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Images courtesy of Amy Charles Media, Mustard Seed Media and Studio 1

Page references from **Godber, J. (2001) *Plays 1: Godber*. London : Methuen Drama**

This Education Pack for **Bouncers** by John Godber is for the current (2015) **The John Godber Company** and **Theatre Royal Wakefield** co-production. The pack is designed primarily to support teachers and students exploring the text practically; it contains workshop activities and notes on performing the text.

The pack also contains documentation on the current production which will be useful for groups who are planning to see the show, opening at **Theatre Royal Wakefield** (The home of **The John Godber Company**) from January 2015 then touring nationally.

The pack directly addresses key skills that students studying EDEXCEL GCSE Drama will be expected to demonstrate (see boxes in the top right of the page for relevant unit), although these skills can be applied by anyone with an interest in performance.

EVERYMAN THEATRE CHELTENHAM
Wednesday 21 – Saturday 24 January

Box Office: 01242 572573
www.everymantheatre.org.uk

THEATRE ROYAL WAKEFIELD
Tuesday 27-31 January

Box Office 01924 211311
www.theatreroyalwakefield.co.uk

MINERVA THEATRE, CHICHESTER
Tuesday 3 – Saturday 7 February
Box Office: 01243 781312
cft.org.uk

LAWRENCE BATLEY THEATRE,
HUDDERSFIELD
Monday 9 – Wednesday 11 February
Box Office: 01484 430528
www.thelbt.org

KEY THEATRE, PETERBOROUGH
Thursday 12 – Saturday 14 February
Box Office: 01733 207239
vivacity-peterborough.com

LIGHTHOUSE POOLE
Tuesday 24 & Wednesday 25 February
Box Office: 0844 406 8666
www.lighthousepoole.co.uk

BUXTON OPERA HOUSE
Monday 2 & Tuesday 3 March
Box Office: 0845 127 2190
www.buxtonoperahouse.org.uk

LINCOLN PERFORMING ARTS
CENTRE
Thursday 5 & Friday 6 March
Box Office: 01522 837600
www.lpac.co.uk

CITY VARIETIES LEEDS
Monday 9 & Tuesday 10 March
Box Office: 0113 243 0808
www.cityvarieties.co.uk

THEATRE ROYAL BURY
ST EDMUNDS
Thursday 12 – Saturday 14 March
Box Office: 01284 769505
www.theatreroyal.org

NOTTINGHAM LAKESIDE
Monday 16—Saturday 21 March
Box Office: 0115 846 7777
www.lakesidearts.org.uk

ROYAL LEAMINGTON SPA
Monday 23 & Tuesday 24 March
Box Office 01926 334418
www.warwickdc.gov.uk/royalspacecentre

MERCURY THEATRE ,COLCHESTER
Thursday 26 – Saturday 28 March
Box Office: 01206 573948
www.mercurytheatre.co.uk

NEW VIC, NEWCASTLE UNDER LYME
Tuesday 31 March – Saturday 4 April
Box Office: 01782 717962
www.newvictheatre.org.uk

POMEGRANATE CHESTERFIELD
Tuesday 7 & Wednesday 8 April
Box Office 01246 345 222
www.chesterfieldtheatres.co.uk

CAST, DONCASTER
Thursday 9 & Friday 10 April
Box Office: 01302 303 959
www.castindoncaster.com

THE GEORGIAN THEATRE ROYAL,
RICHMOND
Saturday 11 April
Box Office: 01748 825252
www.georgiantheatreroyal.co.uk

THEATRE SEVERN, SHREWSBURY
Mon 13 - Tue 14 April
Box Office: 01743 281281
www.theatresevern.co.uk

OLD REP THEATRE, BIRMINGHAM
Wednesday 15 - Saturday 18 April
Box Office: 0121 359 9445
www.oldreptheatre.org.uk

STEPHEN JOSEPH THEATRE,
SCARBOROUGH
Tuesday 12– Saturday 16 May
Box Office: 01723 370541
www.sjt.uk.com

Themes & Style

EDEXCEL

Unit 2: Exploring Play Texts

Response to Live Performance

John Godber's introduction to *Plays:1* acknowledges that at the time of writing *Bouncers* he was dissatisfied with naturalism and had a desire to create a piece of work where the audience were not distracted by the design elements but were engaged with the performances of the actors.

