



TIS PITY SHE'S A WHORE

EDUCATION PACK

2013 / 2014

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CHEEK BY JOWL

Cheek by Jowl was established in 1981 by its co-Artistic Directors Declan Donnellan and Nick Ormerod. The company is dedicated to producing fresh and vivid productions that focus on the actor's art, avoiding directorial and design concepts. Cheek by Jowl produces work in English, French and Russian. The company has performed in 380 cities in more than 50 countries spanning six continents.

Cheek by Jowl's first production was William Wycherley's *The Country Wife*, presented at the Edinburgh Festival in 1981 and supported by a small Arts Council grant. Before long the company received its first official invitations to perform abroad, taking their productions of *Vanity Fair* and *Pericles* to the Almagro, Valladolid and Jerusalem festivals in 1984. These productions were also subsequently invited to perform in London at the Donmar Warehouse.

For that first London season Cheek by Jowl won the Laurence Olivier Award for Most Promising Newcomer in 1986, with over half of the company's plays receiving Olivier awards. The company grew rapidly throughout the 1980s — creating 18 productions in ten years, touring across six continents and giving more than 1,500 performances. By 1990, *The Independent* could say that, "If there is one company to have influenced British theatre in the 1980s, it is Cheek by Jowl."

In 1997, Donnellan and Ormerod directed and designed *The Winter's Tale* for the Maly Drama Theatre of Saint-Petersburg, a production which went on to win Russia's prestigious Golden Mask Award. Throughout the 1990s the Russian Theatre Confederation had regularly invited Cheek by Jowl to Moscow as a part of the Chekhov International Theatre Festival, and this intense relationship with Russia culminated in

1999, when the Chekhov International Theatre Festival, under the leadership of Valery Shadrin, commissioned Donnellan and Ormerod to form their own company of Russian actors in Moscow. This sister company performs in Russia and internationally and its current repertoire includes *Boris Godunov* by Pushkin, *Twelfth Night* and *The Tempest* by Shakespeare, and *Three Sisters* by Anton Chekhov.

The core of the company's repertoire has always been Shakespeare; by the time of *The Tempest* in 2010 Cheek by Jowl had presented no fewer than 13 of Shakespeare's plays. Another of the company's principles has been to present major works of European drama, both in translation and their original versions. To date Cheek by Jowl has given the British premières of 10 European classics including *The Cid* by Corneille and *Andromache* by Racine, over three hundred years since they were first presented in Paris. John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* is the company's most recent English language production and, following a critically acclaimed international tour which saw the production visit Sydney, Paris, London, New York and Madrid, was remounted in Autumn 2012 for a further UK and International tour.

In addition to their work in English and with the Chekhov International Festival in Russian, in 2007 Peter Brook invited Donnellan and Ormerod to form a group of French actors. The result was a French language production of *Andromaque* by Racine, co-produced with Paris' Bouffes du Nord, which toured throughout the UK and Europe in 2008/2009. Following that production's international success, Cheek by Jowl worked with the same French actors on their new production of Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi*. This marked the first time that Cheek by Jowl was lead-producer in a foreign language and culture.

JOHN FORD & THE PLAY

JOHN FORD

Our knowledge of John Ford's life and career are restricted to a meagre number of dates and places. Baptised in 1586 in Devon, he was admitted to the Middle Temple in 1602 (a training college for lawyers) to study law. It is likely that he remained there until at least 1617, and possibly later still.

The earliest evidence of his writing is a prose pamphlet dated at 1606, along with an elegy on the Earl of Devonshire. Until 1621 a number of other minor, non-dramatic works have been attributed to him, but his first prominent venture into writing for the stage is likely to have been his collaboration with Thomas Dekker and William Rowley on *The Witch of Edmonton* in 1621. As was common practice in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, Ford co-authored several plays prior to embarking on his own original compositions, working alongside some of the era's noteworthy writers including Middleton, Rowley, Fletcher and Francis Beaumont.

