



INSIGHT PACK

Welcome to the Insight pack for Touched, directed by Matt Aston. This pack will give you a great overview of the story and the themes within the play. Written by Nottingham native Stephen Lowe, Touched tells the story of the women on the Homefront during World War II. We hope you enjoy.

Nottingham Playhouse Participation Team

CAST

Sandra

VICKY McCLURE

Joan

AISLING LOFTUS

Betty

CHLOE HARRIS

Mam

ELIZABETH RIDER

Mary

ESTHER COLES

Keith

LUKE GELL

Bridie

SARAH BECK MATHER

Harry

IAN KIRKBY

Johnny

GEORGE BODEN

Pauline

ISOBEL GILBERT, EVE McLAUGHLIN, KAIYA WITHEY

CREATIVE TEAM

Writer

STEPHEN LOWE

Director

MATT ASTON

Designer

JAMIE VARTAN

Lighting Designer

NICK RICHINGS

Projection Designer

WILLIAM SIMPSON

Composer and Sound Designer

JULIAN BUTLER

Movement Director

EMMA ANNETTS

Voice Coach

KAT HICKS

Company and Stage Manager

JANE ELIOT-WEBB

Deputy Stage Manager

SHARLENE HARVARD-YOUNG

Assistant Stage Manager

KATHRYN BAINBRIDGE-WILSON

Casting

LUCY JENKINS CDG AND SOOKI McSHANE CDG

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The Story

The play is set in 1945 during the hundred days between VE Day in May 1945 and VJ Day in August 1945. It was this period which included the election of the first ever Labour government and the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The play focuses on a group of women in a working-class suburb of Nottingham, focussing on Sandra and her sisters, Joan and Betty. Sandra has lost a child: not killed by an enemy bomb but by a car in the blackout. Now, with peace coming, she is full of hope for a different kind of future. She says, "The world's changing. It's not going to go back to the way it was."

Lowe was inspired to write the play by his mother: "I grew up on the usual pulp of heroic war films and comics... While therefore I gained a fairly graphic picture of the life of a soldier, it occurred to me while talking to my mother that I had hardly any picture of those who stayed at home - those whose battles had been fought in the landscape I had grown up in. I knew nothing, really, about the sacrifices and suffering of the women who only a few years later were to pick me up and put me down, and place pennies in my hand. Pennies I had never thought to return."

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I love Nottingham. I always have. It's not quite my home town of Walsall, but where is? I first arrived here in 1992 as a student at Nottingham Poly just before it became Nottingham Trent University. I then spent the next 19 years falling for a city that became more than just home and, having spent almost exactly the same time growing up in Walsall, it's little wonder that Nottingham has such a special place in my heart. The memories are stronger and more visceral as well. Not a lot to



remember about being under 5 in the West Midlands.

I've previously worked with Stephen Lowe on three new plays - Smile, Empty Bed Blues and Séance on a Sunday Afternoon, which all premiered at Nottingham Lakeside Arts. All beautifully written pieces. Poetic yet real. Contemporary yet with a sense of history.

Touched has all of this and more. With Nottingham (and particularly Sneinton) and its people very much at the core, it is funny, tragic and hopeful. It's also a play tinged with fear. Fear of what is to come despite the relief and joy at the end of the Second World War. Touched, for me, is also about memory and not just mine as I rediscover - and avoid - old Nottingham haunts throughout the rehearsal weeks. It's a play that reminds us of the horrors of the past, the hardship that families faced and the hope that came as an uncertain future rolled out before them. It's a piece that is more relevant than ever.

This is a play I've admired for many years and one that Stephen and I often discussed bringing back to the Nottingham stage. It's a huge honour and privilege to direct the 40th Anniversary production at the theatre where it began. When I moved away from the Nottingham, Stephen and I lost touch for a number of years. Social media's not his thing and any spare time I had was spent with my gorgeous young family. This project has brought us back together and reignited that creative connection we always enjoyed. And it's reminded me of how much our friendship meant.

Stephen has often said that Touched is a tribute to Nottingham and the people of Nottingham, particularly its women. A tribute to the people who were left behind during the Second World War, those that fought the battle at home and continued to fight it long after the war was over. I hope this production is a tribute to Stephen. One that recognises and magnifies the impact his talent has had on the arts and theatre scene in his home town - a UNESCO City of Literature. I'm already looking forward to getting started on our next project.

