chart a naturalistic journey through that transition. What we found was an attempt by Kali to charm



her way back into the good side of Todd and Todd's staged resistance to this, his submitting then him becoming dominant through the game they are playing.

It essentially became our way of staying true to the cliché 'Love is...never having to say you are sorry'. This might not be explicit but we felt it had a useful resonance to us, considering the impact of the moment when she does actually find herself saying sorry and really meaning it. (p.69)

It should be noted that this original string of material also appears in the fight. In the many ways we played with it there were possibilities for quite brutal manipulation of the partner, and as they were not resisting it seemed to point to the moments when Todd is first being attacked long before he lashes out.

We always test our material in this way. Just because we created it for one section does not mean we may be missing a trick in not using it for a different section. To this end we always ask our performers to take any notion of performance or context out of the material until we are ready to test it. We do this by changing the context in which it is viewed as much as altering the dynamics of the moves themselves. That way we still have lots to learn about their potential meaning. It is the union of movement and context that creates meaning. Not the moves themselves.

However... Breaking news. In all probability, by the time you see this production this scene will be cut! The final run in the rehearsal room clarified so much for us and one of the things that might have to be sacrificed is this scene we are so fond of. We thought we had found a missing beat to the play. In isolation the scene was incredibly moving, complex and true but in context it actually destroyed the scenes that followed it.

We have fought to make it work. We have edited it down to a fraction of its original length but now the cut has to be brutal. There may have been a time that we would have resisted this but it feels exhilarating, mature and correct to make this tough call. Our belief in the scene itself is still strong. It is just not right for this production.

So look out for a gratuitous tea towel dance coming to a future Frantic show near you.

3 The fight

A well known theatre critic with an open agenda to rid the world of physical theatre recently wrote that his heart sank when in a production depicting a riot they suddenly burst into stylised movement.

I know how he feels. And I often find myself in agreement with our fiercest potential critics. I heed their words and keep them close to me always.

Our hearts would sink if we felt that we had given you a dance instead of a fight in Stockholm. There have been times in rehearsal where it has looked like we were doing exactly that. At times the choreography became too obviously choreographed. It was not telling the story of the situation. It felt like an interlude. It felt like something placed there instead of the fight. We had to break it apart and remind the performers of the story that needs to be told within it and help them tell it.

We have choreographed something that we want to be as brutal as any fight you could imagine. What complicates this further than the depiction of a riot is that this is two people who love each other, who frustrate each other. It is the quest for annihilation on one side and the denial of violence on the other. It is not all out war. If it was then you would think Todd would win.

I guess it may still fall foul of certain critics but hopefully to most people it will feel true and complex and not just the kind of thing Frantic Assembly feel compelled to do as a crowd pleaser.

(Hmm. Is there some truth in this? Interesting...)

Our way into the fight was to ask the performers to make some ballroom choreography. It was made without them knowing where it might be used. It was to be the start of an attempt to create a fight that had many layers to it. If we had started making pure 'fight' moves then we would be completely tied down in boring stage fighting practicalities. We wanted our performers to feel safe in each others arms before we asked any more of them.

Once they had these moves we looked at how we could brutalise them (the moves, not the performers!). We did this also with the stop start material we employed in the Tea Towel movement section.

We worked a little on it each day, fully aware how dangerous the final scene might be to perform in a kitchen

of hot hobs, hard surfaces and knives lying around. We had to progress steadily so that the performers felt comfortable at each stage and that every possibility of risk was taken into consideration.

I think our gradual approach to this scene took the pressure off the performers. They did not go into it knowing they were making the 'big fight'. They were not given an unreasonable amount of time to finish it. We worked on it off the set until we felt we had enough material and then took it on set. From here we all worked together at finding a way to put it into its physical context.

4 Putting food away

This is a very simple scene born of a very simple desire. We wanted a glimpse of their domestic perfection. We wanted to see where they operate well together.

We imagined them putting away their shopping with an unspoken slickness, not that suggests the automaton or the monotonous but hints at a conscious pleasure in each others company and how they fit together.