From about 1627 Ford wrote his eight extant plays – *The Broken Heart*; *The Lover's Melancholy* (1628); *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*; *Perkin Warbeck*; *The Queen*; *The Fancies, Chaste and Noble*; *Love's Sacrifice*; and *The Lady's Trial* (1638). However, as only two of these eight can be reliably dated, the sequence of the work is difficult to determine. In this period of independent writing he wrote predominantly for private theatres: *'Tis Pity...* is one such example, having been played at the Phoenix in Drury Lane by the Queen's Men anywhere between the late 1620s and early 1630s.¹ The Phoenix was an indoor theatre, lit by candles, and given this sheltered playing space there is likely to have been more elaborate scenery and costumes than at the Globe; with admission prices higher as a consequence, the Phoenix potentially attracted a more well-heeled audience drawn from the professional classes.

¹ Although the play was published in 1633 along with several other works, there is evidence to suggest that it may well have been composed earlier, notably in Ford's reference to 'these first fruits of my leisure' in the manuscript's dedication. (See Lisa Hopkins' introduction in Ford, J. 2003: *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*. Nick Hern Books: London). After 1639 there is no further record or mention of Ford.

THE PLAY

With little complementary material from Ford's career to consider, a heightened focus on the play's aesthetic merits, and the moral and psychological landscape it manages to explore, is inevitable. J.L. Styan, in *The English stage: a history of drama and performance*, notes that, 'within the revenge framework, [*'Tis Pity*] introduces new attempts at structure and style, and especially a new emotionality, an engaging sensitivity,' when viewed alongside some of the perhaps more frivolous output of other Jacobean and early-Caroline writers. Certainly the play's position in relation to the incestuous relationship it hinges on is an ambiguous, shifting one: are Giovanni and Annabella essentially innocent, either the victims of an insidious mercantile order, or its product? Should we – can we – feel sympathy for their plight? And finally, how responsible are they for the fate that ultimately befalls them? The play offers us few easy answers as to where guilt might be apportioned, or who is free from blame.



'Tis Pity She's a Whore 2014 / Photo by Manuel Harlan

Equally difficult to ascertain is how audiences of the late-Jacobean/early Caroline period might have responded to the incestuous character of Giovanni and Annabella's relationship, and its centrality to the action. In his introduction to the New Mermaids edition of *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* Brian Morris remarks that, "a prohibition against incest has been a steady presence – with varying degrees of disapproval at different times and in different countries – throughout the Christian centuries in Western Europe" – would *'Tis Pity* have been particularly shocking, as a result? It is worth noting that material of this kind would not be unfamiliar to the spectators in



'Tis Pity She's a Whore 2014 | Photo by Manuel Harlan

Ford's first audience, who would most likely be accustomed to gruesome cocktails of violence and incest in the theatre; for instance, they would have been privy to similarly 'explicit' content in Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling*, (which played in the very same auditorium) or Middleton's *Women Beware Women*, to name but two.

In addition to sharing a number of traits with the work of its contemporaries, Ford's play also references a significant dramatic predecessor. On both a structural and thematic level *'Tis Pity* consistently looks back to elements of *Romeo and Juliet*, echoing a number of aspects familiar to us from Shakespeare's tragedy of forbidden love: we might consider the crucial roles of the Friar and Putana, the former providing the play with its doctrinal mouthpiece, the latter a coarse and fatally well-meaning equivalent of Juliet's Nurse; between these two poles lie the brother and sister at the play's heart, wrestling with the social prohibition that fires their affections at the same time as it calls them into question.

FURTHER READING

- Ford, J. 1990: *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (New Mermaids). Edited & introduced by Brian Morris. A. & C. Black: London.
- Ford, J. 2003: *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*. Edited & introduced by Lisa Hopkins. Nick Hern Books: London
- Ford, J. 2011: *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (Arden Early Modern Drama) Edited by Sonia Massai. Methuen Drama: London
- Hopkins, L. (ed.) 2010: *'Tis Pity She's a Whore: A Critical Guide*. Continuum Renaissance Drama: London & New York
- Solga, Kim: "Seeing Inside: 'Tis Pity and the Early Moderns" in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* Production Programme, Cheek by Jowl UK Tour: London.*
- Styan, J.L. 1996: *The English stage: a history of drama and performance*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