Matt Aston

A Word with the Writer with Jo McLeish

Explain the title-why *Touched*?

The original title was '100 days in the land of Hope and Glory', and it's difficult to get a worse title than that. In Nottingham 'Touched' has two meanings - the obvious one of physical contact and the more colloquial meaning of being slightly crazy. The heart of the play is the fusion of these two meanings into one.



What inspired you to write the play back in 1977?

It's difficult to understand now that in 1977 there was hardly any material on the lives of women at home during the war. My father was with the eighth Army and his long war Across North Africa and into Italy was well documented in books, films, television documentaries and so on. The life of my mother's generation seem to be ignored.

So much of the play comes from my own family. When Richard Eyre, (the then Artistic Director of Nottingham Playhouse) approached me and asked me if I has a play to commission, I remembered a conversation I'd had with my mother about the war and immediately pretended I'd been working on this play for months. I did well enough to convince Richard, and then I had to sit down and write it. I was born after the war and it was a fascinating challenge to imagine the lives of the women.

Will *Touched* still resonate with a 2017 audience, and why?

My aim, and my hope, is to reach out and touch the audience in some way. The journey of the few hours in the dark together is perceived as something significant, or at least not a waste of time. I tried to find an unknown kind of beauty that others might see too. Maybe that's resonating. To Touch.

What are you most looking forward to about this 40th anniversary revival?

Writing can be a lonely business - sometimes it feels as if you are in an asylum without the medical staff. The joy is seeing a gradual coming together in the company of diverse talents all with one mind to simply bring the work alive and the sense of pleasure and feeling that your attempt to inspire others plays a small part.

The Hundred Days

1945

May 8 th	Victory in Europe Day. Official announcement by Prime Minister Churchill at 3pm
May 10 th	British Fleet attack Japanese near Formosa
May 13 th	Russians overcome resistance in Czechoslovakia
June 4 th	Churchill's opening election campaign speech. Labour manifesto entitled "Let us face the Future" released
June 21 st	Okinawa falls to the U.S
June 26 th	United Nations established in San Francisco to "save generations from the scourge of war"
July 5 th	Polling Day – owing to army ballots, results will not be known until three weeks later
July 26 th	Election results – Labour landslide
July 27 th	Attlee becomes Prime Minister. The allies at the Potsdam Conference "reaffirm their intention to bring major war criminals to swift and sure justice".
August 6 th	First atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima: "a mushroom cloud 7½ miles high". Bank Holiday Monday
August 9 th	Russia declares war against Japan and invades Manchuria
August 10 th	Second atomic bomb on Nagasaki
August 14 th	Just before midnight Attlee's Announcement of the end of the war
August 15 th	Victory in Japan Day

VE Day (Victory in Europe Day)

8th May 1945 was the public holiday that marked the acceptance by the Allies of World War II of Nazi Germany's surrender. This marked the end of World War II in Europe.

On 30 April 1945, Adolf Hitler, the Nazi leader, committed suicide during the Battle of Berlin. Germany's surrender, therefore, was authorised by his successor, Reichspräsident Karl Dönitz. The administration headed by Dönitz was known as the Flensburg Government. The act of military surrender was signed on 7 May in Reims, France and on 8 May in Berlin, Germany.

VJ Day (Victory over Japan Day)

Victory over Japan Day (also known as Victory in the Pacific Day, V-J Day, or V-P Day) is the day on which Japan surrendered in World War II, in effect ending the war. The term has been applied to both of the days on which the initial announcement of Japan's surrender was made – to the afternoon of August 15, 1945, in Japan, and, because of time zone differences, to August 14, 1945 (when it was announced in the United States and the rest of the Americas and Eastern Pacific Islands) – as well as to September 2, 1945, when the signing of the surrender document occurred, officially ending World War II.