The initial production, performed by Godber and Peter Geeves as a two hander in Edinburgh while Godber was still a student at Bretton Hall, had a set built by John's uncle that fitted in to the back of a car.

Subsequent productions have retained the approach of using a minimal set. The rapid pace of the play, with scenes changing from hairdressers to pubs to nightclubs then video shops and taxi ranks would be difficult to realise with naturalistic sets, whereas Godber's productions suggest these changes in location with the movements of a few beer barrels and the physicality of the performers.

The characters portrayed by the four actors change just as quickly as the scenes; the core characters of the bouncers become a group of girls celebrating a birthday, lads on a night out, other nightclub patrons, a DJ and performers in a "blue movie" that one of the bouncers has hired from the video shop.

The use of multi role playing, along with the use of monologue and the actors directly addressing the audience, show the influence of other dramatists such as Bertolt Brecht, the intention being to reinforce the theatricality of the work and eschew the conventions of realism.

Thematically, *Bouncers* is concerned with the drinking culture of the working classes and the violence and power play that is a part of the bouncers profession. The extremes of sexual relationships, exacerbated by drinking and gang mentality, are examined in detail through Lucky Eric's speeches.



Characters

The first line of *Bouncers*, spoken by Lucky Eric, states “Ladies and Gentlemen, we present Bouncers”. As such, the bouncers are the central characters and narrators of the play, although they also present all of the other characters.

Lucky Eric: Recently separated from his wife, Eric is a powerlifter and bouncer who often seems on the edge of a violent breakdown. Older than the other bouncers, he is seen as the wise owl and gives the impression that he is a deeper, more thoughtful, character than the others. His monologues, which regularly interrupt the narrative, show his revulsion at the way that he sees young women being regularly objectified and exploited within the nightlife culture. Lucky Eric also plays **Baz** from the group of lads, **Maureen** (“short but nice-fat but sickly”) and the **buxom Swede** in the pornographic film.



Les: Eager to get in fights with the clubs clientele. He also plays **Kev** from the group of lads and **Rosie**, the birthday girl whose boyfriend is seen betraying her in the nightclub as well as various other nightclub patrons.

Judd: Involved in a bit of petty theft for extra income, Judd used to be a wrestler and was trained as a power-lifter by Eric. Throughout the night Judd seems keen to pick a fight with Eric. He also plays **Terry** from the group of lads and ‘plain’ **Elaine**, (“left school at sixteen with one GCSE in metalwork. I’m on the dole”). Judd plays both the **barber** and the **hairstylist** in the early scenes where we first meet the groups of girls and lads.

Ralph: Less explicitly aggressive than some of the other bouncers. He trains in judo and is described by Eric as “Mr Inner Calm”. Ralph also plays **Jerry** from the group of lads, **Suzu** “Sexy and flashing it about a bit”, the club **DJ**, **Nobby** the **Swedish postman** in the pornographic film



Full Synopsis

Page references from **Godber, J. (2001) *Plays 1: Godber*. London : Methuen Drama**

Act One

Godber's stage directions indicate that during the pre-show, as audience members enter, the four actors are parading the auditorium as their bouncer characters. As per the stage directions, there is 'a sense of menace throughout'. **Page 3-6** The Bouncer's rap. The bouncers directly address the audience, describing the atmosphere of drunkenness, sex and aggression of a Friday night at the disco.

'Radio Bollocks' cuts in as we segue into the ladies hairdressers (**Page 7-9**) where the bouncers become the girls, getting their hair done for a big night out to celebrate Rosie's twenty-first birthday, discussing their shopping purchases and the best places to head out for the night.