To purchase a copy of the programme contact solene@cheekbyjowl.com for details

INTERVIEW - - Owen Horsley | Co-Director of Cheek by Jowl's 2011 production of *'Tis Pity*

1. *'Tis Pity She's a Whore is renowned for the incestuous relationship at its heart: how does Cheek by Jowl's production deal with this sensitive issue?*

The production deals with it in large part by considering the society that surrounds the incestuous act. It is a society with very ambiguous boundaries – between parents and children, between servants and masters – and this makes the traditional formalities and differing statuses between the characters somewhat blurred. This in turn allows this great taboo – incest – to be broken. However, while the world of the play does allow this relationship to form and to *happen*, our production doesn't seek to judge either that society or the brother and sister in particular; in fact it doesn't necessarily make a clear separation between good and bad – it is not interested in saying that society is entirely *bad* or indeed that this relationship is an entirely innocent one in which two *good* people are in love – it attempts to deal with the incest theme in a less clear-cut, much more ambivalent way. This is reflected in how the relationship between the brother and sister, Giovanni and Annabella, undergoes a much more pronounced change later on the play: it does a 180° turn! Over the course of the production we see Annabella realise the magnitude of what she's done with regard to her relationship with her brother, and she matures onstage as a result. She makes a definite choice about her life, and rather than simply consign herself to dying alongside her brother, (as in the rather romantic way in which the play is sometimes done, where brother and sister ultimately have a shared death wish) here, she wants to live.

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2. *The production has a very modern setting in a society very contemporary to our own (the production is set exclusively in Annabella's bedroom); why is that? And how does the use of verse work within that setting?*

It is in a modern setting because of the actors we were working with, and the work we did with them in rehearsal. A lot of the improvisations and *études* that we do at the start of the rehearsal process feed into the staging and the space in which the action will take place, so many of the initial choices are drawn from the energies of these particular actors and what they created. Specifically, we found a way into this play in large part through the character of Annabella, so the setting is very much to do with her creative space – as if it is her fantasy, and everything is created by her. This makes for an ambiguous journey that swings between those moments when she *is* in control of her fantasy and those when she *isn't*. The space, then, is aiming to capture the essence of a teenage girl's imagination; our emphasis on seeing things through the eyes of this rebellious young girl gives the play a great energy, while also allowing us to take much greater risks in the way that some scenes are presented. We're still telling the story as the text and the verse dictates it to us, but the text manages to give this naturalistic space an added, epic dimension. (contd.)