We presented them with two bags of shopping containing cereal, fruit, vegetables and just got them to play at this slickness. We watched, noting what worked and what did not. We then had a palette of physicality and tricks to work from.



Georgina Lamb and Samuel James
Photo Scott Graham

I only have eyes for you

Really early in discussions, probably years ago, myself and Steven talked about those couples who drag you into their world and implicate you as they unravel before you. They would argue and look to you as the voice of reason that would prove the partner wrong. This is a frustrating and dangerous position to find yourself.

Initial thoughts about Stockholm suggested the audience should feel dragged into this relationship in just the same way. We even talked about how the audience might play a 'Relate councillor', constantly asked to comment on the couples troubles but also attacked for interfering.

(I should point out the project was not called Stockholm then. Early suggestions for titles included 'Treats' until it transpired that it is, inexplicably, one of Steven's most despised words! And for similar reasons and as long as I have breath in my body you will never see a Frantic show called 'More-ish' or 'Cornucopia').

Years later, when we returned to the project, our interest had turned to Stockholm Syndrome and it suddenly felt wrong for this couple to be so 'public' with their relationship. The emphasis started to shift towards the denial of the problem. We realised that their world is far more insular than we first thought.

Within Stockholm Bryony has identified the problem. Surrounded by views of stars both characters can still only take in the near aspect. They effectively only have eyes for each other.

Stockholm still reads like the protagonists are addressing us throughout. At the moment we are resisting the temptation

to throw everything out to the audience. We like that clash that occurs as it appears the character is talking to us but cannot take his eyes off his partner. We like this presentation of the power this has over them.

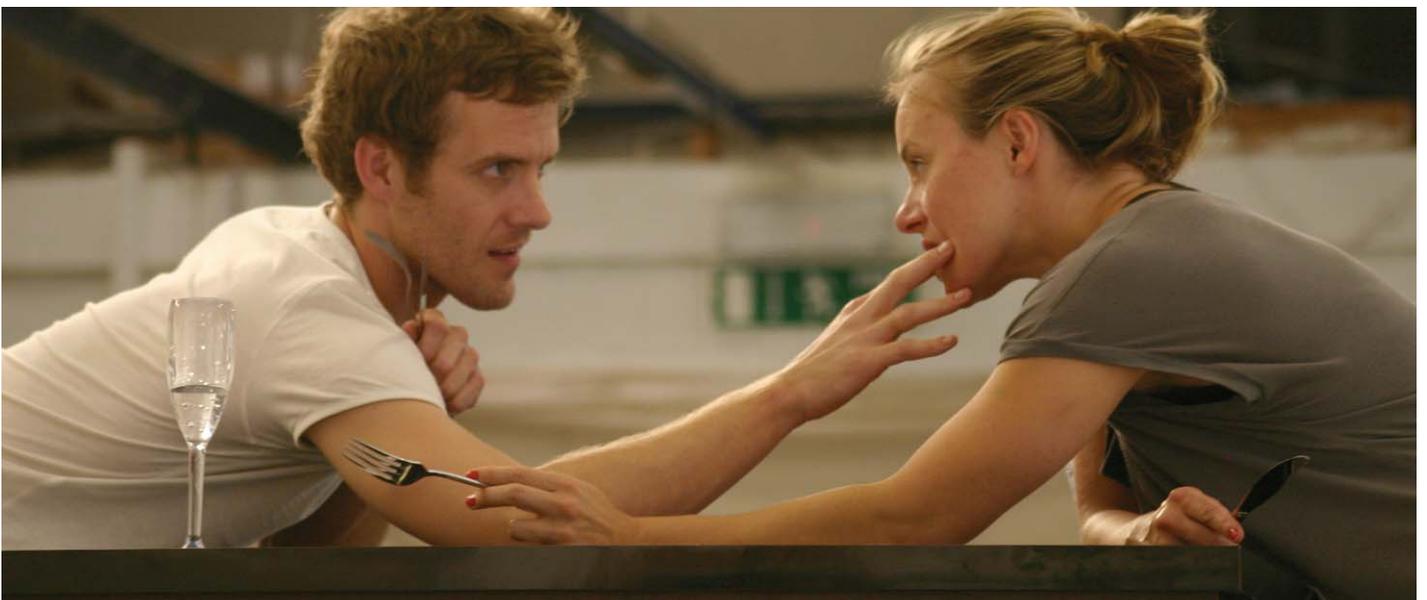
This fixation with the 'near aspect', their partner, their home, is killing any rational objectivity. Even when they appear to be seeing their relationship in a dangerous and negative way they still return to each others gaze and find it impossible to escape.