An abrupt shift (**page 9-12**) takes us to the barbers where we are introduced to the lads, reading dirty magazines and talking about 'pulling' before another quick shift takes us to the lads preparations for the night ahead (**Page 13-16**), popping spots, dowsing themselves in aftershave and hitting the pub to get the drinking started.

A similar scene follows (**Page 17-19**) with the girls from the hairdressers. Maureen, Rosie, 'Plain' Elaine and 'Sexy' Suzy introduce themselves and argue about what to put on the jukebox.

Page 19- 28 the pace slows as the bouncers return to playing themselves. The frantic energy of the groups of lads and girls is replaced by the menace of the bouncers sizing each other up, bantering about their training regimes, women, nights gone by and the night to come.

Page 28, 29 Lucky Eric's first speech. Eric worries about having to turn a blind eye to the age of the girls attending the club, his urge to protect the girls and his fear that they all grown up too quickly.

Page 30-33 Inside the club we are introduced to the obnoxious nightclub DJ 'Marvellous Michael Dee' before returning to the girls, slightly worse for wear and dancing round their handbags. Rosie's boyfriend is spotted kissing another girl across the club and the inevitable first tears of the night are shed.

Page 33-37 Back outside with the bouncers, we encounter the punks and out-of-town stag nights that the bouncers take pleasure in turning away.

Page 37-39 The lads that we first met at the barbers have finally made their way to the club and after a hard time from the bouncers, enter the club and make their way to the club toilets.

Page 40 Back outside, the bouncers discuss chat up lines and Judd tries to get a rise out of Eric, talking about how he'd seen Eric's ex-wife at the club with another man. Before things get out of hand, we move to Lucky Eric's second speech.

Page 41, 42 Lucky Eric's second speech describes the drunken one-night stands and desperation of "over-25s night", his resentment and aggression is barely contained as he nears breakdown.

Act Two

Page 43-47 Back inside the nightclub, the DJ offers free drinks and nightclub entry in exchange for girls' underwear while outside the tension between the bouncers continues to threaten to boil over. The tension is dissolved by the mention of the "blue movie" they will enjoy later that night. We are transported to the video shop and Ralph and Eric act out the film, an encounter between 'Nobby Ze Swedish postman' and a woman whose "husband is away on business". The comic overplaying of the smutty scene comes crashing down in to reality with Lucky Eric's third speech.



Page 47 Lucky Eric's third speech. Sat alone in a pub over Christmas, Eric watches a group of football supporters take advantage of a drunken teenage girl, each daring to go further than the other until Eric, overtaken by rage gets up and attacks all of them and sends the girl home.

Page 48 Back in the bouncer's present reality they discuss the place of women in the world of the 'doorman' before we cut back inside the club.

Page 49-52 The groups of girls and lads from earlier have an encounter in the nightclub. Baz hooks up with Suzy while Kev tries his best to get away from Elaine. After Kev calls Elaine a "horrible smelly fat slag", a group of Elaine's male friends pile in and a fight begins on the dance floor.

Page 53 The bouncers pile in to split up the fight but the tension that has been building throughout the night leads to Eric and Judd turning on each other.

Page 54 Lucky Eric's fourth and final speech. Eric details the hopeless desperation of the club's regular "Miss Wet T Shirt" nights, his sadness and his desire to give it all up.

Page 55 The tension between the bouncers eases, they talk about Eric's break-up with his wife and the fact that he misses her and the kids.

Page 56,57 Back in the club with the lads, it's closing time and they haven't pulled. They demonstrate a number of appalling pick-up lines.

Page 58-60 The bouncers clear out the last of the club-goers, before spotting Sexy Suzy, round the back of the disco having sex against the wall while eating a pizza.

Page 61-63 The lads negotiate the streets on the way to the taxi rank, realising that they've spent all of their money for the week and come away with nothing.

Page 64-68 The bouncers roam the empty club, picking up lost money, underwear and discarded basket meals. Following a parody of the Michael Jackson '*Thriller*' dance, the bouncers repeat the rap from the beginning of the play.