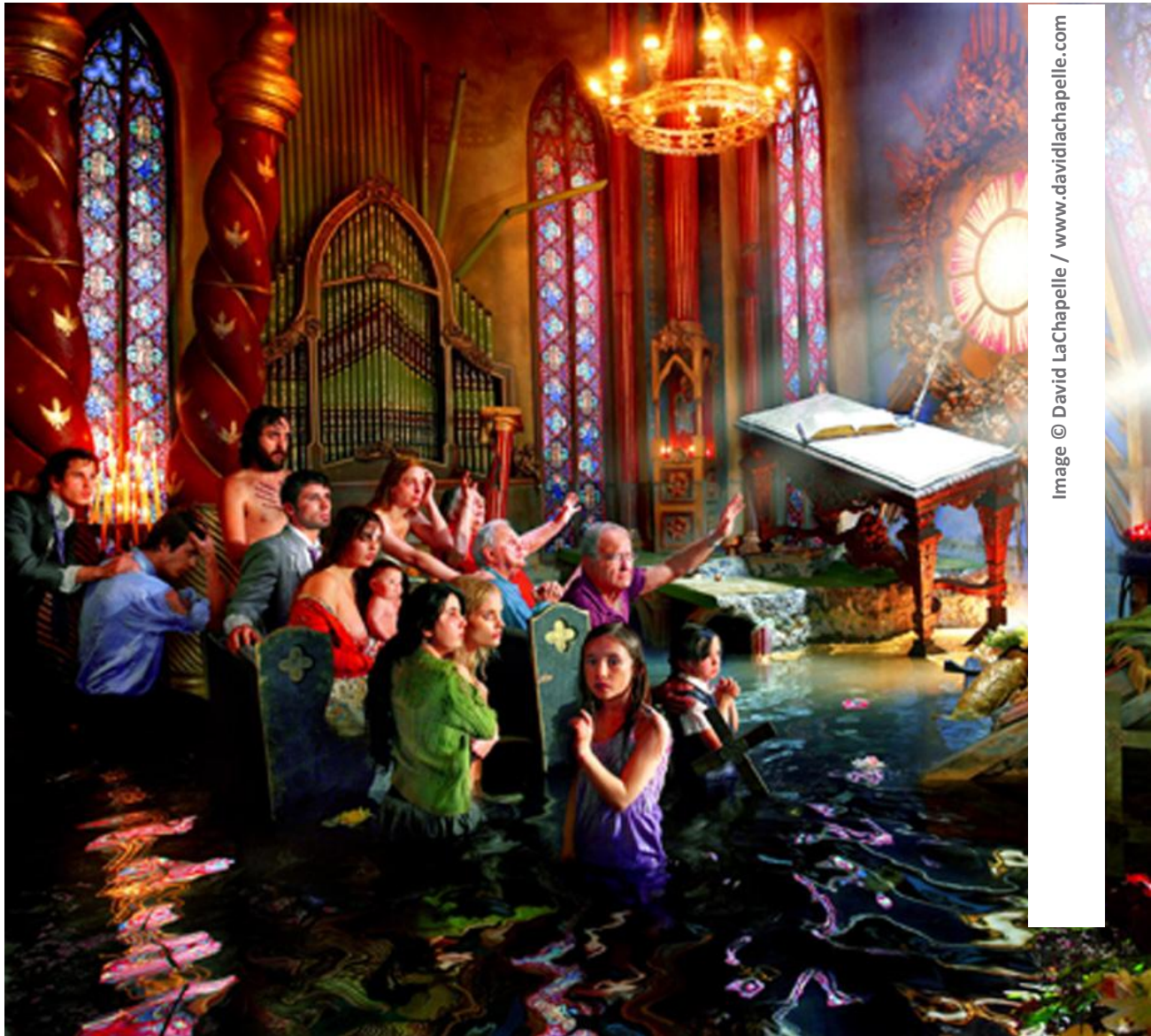


Image © David LaChapelle / www.davidlachapelle.com

(contd.)

This girl's bedroom is a fascinating space; it can have many, many possibilities, and it is still revealing more to us in terms of how many things it can be, how many places it can go. Added to which the title alone establishes that the focus is on *her*: *'Tis Pity* is very much a study of this girl, seen from her point of view: it's to do with how she is treated and how she is viewed by the society around her and her brother. You notice this in the way that, as is the case with *Romeo & Juliet*, (to which the play owes a debt) where Romeo disappears for a whole act and we follow Juliet's story, so Giovanni also disappears for some time while we follow Annabella's. It was quite clear to us that the focus lay with her and it was her story we were telling, which has made our approach almost filmic in some respects: we lead the audience through this play from a singular perspective.

3. *How does this production tackle the play's religious elements?*

At first we felt as though the play's religious elements might appear dated or out of tune with our society, which is more secular, and didn't think audiences would relate to it. Then suddenly, once we started to consider the play from this teenage girl's perspective, you start to realise how connected religion can be to a young teenager's life, even obliquely. The amount of religious imagery which popular culture trades in, for instance, is astonishing. This is particularly true in relation to young girls' experience: pop stars like Lady Gaga often look for a subversive edge

through their use of religious images in music videos and artwork, and the reason for this is undoubtedly because of how evocative these images still are for us as a society.

Pictures of the Madonna, the Fallen Angel, Eve: these images are instantly recognisable and make a deep impression on us – one which is all the more powerful because it is difficult to explain, and deeply ingrained. We have a tendency to deny religion,



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by saying that it's no longer really a part of our lives anymore, but it is: perhaps not in the way it may have been four hundred years ago, but it certainly continues to change with the times. What we've tried to do here is to tap in to the ways in which religion is presented now; and using those images, putting them on stage within the context of a girl's bedroom, brings them alive. During rehearsals we looked at a lot of religious images as well as other, related art. The work of photographer Dave LaChapelle is a good example: in his photos of celebrities the subjects pose in the style of religious icons, but in very domestic spaces. In a similar way, we've hopefully managed to suggest in quite a truthful way how religion still has a latent, but powerful impact on a young girl's daily experience.