The practical dilemma we face is 'is this theatrically interesting? Will an audience just feel excluded and not care about them?'

We feel that the alternative (opening the performance out into more frequent direct address) could create the impression that the performance is hosted by the performers or characters. It may appear flippant or smug. We have actually toyed with this approach. Again, really early on we thought it would be a virtue when we thought our couple would want to discuss their relationship. As Stockholm Syndrome began to inform the project more and more it just started to feel wrong to open out to the audience in such a way.

But the practical dilemma remains. We cannot afford to alienate our audience. It will ultimately be about finding the right balance between portraying their consuming obsession with each other and making sure the audience feel they are not being excluded. While this is in our minds now it will not be solved until we can take a look at the whole story. It will hopefully be a very late but minor fix.

Samuel James and Georgina Lamb
Photo Scott Graham



Their dance

We wanted something that belongs to them. Intimate, sexy, challenging, it is also exclusive to them. When they dance they are showing the world they are a couple. The world can only watch in awe.

We wanted them to possess a physicality that might not have been seen in previous Frantic shows. Knowing nothing about ballroom dancing and being avid avoiders of any Saturday night celebrity dance competitions we envisaged the performers developing a hybrid style of movement that could look genuine but was not necessarily stuck in any one style. The point was not that they were certain type of dancers, just that they loved to dance.

This new physical language would allow us to present the joy they find in it and then revisit it at other, less applicable, times. Kali's need to dance contests with Todd's need to cook. When he submits we might see that the moves are not merely repeated but have become angry or inherently dangerous by now being executed on the surfaces of a working kitchen.

There is nothing new in this approach. It is simply the use of motif, repetition and retrograde that any dance piece would employ. What is important to us is that the dance feels different each time for the characters. They are aware of the differing context for each dance. They are aware of the heightened challenge, or the tension of the moment. As this context changes so do their reasons for pulling each other tight. It is not merely repetition. The moves express the characters growing passion, anger, jealousy, insecurity, desire and desperation.

In early development we set our performers the task of making up some ballroom type material (we said ballroom without really knowing what that meant but the actors seemed to know). They created some lovely and joyful moves that I am sure a panel of experts might slaughter but to our uninitiated eyes, they looked just right.

Georgina Lamb and Samuel James
Photo Manuel Harlan



Once they had made the material we then gave them 3 scenarios

1 While dancing they had to say sorry to each other when it felt right. They had to keep saying sorry and build in intensity throughout. The results were very striking. The raw passion was amazing but it was never a simple presentation of increasing remorse. Sometimes the 'sorry' became very aggressive, the hold on the partner appeared to become crushing and the whole tone of the piece had changed from joyful to heartbreaking or terrifying.

2 Again, keeping the same moves, they entered another scenario. We created a room using an old metal filing cabinet, tables and chairs and placed plastic bottles and knives and forks precariously around the place. The room was made as small as possible. Claustrophobic and cramped.

The performers were asked to commit to the set moves. These moves required a much bigger space and would lead to the performers clattering into the furniture and knocking over the bottles and cutlery. They had to ignore the chaos they were creating and keep dancing.

What transpired was a couple oblivious to the end of the world. Or was this a couple causing the end of the world? Did their love transcend this chaos or was it the route of it?