END

Bouncers Production History

Bouncers is one of the most widely produced plays in the world and, in 2000, was voted one of the top 100 plays of the 20th Century in a poll conducted by the National Theatre. As well as being one of the first productions by Hull Truck when John Godber took over the role of Artistic Director, it was also the last production staged in their Spring Street venue before Hull Truck they moved to the current Ferensway venue.

1977: Edinburgh Fringe Festival

Written while Godber was studying for his teaching qualification at Bretton Hall, this version featured two unnamed bouncers (Tall and Short) and was performed at Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Despite reaching a very small audience, Godber received encouragement from the actor Brian Glover who was in attendance on the second night.

1981: Yorkshire Actors Company

Having had years of success and winning numerous awards at the National Student Drama Festival with productions such as *Happy Jack* and *September in the Rain*, Godber was now working as the Head of Drama at Minsthorpe High School (the school where he was previously a student). Godber was approached by a group of actor friends with a request that he expand *Bouncers* for four actors. This version received its premier at Rotherham Arts Centre in early 1981.

1984: Hull Truck

In 1984, John Godber was appointed as Artistic Director at Hull Truck Theatre. The Hull Truck production of *Bouncers* appeared at the Assembly Rooms, Edinburgh Fringe Festival with the actors doubling up to also present Godber's new play, *Up and Under* where it won a Fringe First award, and was later nominated for Best Comedy at the 1985 Olivier Awards.

1991: 90s Remix

An updated version of *Bouncers*, including updated music and cultural references premiered at Hull Truck in 1991. Adrian Hood, a former student of Godber's at Minsthorpe High School, played the part of Judd in that production, as he does 24 years later in the current John Godber Company / Theatre Royal Wakefield production.

2015:

Bouncers remains incredibly popular with productions all over the world.

Social, Cultural and Historical Context

Cultural context

Disputes between the National Union of Mineworkers and the Conservative government in the mid-seventies and the ensuing 'three day week' led to two general elections being called in 1974 (leading to a hung parliament and then a small Labour majority). Strikes, reduced working hours and electricity shortages typified the era and would eventually lead to later clashes between Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government and the miners and trade unions of the mid-eighties. The impact on Godber (whose father and grandfather were miners) and the landscape that he grew up in, is seen directly in his later plays such as *Our House* and *Salt of the Earth*.

With Labour and the trade unions representing the working classes of the time, and the Conservatives seen as the party of the middle classes, some of the most enduring work by British playwrights from the late 1970s and early 1980s dealt with issues of class conflict. Mike Leigh, Steven Berkoff and Willy Russell explored social class in different ways. Berkoff's *East* charts the violent energy of his own working class upbringing in East End London, while Russell's *Educating Rita* examines the aspiration of a working class character bettering herself through education but, in doing so, taking on the pretensions of her new social group.

A list of the top 100 plays of the 20th century, created by the National Theatre (www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/discover-more/platforms/nt2000-one-hundred-plays-of-the-century) includes *Bouncers* and puts this work in context of the new writing of the time.

- 1975 *East* by Steven Berkoff
- 1977 *Abigail's Party* by Mike Leigh
- 1979 *Educating Rita* by Willy Russell
- 1984 *Bouncers* by John Godber

The sub-culture of punk came to the forefront in the mid-late seventies, the time that the original version of *Bouncers* was produced (two cartoon punks turn up on page 36, calling the bouncers "Fascist pigs"). The idealism of the punk movement was built on the notion of doing-it-yourself, with people inside the movement forming their own bands, putting on their own events and making their own clothes. Godber echoed the sentiment in his approach to theatre in an interview with Gemma Noon in 2010: "My view, although many will disagree, is to try to realise the production yourself. Put it on at your school hall, the youth club, or go to Edinburgh Festival".