5. *Cheek by Jowl's production has chosen to make some quite bold cuts to the original text. What was the reason for this?*

The major cuts we made to the play before the rehearsal process were for practical reasons. The first was the removal of the comic interludes featuring Bergetto and Poggio; the fact of having a small cast meant that we felt it was better to dispense with these and focus on the play's primary narrative. Similarly, we also cut the secondary sub-plot involving Richardetto (Hippolita's husband in the original) because we found that the husband returning in disguise to enact revenge on his wife wasn't necessary for Hippolita to 'work' as a character.

In terms of other changes that were made to the text in rehearsals, the major problem we had to solve was how to get around two narrative moments which aren't given to us in the original text. There are two crucial, 'invisible' scenes which Ford doesn't write, and which a major problem to which we needed to find solutions. The first of these precedes Soranzo's accusation of Annabella, in which he discovers both that his wife to be is not a virgin, and also that she is pregnant. The second 'invisible' scene is one which Vasques reveals to Soranzo that Annabella is having an incestuous relationship with her own brother, Giovanni. It's interesting that these two scenes – which are so vital – are completely unwritten. And although we have to accept that to some degree, the *experience* of those scenes still has to be felt on stage, because they are undoubtedly big moments in the story. We've managed to put them on stage through a variety of means: we have added or moved a couple of short passages, for instance; and, in the case of Soranzo's realisation, we have made it clear in the playing of the subsequent scene.

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4. *You've mentioned that personal and social boundaries in the play are blurred – then crossed – but in the end it still seems to be a play about love. Would you agree?*

In some ways, every play about love is also a play about loss. From very on in rehearsals we found that one of the ways of looking at *'Tis Pity* was that each of the characters onstage is behaving as they do, acting in this way, as a defence mechanism against loss. This is very evocative for us because, in our own lives, particularly at those moments when we act in ways which appear extreme, we are often fighting against loss – or abandonment, or separation: these are real triggers for us. Every character in this world has something to lose: Giovanni is anxious to avoid losing his sister; Soranzo acts to avoid loss of face; Hippolita is compelled to poison Soranzo so that she will not have to lose him to another woman – and so on. Even the play's brutal finale brought about by Giovanni can be seen as his attempt to defend himself against loss. Interestingly, making this slight distinction allows you to be much more specific about the way you view the play. To interpret it as solely about love makes it a boundless territory in which it is easy to get lost. On the other hand, if you see the extreme actions of these characters as emerging from a desire to combat loss, rather than express love, it makes the job of playing with, staging and experiencing this text that much clearer.

September 2012

SYNOPSIS

The action begins with Giovanni confessing his love for his sister Annabella to his close friend the Friar Bonaventura. Giovanni attempts to convince the Friar of the validity of his love in intellectual terms, but the older man urges him to forget his passion. In the meantime, a fight between Grimaldi, one of the many suitors to Annabella, and Vasques, servant to Soranzo, suggests there is fierce competition for Annabella's hand. Of the potential matches Soranzo is the most favoured by Giovanni and Annabella's father Florio.

Annabella cares little for the offers of marriage which may be coming her way. Her mood changes upon noticing Giovanni, whom she does not immediately recognise as her brother. Once the two are left alone, Giovanni is unable to bear it and confesses his love to her; Annabella shares his feelings, and they make a vow never to betray each other, to either love or kill each other. Having consummated their love, Giovanni is concerned that his sister will have to marry eventually; she assures him that she will remain devoted. Putana becomes aware of the relationship but is unconcerned.

Meanwhile, Soranzo receives a visit from a former lover, the widow Hippolita. As she bitterly reminds him, he had sworn to marry her in the event of her husband's death, and has not made good his vow. Arguing that it was a sinful promise, Soranzo unrepentantly dismisses her

claims. Hippolita swears revenge and, left alone with Vasques, persuades the servant to join in her plot.