3 This time we arranged a room of tables and chairs. It was set out roughly like a kitchen with lots of work top surfaces. Again the performers were to stick to their choreography where possible but it was all to happen off the floor, across the tables and chairs.

Here the moves quickly became dangerous. They also became a challenge and a ritual between two people as they tested each other's commitment, careering across gaps and teetering on precipices.

The 3 scenarios above brought out a lot of the potential in the movement. The interesting thing to note was that it was the setting or theatrical context that was crucial to this potential meaning rather than the choreography itself. The moves ultimately bent under the weight of the context but the joy of seeing them exist in one context and then struggling to exist again in another context was fascinating.

This is an excerpt from an old notebook of mine. Written in December '06 I think it sums up our thoughts about the potential of their dance.

Does this break down?

Does this become exhausting?

A ritual? A symbolic act?

Bullying? A reluctant partner?

Is it performed in increasingly smaller spaces? On a podium?

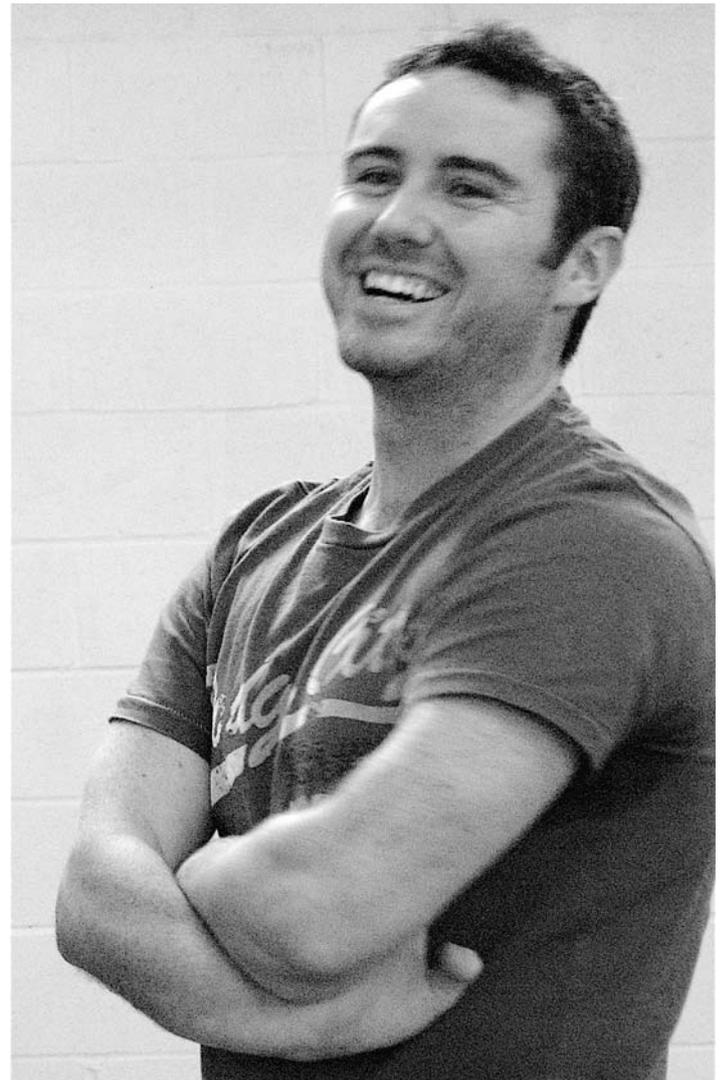
Risk - To stop is to fall off - metaphor

Along the top of the kitchen?

A desperate, exhausted act...

Or a passionate act of apology...

An attempt to recapture something?



Scott Graham
Photo David Sibley

The bed

Samuel James and Georgina Lamb
Photo Scott Graham



The raised bed, floating at a height of 3.7 metres, is, thankfully, at a much more manageable height of 1.5 meters in the rehearsal room. Although this is a practical necessity (the ceiling is less than 3 metres) it is also a blessing for rehearsal. It means that we can start gently without scaring the life out of the performers.