The cultural references in the 1984 script were updated in the 90s Remix version of the script (EG. the aftershave that Cliff Richards uses is substituted for the aftershave that Jason Donovan uses) and the script has been updated over time as contemporary music and references replace those used in previous versions of the script.

The current John Godber Company / Theatre Royal Wakefield production returns us to the eighties with references to C&A, Bruno Brooks and Samantha Fox all back in place.

Workshop Ideas

EDEXCEL

Unit 2: Exploring Play Texts

Practical Exploration

Characterisation

Role on the Wall: A technique used during rehearsals to make notes on specific characters.

Activity

You can make your own role on the wall diagram by getting a large piece of paper and drawing around one of your friends.

Select a character from the play.

Using the character descriptions and full synopsis in this pack, together with your own knowledge of the play and a script, fill in the outline with notes on your selected character.

Things to consider when making your Role on the Wall:

What is the character's gender?

How old are they?

What physical descriptions are given in the play?

What is their social class?

What is their status among their friends colleagues?

Are they happy with their social class/ status?

How do they feel about their environment (their workplace/ home life)?

What can we tell about this character from the language that they use?

Discussion

Find out if anyone else in your group has looked at the same character. Compare your notes.

Have they made any notes that you haven't?

Did they miss something that you picked up on?

Are there any points that you disagree on?

How did you come to these conclusions?

Workshop Ideas

EDEXCEL

Unit 2: Exploring Play Texts

Practical Exploration

Characterisation

Movement and Gesture: How a performer can physically portray their character.

Activity

Start to walk about the room, trying to move in to empty spaces (and avoiding bumping in to other people!) Think about one of the characters from *Bouncers*.

Imagine your character is on their way in to the nightclub.

Think about the '**Role on the Wall**' resources you created. Using what you know about the characters, think about:

- their **Body Language**
- the **Gestures** they may use
- how they might **Move** around a space.

Things to consider:

A very busy or stressed character may move quickly and with urgency

A character that is relaxed, tired or unenthusiastic will move much slower

An older character or someone with an injury etc may have more difficulty moving

A more confident/ higher status character will often have a more 'open' body language than a less confident character.

Open

Chest and shoulders out

Straight back

Head up, eye contact

Closed

Chest and shoulders in

Hunched over

Head down, avoids eye contact

During this activity, find moments where you come to a stop. Think about how you can use this moment of stillness to best show the physicality of your character.

Imagine you are performing this still image to someone at the other side of a football pitch. How exaggerated would your physicality need to be?

Take a moment to step out of the exercise and observe other people.

Can you tell which characters other people are portraying?

Discussion

Make a small group with people who have developed different characters from yourself.

Share your work with them, teach them how your character moves and explain your decisions.

Ask them what they would have done differently with your character.

Workshop Ideas

EDEXCEL

Unit 2: Exploring Play Texts

Practical Exploration

Characterisation

Movement and Gesture: Seven levels of tension

Jacques Lecoq's 'seven levels of tension' exercise can be useful in exploring how emotion affects movement.

Practice moving up through the levels:

- 1) **Exhausted:** An almost complete inability to move. Total relaxation. Any effort to speak or move is very difficult.
- 2) **Laid Back:** Still relaxed, moving and speaking are seen more as unnecessary rather than difficult.
- 3) **Neutral:** Present and aware of their surroundings but unthreatened by them. Ready to react in the event that something happens.
- 4) **Alert:** Curious and interested in their surroundings. Uncertain about their environment.
- 5) **Suspense:** The feeling that a crisis is about to happen. The tension is in the eyes and face, struggling to be controlled within the body.
- 6) **Passionate:** Reacting to a present and know danger. The emotion of the situation (anger, fear, despair) is no longer controlled within the body.
- 7) **Tragic:** The tension is so high that the body can no longer move. Frozen in solid tension.

Follow up this exercise by examining an extract from *Bouncers* and breaking down the changes in levels of tension, both for the groups and the individual characters.

Workshop Ideas

Characterisation

Multi Role Playing: A technique used regularly by John Godber (and many others!) to allow a small cast to play a large number of characters.