August 15 is the official V-J Day for the UK, while the official U.S. commemoration is September 2. The name, V-J Day, had been selected by the Allies after they named V-E

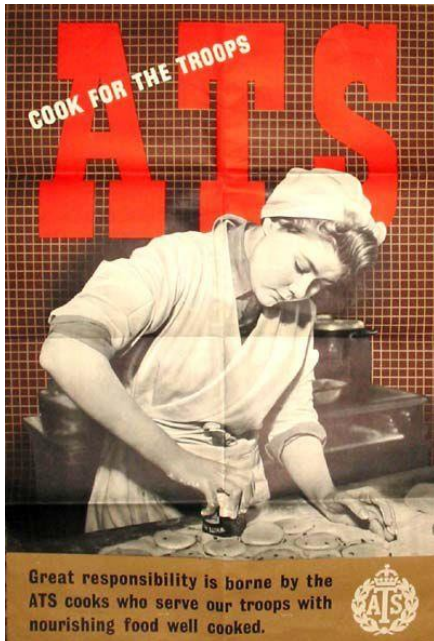
A Look at Rehearsals by Robert Day



Women at War

Taking over 'men's' work

As thousands of men were away serving in the army, ordinary women took on a host of new roles during the world wars.



Many jobs were seen as inappropriate for women as they involved hard physical labour or 'dirty' work. But with the shortage of male workers, women all over the country began being bus conductors, policewomen, tractor drivers and worked with materials like coal.

The work of women would become crucial to the continued war effort. Eventually this work became compulsory. In 1941, Ernest Bevin, the Government Minister for Labour, declared that, 'one million wives' were 'wanted for war work'. Later that year, in December 1941, women began to be conscripted for war work, when Parliament passed the National Service Act.

This meant that unmarried women aged 20-30 now had to join the armed forces, with the Women's Land Army or in a factory.

Women in the Armed Forces:

Women's work in WW2 included:

The Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS)

This was the women's branch of the British Army. Women aged 17-43 could join but were not allowed to work in combat roles. They took on other jobs such as cooks, storekeepers, orderlies, drivers and postal workers. As the war progressed and there was a shortage of men, women then became radar operators and even anti-aircraft gun crew members.

The Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS)

At the start of the war, the women's arm of the Royal Navy was seen as a way of freeing men in non-combatant roles (like driving or cooking) to fight. 'Join the Wrens today and free a man to join the

Fleet', one recruitment poster urged. Nicknamed 'Wrens', these women went on to do extremely important and varied work, from code-breaking at Bletchley Park to operating radar equipment.

Women also served with a range of other services:

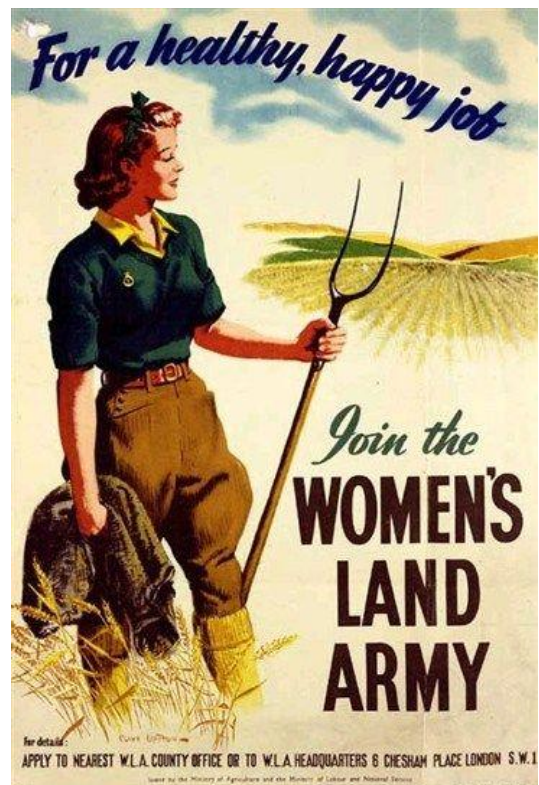
- The Women's Land Army and the Women's Timber Corps
- As pilots and ground crew in the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA)
- In the Women's Auxiliary Service, as voluntary policewomen
- As military nurses or volunteer nurses (VADs) with the Voluntary Aid Detachment
- As spies with the Special Operations Executive (SOE)

Discussion ideas:

- Why do you think women were banned from fighting?
- How do you think views of women workers changed during and after WW2?
- Are there still any jobs that women are banned from doing today?

Activity ideas:

- Research women in the British Armed Forces today:
 - Are women allowed to serve in battle today?
 - What sort of roles do women carry out in the modern armed forces?
 - Are there any different rules for women in the British Army these days?



The Set Design

Initial meeting with Director

Our designer Jamie Vartan met with Director Matt Aston to discuss initial thoughts of the play. Jamie had already read the script and become familiar with the structure and themes of the play. This initial meeting is an opportunity for both to share ideas, ask questions and develop an understanding of what the design may become.