We are aiming to create a very beautiful and sexy scene on the bed. This has to be the bed where they make up, where they make everything alright, where the outside world can't touch them. Its elevation will also make it a dangerous bed. Metaphorically it is their relationship - dangerous to be in and dangerous to contemplate leaving.

Our task is to suggest the danger without putting our performers at risk. Health and safety directives would have our performers trussed up in harnesses and taking no risks but this is no good to us theatrically. We initially explore just how close you can move your partner to the edge. How far can limbs drape over the edge safely yet look like they are in peril? (Remember all of this exploration is happening at 1.5 metres). The performers roll over each other with apparent abandon and look as if they are about to fall out, only for their partner to scoop them back in, both of them oblivious to the mortal danger.

Of course in this improvisation the opposite is true. We are very consciously testing the limits of what we can safely achieve.

This gives the performers a confidence in their abilities and a confidence that we are not going to ask them to do something they cannot safely do. All of this is crucial before we even think about taking the performers up to the full height. This is all just part of the training.

When it came to working on the scene itself we placed the performers back on the bed but started very small. We were interested in the tiny physical gestures of affection that they might share as they expressed their love for each other. This gave us the other extreme of the range of possibilities. We now knew how big we could safely make it and how small it could be and still remain theatrically interesting. Knowing this means that any potential scene is aware of all possibilities and you are in a position to add theatrical 'colour' to it (Making sure it is not full of the same type of movement. This 'colour' is just variation. Think 'texture'. Think changes in 'focus').

We then worked on the choreography. We felt the performers were now ready to help making material. They knew the kind of moves we wanted to explore and they knew how to move safely on the bed. Without the groundwork the bed could have been a very uncomfortable place for them to be trying to make work in and this would have produced a feel to the moves that would have been completely wrong. The bed HAS to be comfortable, even if it is 3.7 meters high. The key to making this scene was recognising the steps we needed to take to make that bed comfortable.

Out of the kitchen, into the kitchen

As the production week starts the cast are faced with a few days standing in lights as we focus and plot the technical side of the show. This is a frustrating time as the actors are raring to go and are losing the momentum they have built up in the rehearsal room. To combat this we are taking the cast out of the set and all of the responsibilities they have there and going to run the lines in a real house in Plymouth. It will serve as a refresher course in truth and reality. This practice stems from the experience of doing line runs while we were constructing the Tiny Dynamite set in venues on tour. We would be on our backs with ratchets in hand, fixing nuts and bolts together but the words felt more real than ever. The physical task had rooted the words in much more convincing naturalism than we were delivering on stage. Admittedly the situations were different but it was a useful exercise.

We took it a step further on Hymns. That show was about 4 friends coming together to mourn the loss of a fifth friend. They sit around drinking and skirting over the real issues between them until they can hold their tongues no longer and the home truths spill out. The very last task we set the performers was to take some beers we had bought them back to one of their hotel rooms, drink them and do a line run.

It becomes much more than a line reading. It becomes grounded in reality again. It becomes a very naturalistic and passionate performance. It is the perfect refresher for the actors now that they are fully immersed in all the heightened physicality of a Frantic show.

I would not suggest you ply each other with drink. It is 'horses for courses'. That is why we are going to take our Stockholm performers into a kitchen. Our suggestion is that you have a think about what this refresher can be. What real environment would help the performers here? And it is not about going site specific with the physicality. This is a textual and character exercise and should feel like liberation for the performers, freedom from all of the extra responsibilities and technical requirements of delivering on stage.

Georgina Lamb and Samuel James
Photo Scott Graham



Soundtrack of their lives - the use of music in Stockholm (by Steven Hoggett)

Very early on in the development of Stockholm, we had decided that most of the action would take place in a domestic kitchen environment. As part of a modern home, we liked the idea that the couple would have some kind of music system in the kitchen and that, just like its directors, the performers in Stockholm would occasionally make choices to play certain songs or music in the show.