Activity

Although the original version of *Bouncers* featured only two performers, it is normally performed by three or, more often, four actors. With so many characters in the script, each of the actors will have to perform multiple roles, changing very quickly between characters.

- The group should form a circle.
- One player starts with a ball (you could also pass/catch a clap or finger-click).
- Make **eye contact** with someone else in the circle and, when they return your eye contact, throw the ball to them.
- As you throw the ball, **shout the name of one of the characters** from *Bouncers*.
- Once the catcher has caught the ball, they should **freeze in an image of the character** (think back to the **Movement and Gesture** exercise).
- Mark the moment by holding the freeze for a few seconds and then repeat, making sure everyone in the circle gets the ball.
- Can you work in smaller groups? The less people in the circle, the more often you will have to change character.
- Once the group are confident with this exercise, you can add multiple balls to the exercise. Remember that eye contact is very important in this activity.
- If the group can confidently carry out this exercise, think about moving out of the circle and playing the game as you move freely about the space.
- It may help once you open out in to the space to reduce the number of balls back down to one initially.
- Can you maintain the character as you move around the space? Can you add a line of dialogue once you've caught the ball? This dialogue could be either from the script or 'in character'.

Discussion

What is the level of exaggeration needed to make the change in character clear?

What methods other than use of gesture and body language could you use to show the change between characters?

Workshop Ideas

EDEXCEL

Unit 2: Exploring Play Texts

Practical Exploration

Explorative Strategies

Hot Seating: A technique to encourage performers to explore their character in-depth and improvise in-role.

Activity

- Working in pairs, choose a character from *Bouncers*
- Imagine that they have gone to an interview; maybe they have a job interview, they've been pulled in by the police or are at the job centre. As the interviewee, fill out your replies and descriptions by thinking about the five senses (What does home smell like? What are the noises you hear there?) You will know more about the character than you will need to for the exercise. Think about something that your character would know but may not want to share (a secret).
- Try to imagine an interviewer who the character may meet in the outside world.
- As the interviewer, think of five questions that you might ask them.

Questions to ask:

Thinking back to the role on the wall exercise, what would it be useful to find out about the character?

You may want to find out the characters background (home life, work life), their relationships (with friends, family, work colleagues) and their motivations and/ or aspirations. Use the space below to list five useful questions to get you started:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

Take it in turns to be the interviewer/ interviewee.

Stay in character and answer the questions as the character would answer them.

Try the activity with different characters.

Discussion

After the activity, discuss your responses with your partner.

Do you think they were true to the character?

Do you think the character would have answered differently if the questions were being asked by somebody else? For example, would Terry speak differently to the other lads than he would to the girls? Or the bouncers?

Workshop Ideas

Explorative Strategies

Role Play: A technique to help performers improvise in character.

Activity

In small groups, improvise a scene featuring some of the characters from *Bouncers* in a setting that we don't see in the play.

You may want to improvise one of the scenes that we hear about but never get to witness.

Examples include:

- **Judd is working at the nightclub and sees Eric's ex-wife leaving the club with a young man**
- **Eric is at the gym with Judd, training him as a powerlifter**
- **Terry arrives home having drunk away his board money and is confronted by his mother.**

Things to consider

*How can you use what you learnt from the **Hot Seating** exercise to help you?*

*What do you know about how certain characters in *Bouncers* relate to other people?*

If you are playing a character that does not appear in the play (e.g Eric's ex-wife), are your decisions on how to play them based on information from the text? You will have to fill in some of the gaps yourself.

Are you staying true to the characters in the play?

Is your character making the same decisions as you would in the same situation? Have you considered other ways of dealing with the situation?

Workshop Ideas

Explorative Strategies

Rhythm, Pace and Tempo :

Changes in rhythm, pace and tempo help to keep the audience engaged in the dialogue but are also useful to suggest changes in the energy and atmosphere as the narrative moves along.