White Card

At the white card meeting, Jamie presented some initial ideas for the set. This is an opportunity to discuss the plans with the director and production staff to make sure the ideas is feasible.



Final Design

Jamie was then able to create a scale design for the production. This is an opportunity to show all involved in the production the set they will be building and working with. Here are some images of the final design.



HOME COMING With Tom Adcock

VICKY McCLURE DISCUSSES RETURNING TO THEATRE AFTER 12 YEARS AND REVEALS HER FAMILY'S CONNECTIONS TO THE SECOND WORLD WAR.

Touched marks your professional stage debut - what is it about this play in particular that made you want to take to the stage now?

It honestly felt like all the stars aligned for this play. I'm a proud Nottingham girl; a city historically run by women. The famous 'five girls to every boy' line about the city comes from the Lace trade, which was dominated by mostly female workers. During the war this was exacerbated even more as most of the men were away fighting. Interestingly, production remained the same with women taking over the reins. This was true across many industries. In



fact production sometimes improved. It made for some difficult questions after the war when pay discrepancies were so huge between the genders and women were excluded from many professions. Because the play explores all this and is written by a wonderful Nottingham writer, Stephen Lowe, I knew it was the right one for me.

How different have you found the rehearsal process compared to your experiences working in film and television?

As Matt Aston, our brilliant Director will tell you, I was like a rabbit in headlights to start with. Theatre gives you rehearsal time that film and television sometimes can't. I had to learn to walk before I ran. Projection of the voice for example is hugely different. In TV acting you're aware that every nuance is picked up by the camera. In theatre there's no point internalising something when someone at the back can't hear a word you're saying. It's a completely different discipline and way of acting.

How would you describe your character Sandra?

Sandra has that strength I believe is deeply rooted in Nottingham women. They're grafters, and not just in the work place but in all aspects of life. That constant urge to keep things together. On the surface Sandra has it all under control but underneath she's scared, lost and alone.

Has there been anyone with experience of this period that you've turned to for help relating to the wartime setting?

My paternal grandfather was part of the D-Day invasion of June 6 1944. He was in the Navy and helped in landing soldiers on Sword beach that fateful morning. He came under heavy fire but



thankfully survived. He's still alive and was recently awarded the Légion d'Honneur, France's highest decoration. Also my Nana, who recently turned 91, lived in Nottingham while it was being bombed. Both are inspirational people I'm able to talk to and learn from. Another story is that my maternal great grandfather actually fought and was captured in the fall of Hong Kong to the Japanese. He was taken prisoner and sadly died in a POW camp in the Far East, leaving behind a young family in Nottingham.

Five of the actors in this production, including yourself, trained at Nottingham Television Workshop – what do you think makes it so special?

I think it's the freedom you get down there; you are encouraged to be yourself and embrace who you are. The mutual respect and support you got from all the workshop members meant you didn't feel in

competition with each other or embarrassed to try things. I could gush about the Television Workshop all day. In short, it's unique.

Will we be seeing you do more theatre from now on?

Haha! Let me see how this goes first and I'll let you know.

Resources

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victory_in_Europe_Day

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victory_over_Japan_Day

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/august/15/newsid_3581000/3581971.stm

<http://www.mylearning.org/women-at-war-the-role-of-women-during-wwii/p-3973/>

Extra events

Post-Show Discussion – Tue 28th Feb with director Matt Aston and members of the cast.

Audio Described Performance – 25th February and 1st March

Captioned performance – 2nd March

Teachers

We run a Teachers Forum twice a year when we can meet with you, find out your curriculum needs, and give you advance notice of what's coming up at Nottingham Playhouse. A glass of wine, nibbles and a free ticket to the evening show is included! Why not join us for the next one. Contact the participation team at participation@nottinghamplayhouse.co.uk

Participation Activities

The participation department runs a series of activities throughout the year. Below are a few examples, if you are interested in any please contact us for more information



Little Playhouse

A fun and interactive session for children aged 2 to 4 and their parents/carers, held on Monday mornings.



Bigger Little Playhouse

An introduction to theatre for children aged 5 to 8, held on Monday evenings from 4.30pm – 5.30pm.



Work Experience

We offer work experience opportunities in July for Years 10 to 12 and throughout the year for ages 18 and over.

If you would like any more information please contact us at participation@nottinghamplayhouse.co.uk