Every Frantic performance has a detailed, specific soundtrack and in this instance, we relished the idea of there being two. One would be the outer score, heard by the audience, chosen by the directors. This would be a combination of soundscape and score. The other would be the internal soundtrack, songs selected by Todd or Kali from the ipod dock that rests on the kitchen counter.

Selecting a Frantic score is occasionally frustrating but always exhilarating, watching actors respond to certain tracks but not others whilst they are devising or improvising. Tracks that sat so well with scenes during week two might then become weak or overbearing come week five. However, there does seem to be a Frantic sound which is why most Frantic shows will, at one time or another, feature some deep strings or bass heavy beats or slightly ethereal piano and other elements that we are total suckers for. (For all of the above, try Imogen Heap's Speak For Yourself album and you will see why asking her to provide the soundtrack for pool (no water) was a complete no-brainer). Providing the soundtrack for Todd and Kali's kitchen was a very different experience. Stockholm marks our first collaboration with a Sound Designer. Adrienne Quartly came on board after being warned that we didn't really know what we would be asking of her but also knowing that there were certain elements to making this show that we would be rather fixed on and might not be all that clear in explaining why if she ever felt the need to challenge us on it.

Thankfully, Adrienne is no retiring wallflower and was soon challenging us on most if not all our initial choices for music, as well as bringing in a whole new clutch of albums by artists we couldn't even spell (some of which sounded like something you would only find at the bottom of a Wagamama menu).

I have still to be convinced that Adrienne is in agreement about certain choices and tracks that exist within Stockholm but it only shows how adept she is in partaking in a truly collaborative process.

Deciding on tracks for the kitchen put us all in the strange position of trying to select tracks that were right for the

characters. The upshot of this was considering tracks that we ourselves didn't actually like. It was important that these choices were serious and did not send the characters up. In the same way that they were uber-tasteful in the designing of their house, so their music taste should be similarly cool. Of course, cool is a very subjective area and is also slave to the passing of very little time before becoming not so cool. The eventual choices we made were hard to land and often fought for over and over again, but we believe that in the moments when they press play on that ipod, the tracks they have selected speak volumes about the couple that they are.

Elsewhere, the score for the show regularly uses tracks from film soundtracks. This stemmed from an early idea that the two are film fanatics. (The trainspotters amongst you might notice that Todd's ring tone during the show is the theme from The Bourne Identity). Heightened moments in the show when their imaginations take flight are supported by often lavish sweeping music that are part of their cultural world. The soundtracks used are not necessarily the most obvious ones, but in choosing The Italian Job over Reservoir Dogs and Perfume over The Piano, we represent the true lives of Todd and Kali.



Samuel James and Georgina Lamb
Photo Manuel Harlan

The image

The image for a show is incredibly important to us. Getting it wrong not only means you are misrepresenting your show and not promoting it properly but it also means that you are going to see it a lot and be constantly reminded of your mistake. As the creation of the image is something that myself and Steven take very personally there would be no one else to blame. We just had to get it right.

We were looking to create an image where a couple could be entwined, utterly focussed on each other and oblivious to the chaos and destruction around them. We felt this reflected the denial at the heart of Stockholm Syndrome.

One of the ideas was to take one picture from the the top of a high building looking down onto the pavement below where people are looking up. We would superimpose another image of our couple kissing while falling over. The effect would be watching a couple falling out of a window or off a building without any sense of the approaching destruction.

This captured the ideas but was tricky to pull off. It was then that we looked at a photo advert for a music system. It featured the figure of a man represented only by his clothes (no head or body visible) switching on a music system. The figure appeared to be blasted back and all the clothes were in tatters.

Inspired by this we started talking about the image of a couple who could only see each other and within their space everything is beautiful. Everything outside this centre of calm would be chaos. The centre would be the most serene and beautiful representation of love.

This image would capture the feeling that the couple are unaware of the impact their relationship has on their friends or how the relationship must appear from the outside.