The changes of emotion and intent within a character can be displayed in the way that their vocal delivery changes, as well as in their body language. You may choose to play a character's anger by increasing the speed and volume of delivery but it may be just as effective to slow down the speech and lower the volume to create a sense of intensity and menace.

Exercise 1

Imagine yourself in a space. It may be somewhere noisy and hectic (a crowded pub or a football stadium on match day), or it may be somewhere quite peaceful and tranquil (a park on a quiet morning).

How does where you are affect you physically?

Does it affect your breathing?

The tension in your body?

How does it affect you emotionally?

Exercise 2

Look at page 47, Lucky Eric's third speech, set in the pub just before Christmas. At the beginning of the speech, the pub is crowded but the atmosphere is not particularly menacing. As the speech progresses, there is a sense of building tension as Eric becomes more revolted and angry, a violent climax and finally a moment of calm.

Think about how you could use your vocal delivery to present this change in atmosphere to an audience.

Mark on the script moments where you might pause, speed up, slow down or emphasise certain words and phrases using volume and enunciation.

Repeat the exercise with a different piece of text. Take time to note the journey of the narrative and the shifts in emotion and atmosphere before annotating the script.

Workshop Ideas

Explorative Strategies

Still Image: A technique used to explore how performers can use levels, proxemics, body language and facial expression to show relationships between characters. Sometimes called 'freeze frames' or 'tableaux'.

Activity

Choose one of the scenes from *Bouncers* and, in small groups, create a **Still Image** based on the selected scene.

Things to consider when making your scene:

How many characters are in the scene?

What is the action taking place?

Where is the scene set?

What has happened in the scene preceding this scene in the play?

What do we know about the relationships between the characters in this scene?

Discussion

Share these still images with the rest of the class who should offer feedback.

Things to consider when offering feedback:

Is it clear where the audience should be focusing in this scene?

What can you tell about how the characters relate to each other from the use of facial gestures and body language?

Is it clear in this image who has higher/lower status? How?

Are the performers in the scene still and focussed?

After each group has received feedback, they should go back and create these still images again, trying to include the notes that they received during feedback.

Show the images a second time.

Are these more/ less effective than before?

How have they improved?

Workshop Ideas

Explorative Strategies

Thought Tracking: A technique used to explore how certain characters are feeling internally

Activity

- Choose one of the scenes from the synopsis on pages 6 & 7 and, in groups, act this scene out physically (no dialogue).
- One person from the group, **The Observer**, watches the scene from the outside.
- Agree in your group who is playing which characters and what the scenario is.
- Make sure that your physicality and characterisation is clear and that we know what your relationship is with the other characters.
- At any point in the scene, **The Observer** can clap their hands and everybody in the scene freezes in a **Still Image**.
- While the image is frozen, **The Observer** can ask questions of the characters in the scene about how they feel in that moment.

Example Scenario: Pages 33-37, various patrons are turned away from the nightclub by the bouncers.

Characters: Bouncers, a stag night group, punks, the lads

Example Questions:

Do you think that you are going to get in?

Why are you out tonight?

Why have you come to Mr Cinders?

Workshop Ideas

EDEXCEL
Unit 2: Exploring Play Texts
Practical Exploration

Explorative Strategies

Narrating: The characters of the bouncers in *Bouncers* act as both narrators and characters within the script. They acknowledge dramatic techniques such as multi-role playing with asides to the audience, “I thought he was the barber?”. Lucky Eric’s speeches, which punctuate the text, are delivered directly to the audience.

Narration, used to fill in gaps in the action, explain a character’s internal monologue and address the audience directly, emphasising the non-realistic performance style.

Although we don’t meet characters such as the female bouncer from Manchester or the rugby club on a night out, the narration by the bouncers fills us in.

Exercise One

Take one of the scenes that does not involve the bouncers such as the lads in the toilet or Rosie’s boyfriend cheating in the club.

