

Pitch Presentation for Jerusalem – Process Workbook

Our group presentation on Jez Butterworth's Jerusalem started with us reading through it in our own time and coming back as a group to discuss our initial thoughts on it. We all collectively agreed that we were drawn to the fantastical and mystical side of the play along with the symbolic elements. For my role in the production company, I took on the role of Costume designer.

While doing research into Jerusalem I came across a blog written about the play "Saint or Dragon? Johnny Byrons presentation in 'Jerusalem'" (Khambay, 2020) which discusses the ambiguity of Johnny's character, touching upon Johnny being this saint or dragon which got me thinking about the significance of the play being set on St George's Day. A common legend tied to the figure is that of Saint George, who slays a dragon to save a princess from sacrifice and her town from its terror. In Jerusalem, this is parallel to the dynamics between Johnny Byron, Troy Whitworth, and Phaedra. Johnny presents as a rough, modern-day Saint George: a flawed but heroic outsider who protects the innocent. Yet the play first presents him as something dragon-like himself; feared by the locals and breathing out wild, dangerous stories that make him seem monstrous before his true role emerges. Troy, then takes the place of the real Dragon, not as a fantasy creature but as territorial power, driven by control and violence. Phaedra, the missing May Queen, takes the symbolic role of the princess, young, endangered and bound by her stepfather. This interpretation I then shared with my group, and we decided it was a strong thing to bring forward while pitching our production. I especially wanted to touch upon it in my costuming.

For costuming I was working with the time era of 2009 in which the play was set. I took this era with me when thinking of each costume and applied it to characters I thought suit the trends of the time. The lack of description for costuming made the process more difficult making me really investigate personalities. This allowed me to be more imaginative with how I dressed characters.

For the main character Johnny Byron, I was inspired by the original production of Jerusalem (Jez Butterworth, 2022) where he is costumed in a green tank top so for my own costume, I did similar in the form of a worn-out black tank top. I found this would emphasise his rough and tough presence and along with this I would pair it with faded jeans or work-toughened trousers. I wanted his look to show a 'tougher' figure whose appearance has a grit to it to parallel his dare devil behaviour stories mentioned throughout the play. As mentioned before there is this a deeper level to Johnny's character in the symbolism behind Saint George, whether he is the dragon or saint in this story. To show this symbolism, I drew inspiration from paintings of Saint George and the Dragon, like Saint George and the Dragon by Paolo Uccello (www.nationalgallery.org.uk) I would have Johnny have a tattoo of St George and the dragon to bring the legend forward as a concept in the play. The tattoo becomes a

constant reminder of this duality, allowing his costume to reinforce the ambiguity of his character. I would also have the war helmet and goggles be part of his introductory costume when he first appears as started in the stage directions “[Johnny appears], wearing a second world war helmet and goggles”

For Ginger I wanted the costume to highlight his desperation to appear “cool” as a character, which is shaped by his wannabe DJ persona. This is implied by his insistence on being called a DJ by Johnny “Just say it. Say, ‘Ginger is a DJ’”. His lanky frame would mean his clothes would likely hang awkwardly off him; slightly oversized graphic tees, loose jackets, or baggy jeans that suggest he’s clinging things for too long that long should have been put to rest.

For Phaedra, she is “dressed as a fairy” as she ran away from home after a costume party where “[she] made her own costume”. I wanted her to wear a simple white dress with the white colour representing her vulnerability and innocence, along with her dress being visibly handmade with the handmade quality of the costume showing her youth. The fabric of the dress would be slightly worn and creased from days spent hiding in Johnny’s trailer. The wear and tear of her costume can show the contrast between her desire to disappear into a fairy-tale world that Johnny has created and the harsh reality she faces.

For Troy, the costume would show his role as an intimidating presence within the story. I wanted his look to come across as one of a dragon in a more symbolic manner. His outfit would be dominated by heavy, stomping boots that exaggerate the sound of his steps adding weight to his arrival. A striking red bomber jacket would add to this as dragons are typically associated with this colour, as well as the make of the jacket further showing his intimidating presence.

For Lee, the costume would emphasise his status as the more ‘trendy’ member of the group. I wanted to include flannels, nicer jeans or some more on trend pieces of clothing of the era interpreted into his own sense of style, reflecting his naturally chilled-out personality and sense of free will. I found Lee easy to dress as I felt his style would match mine in a similar way.

For Davey, the costume would lean into his ‘young farmers club’ niche, which I found quite familiar due to my own young farmer background; his clothes would be a simple polo top, worn jeans, and Chelsea work boots that he probably wears to death, along with big shades and an accordion for his entrance, as stated in the stage directions, “Enter DAVEY, in big shades, with an accordion.”

For Wesley, his costume is rooted in his role with the Flintock Men, wearing full Morris dancer attire “brightly coloured waistcoats, sashes, and ribbons, as well as bells around [the] knees or ankles” (Tradfolk, 2023) with the bells being important for their “jingling in the wood” that announces his arrival.

For the Professor, he should appear smartly dressed in an old tweed jacket, neatly pressed trousers, and a shirt that once signalled sophistication, though the outfit is undercut by the pair of muddy wellies he wears, reflecting his lost personality.

For Dawn and Marky, their costumes would reflect the simplicity and ordinariness of late 2000s fashion, grounding them in the real world outside the mythic atmosphere Johnny creates.

Evaluation

Overall, I am happy with how our groups pitch presentation came together to create the full production ideal, with each of us bringing our own thoughts and interpretations into the final pitch, however I would have liked for us to have explored the mystical aspect we first discussed and gone even deeper with the concept. For my role I enjoyed looking into the symbolism that came behind St Georges Day and how that can be tied into the storyline, adding the extra depth to it. I also would have liked to go for a more fantasy inspired costuming to make our production that little bit more unique and creative but decided to stick with only a symbolic side of it and exploration with the main characters.

References

Khambay, H. (2020). *Saint or Dragon? Johnny Byron's presentation in 'Jerusalem'*. [online] Khambay's Words, Words, Words. Available at: <https://khambayswordswordswords.blog/2020/11/12/saint-or-dragon-johnny-byrons-presentation-in-jerusalem/>

Jerusalem by Jez Butterworth (2022) [Directed by Ian Rickson] Apollo Theatre, London
16th April – 10th August 2022

www.nationalgallery.org.uk. (n.d.). *Paolo Uccello | Saint George and the Dragon | NG6294 | National Gallery, London*. [online] Available at: <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/paolo-uccello-saint-george-and-the-dragon>

Tradfolk. (2023). *Morris Dancing - Tradfolk*. [online] Available at: <https://tradfolk.co/morris-dancing/>