The task of creating the image was fairly simple from our point of view. We commissioned a photographer and hired two beautiful dancers that we have worked with and took the picture of them about to kiss in the photographer's studio. It was then given to a graphic designer who was asked to create the tatters on their back turning into birds (a detail inspired by a European version of the poster for the film 'Perfume', where fragments blended into butterflies).

After a few versions and retouches we were happy with the results. The response so far to the image has been excellent. It also does a good job of suggesting the love that exists within the show. This is important because we would be very disappointed if people came to the show looking merely for a show about domestic violence. Stockholm hopefully presents a much more complex situation.



Directors note



Steven Hoggett and Scott Graham
Photo David Sibley

Stockholm was inspired by a real event, namely witnessing people we cared about destroy each other and not being able to intervene. That position of impotence and frustration lives long in the memory.

In this production we did not want to judge the protagonists. We wanted to get inside their relationship and get an understanding of what they mean by love and what makes them run back to each other. We have always talked about Stockholm as a love story that simply requires a wider definition of 'love.' It is uncomfortable, difficult and traumatic but as soon as we started talking about this idea to others it was remarkable how many people talked so eloquently about their experiences within such relationships. What really stood out was people's complete commitment to the relationship at the time. It was only when they eventually emerged outside the relationship that they found some perspective.

This led us to research Stockholm Syndrome and its fascinating bond between perceived victim and aggressor. This relationship is incomprehensible from the outside but perfectly clear from within and seemed to be born from the

same climate of fear and potential violence. Stockholm Syndrome seemed to be the world we wanted to explore.

Designer Laura Hopkins has made this world real and more. She has delivered a set that provides the perfect contrast between domestic bliss and intrinsic danger. Lighting Designer Andy Purves and Sound Designer Adrienne Quartley are currently offering us new and exciting ways to make this world both fantastical and terrifying.

Sam and George are two remarkable performers. Their sensitive performance instincts are as brave and impressive as their awesome physicality. This is a fairly intense subject matter and, being a two hander, the work is relentless and there is nowhere to hide. They keep coming back for more and have been a joy to work with.

And in Bryony we have found an incredible collaborator. It has been a thrilling process grappling with her unique mind. Every stage of development has felt like we are inspiring and bringing the best out of each other and we are already planning our next collaboration.

Last minute discoveries

We were rehearsing one of the final scenes in the kitchen and all was not going well. We were struggling to find the logic of the moment when Todd claims he has had enough of it all and the frustration and tiredness of long hours of hard work were beginning to show.

We felt the only thing to do was liberate the performers from anything we had set before. It was looking like they were trying to join the dots to make a picture that would please us rather than find a truthful way through the scene. We told them to forget anything they had done before and just have a go at it. Just them, the words and their instinct.

The results were so refreshing. They were not perfect. They were certainly not polished. Some of it was clearly wrong but when you are trying so hard to get something right you can become blinkered and obsessed only in getting it right. Sometimes if something isn't working it may simply be that it is wrong. Bashing a square peg into a round hole does nobody any good.

This exercise was liberating and exhilarating. It reminded us that there is more than one possibility to a scene and that the quest to get a particular approach right can sometimes make us forget this.

The task unearthed another valuable insight. I have spoken about the dynamic of not talking to the audience in every moment. I said by doing this we will find out when we really need to open out to them and when we can allow them to

come to us. As the performers ran this scene Sam spat out the words with a real vehemence at times directly at the audience. He really needed us to know that enough was enough. Moments later as he succumbs to Kali's genuine remorse, he basically tells us we will never understand them unless we were in exactly the same situation.