Appalled to learn of Giovanni and Annabella's relationship, the Friar tries in vain to suggest that Giovanni put an end to it. Giovanni remains adamant as to the strength of their love; he is proven correct when Soranzo asks for Annabella's hand and she replies that there would be no love for her in the match. As Giovanni celebrates her loyalty, Annabella is suddenly taken ill. It transpires that she is pregnant, and the seriousness of the situation becomes apparent.

Following the Doctor's advice, Florio is anxious to hasten the preparations for marriage. During a subsequent confession to the Friar, Annabella is made to realise the gravity of her errors and renounces her love, swearing that she will live only for Soranzo. Hippolita meanwhile, learns of the impending marriage from Vasques, which only strengthens her



'Tis Pity She's a Whore 2014 | Photo by Manuel Harlan

resolve to kill her former lover.

Once the marriage ceremony has been performed, Hippolita arrives in disguise to shame Soranzo for his disloyalty to her in front of the wedding party. However, she is betrayed in her attempt to poison him by Vasques, who alerts his master to the danger at the last minute; he reveals that he could not be corrupted by Hippolita's promises, and has swapped the drinks so that she herself is poisoned. Hippolita dies.

Learning of Annabella's pregnancy, Soranzo's anger is considerable; and though he puts pressure on her to reveal the identity of the father, she does not yield. Once Annabella has left, Vasques assures Soranzo that he will discover who the father is. This information he coerces from Putana with the help of the bandit Gratiano; once she has revealed it is Giovanni the men gag and blind her.

Now fully repentant of her past actions, Annabella writes a letter to her brother renouncing their love. The Friar conveys this to Giovanni who, incredulous, is convinced the note must be forged. Vasques then invites the two men to a feast in celebration of Soranzo's birthday. Fearing the worst, the Friar urges Giovanni not to attend but acknowledges that the young man's fate is now out of his control. Arriving at the feast, Giovanni visits Annabella in her room. While she has accepted the end of their love he cannot, and he kills her. When he returns to the feast, he enters carrying Annabella's heart.

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'Tis Pity She's a Whore | COMPANY



Ruth Everett
Hippolita



David Collings
Florio



Ryan Ellsworth
Donado



Orlando James
Giovanni



Raphael Sowole
Friar



Maximilien Seweryn
Soranzo



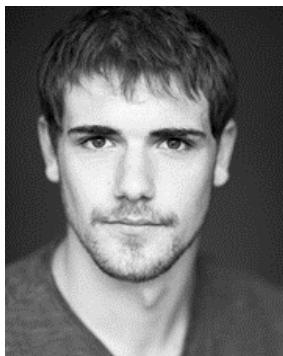
Nicola Sanderson
Putana



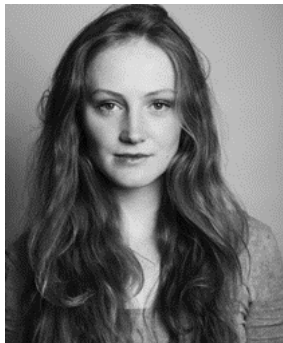
Peter Moreton
Cardinal/Doctor



Sam McArdle
Grimaldi



Will Alexander
Vasques



Eve Ponsonby
Annabella



Jimmy Fairhurst
Gratiano



'TIS PITY SHE'S A WHORE

Produced by Cheek by Jowl in a co-production with the Barbican, London, Les Géméaux/Sceaux/Scène Nationale and Sydney Festival

CREATIVE TEAM

DIRECTOR

Declan Donnellan

DESIGNER

Nick Ormerod

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Paris Erotokritou

ASSOCIATE AND MOVEMENT DIRECTOR

Jane Gibson

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Judith Greenwood

COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER

Nick Powell

CASTING DIRECTOR

Siobhan Bracke

COSTUME SUPERVISOR

Angie Burns

COMPANY MANAGER

Tim Speechley

TECHNICAL STAGE MANAGER

Robin Smith

DEPUTY STAGE MANAGER

Clare Loxley

LIGHTING

David Salter

SOUND

Morgan Rogers

WARDROBE MANAGER

Victoria Youngson

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Angela Garrick

MUSIC SUPERVISOR

Peter Moreton