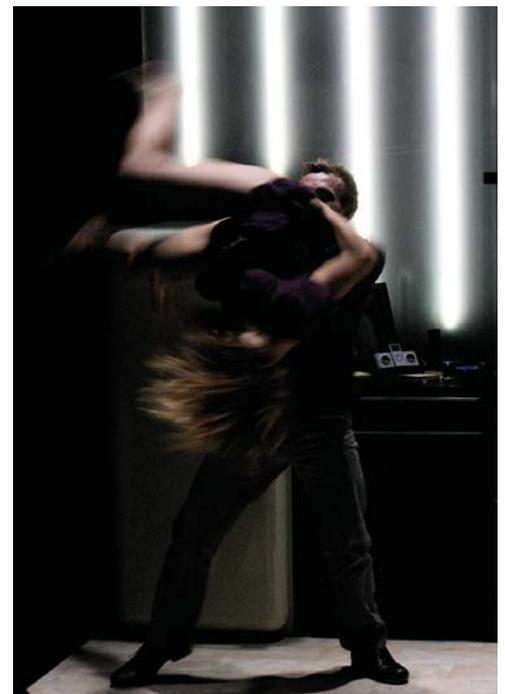
The overall dynamic of the production was beginning to take shape. A couple invite us to see their house, to see their life together. We go with them. Things turn nasty and they become less self conscious and self destruct in front of us. We are then asked to witness the provocation and understand that this is the final time it will happen. The last twist is us being dismissed as we would never understand.

This push and pull is a useful dynamic for the performers to bear in mind. The lesson for me is to always look for this within any production. Something I have always been aware of on this production and have always been asking myself is 'why do they speak to us? How did we get here at their most intimate moments?.' I was clearly reminded that they invited us here and they will send us on our way. The final scene is their perfect smokescreen.

Kali **They had one of their rows!**
They're both very strong individual characters...
(p.76)



Samuel James
Photo Scott Graham



Georgina Lamb and Samuel James
Photo Scott Graham

Suggested Essays

- 1 Kali puts two bottles of champagne into the fridge. When Todd opens the fridge it is packed full of nothing but champagne. When she returns the fridge is back to normal and she takes the two bottles out. Why do you think this is?
- 2 Why is the bed so high? What is gained theatrically from its elevation? How would the scene have been different if the bed was at ground level?
- 3 What did the 'Us' characters represent? How has the production made them seem different from the voices of Todd and Kali?
- 4 How did the production use music and sound? What were the effects of the different ways music was employed?
- 5 How would the production have differed if it was not presented in a semi naturalistic setting? What did this setting offer the production?



Samuel James and Georgina Lamb
Photo Manuel Harlan

Inspiration

Below is a list of some of the inspirational references that go into our production. Sometimes the influence is quite direct. Sometimes another work, a painting, an advert, a film might be referenced for a fleeting moment that somehow helps us understand Stockholm and helps those we are collaborating with understand what we want to achieve. We feel it is important to point out that inspiration and epiphany can come from diverse sources and you should never be ashamed about how ridiculous it might seem. To be honest, I think you could talk about every aspect of human life and only reference The Simpsons. You don't have to find your inspiration in high art. I think the key is finding examples in the little, simple things that we can all share.

Having said that, this list below is a right mixed bag but hopefully it will give you a sense of how our work comes together.

The Seventh Seal - Bergman

Scenes From A Marriage - Bergman

To Build A Home - The Cinematic Orchestra

Downfall - Film dir. Oliver Hirschbeigel, written/produced by Bernd Eichinger

Cymbeline - Shakespeare

The Rape of Lucrecia

The Dead - James Joyce

Poltergeist - Tobe Hooper

Don't Look Now - Nic Roeg

Police Academy - dir. Hugh Wilson

Autumnal Cannibalism - Salvador Dali painting

The photographic art of Gregory Crewdson

Cover for the Beautiful South single 'We Are Each Other'

It is very important to stress that the links to news stories are not necessarily about diagnosed Stockholm Syndrome. They are news stories that we talked about. They are tragic events upon which we conjectured about what might have caused them. We talked about how attempts to hurt each other directly had not seemed to work and the focus of the destruction had shifted. These may still have been attempts to annihilate the partner, though.

The links are here to show you what we talked about. They are not here to point you directly to examples of Stockholm Syndrome.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/london/4219796.stm>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/g2/story/0,,1564895,00.html>

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/bristol/5297298.stm>

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/5024562.stm>

<http://ramitsethi.com/papers-academic.html>

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