Read through this section of text and then, instead of playing the characters and using the dialogue from the script, tell the story as if you were one of the bouncers and are speaking directly to the audience about what you have witnessed. Think about your use of eye contact. Direct address can be a useful technique for reminding the audience that they are witnessing a performance and breaking the spell of naturalism. Be sure that your eye contact makes it clear to the audience that you are talking to them and that you are not talking to another character.

Exercise Two

Building on the work you did on still images, create three still images from one of the scenes (a beginning, middle and end). One member of the group who is not in the tableaux can then add narration during the transitions between the still images to link them together and fill in the gaps.

The Current Production

EDEXCEL

Unit 2: Exploring Play Texts

Response to Live Performance

The Theatre Royal Wakefield / The John Godber Company production of *Bouncers* originally opened at Theatre Royal Wakefield in early 2014 before showing at CAST, Doncaster and Hull Truck Theatre. In that version, Les was played by Dave Maccreedy. This version, touring nationally, features Frazer Hammill who has previously performed in a number of productions of *Bouncers*.

The first day of rehearsals involves a meet-and-greet between the cast and the staff at Theatre Royal Wakefield.

The cast run through the performance, 'script-in-hand' while the director makes notes on blocking, characterisation and the delivery of lines.

Present at the read-through are:

Cast:

Adrian Hood

Chris Hannon

Frazer Hammill

Robert Hudson



Director & Writer: John Godber

Designer: Graham Kirk

Company Stage Manager: Sarah Follon

Production Manager, Theatre Royal Wakefield: Gareth Williams

Deputy Stage Manager: Vicki Maiden

The Current Production

EDEXCEL

Unit 2: Exploring Play Texts

Response to Live Performance

John Godber on Directing *Bouncers*



“30-odd years on [from the first production of *Bouncers*], we realised that we were trying to re-invent the wheel; after a while you realise that it just works. There are productions of *Bouncers* where, because it’s a large venue, the temptation is to build a big set just to fill the space, but then you may as well be doing *42nd Street*.

It’s just telling the story and what I want to get across in this production is the simplicity. The performance style is very zen. It’s four bored guys on the door, they are oak-aged in the club, masterful in the art of telling of the story. It’s showing. We ‘demonstrate’ a pub for you. It’s totally Brechtian.

On stage, whenever the actors are not playing the characters [within the story], they are the bouncers. As they go in to the characters of the girls in a scene, there is this sense of dread. They exchange these looks that say ‘here we go again’. They are uneasy in the characterization at first, asking “will this work”? The illusion is hanging by a thread! When they stop playing the characters, they [stare menacingly] at the audience, as if to say “What are you looking at”.

The more realistic and believable the bouncers are, the more we can exaggerate the other characters. They are preening and joking, but underneath it there is a deep menace. They are pumped up for violence and then the boredom makes them want to make something happen. Cabin fever sets in. There is a game of one-up-manship. They’re in it together, they are a team, and then they’re not.”

Actor Interview

EDEXCEL

Unit 2: Exploring Play Texts

Response to Live Performance

Chris Hannon (Ralph)

Chris Hannon has appeared at Theatre Royal Wakefield for the last five years as the resident pantomime dame. He can currently be seen on the Cbeebies channel playing 'Dad' in the TV adaptation of the popular *Topsy and Tim* children's books..

Frazer, Adrian, Rob and, in the original Theatre Royal Wakefield / John Godber Company Spring 2014 version, Dave Macreeedy, have all previously performed in versions of *Bouncers* directed by John Godber. The 2014 *Bouncers* production was Chris' first time working with John Godber as a director.



There is a quote attributed to John that goes along the lines, “You ain’t seen a Godber play unless it’s directed by me”. How did you feel about your first experience working in the Godber style?

“I’ve never done any Godber, I’ve seen *Bouncers* but I’ve never worked on a Godber play. I was kind of worried when we started because all of the guys had worked with him before, done *Bouncers* a lot of times with him before. Whereas I’ve not and I thought that I might be at a disadvantage and be on the fringes but when we started the process he said he felt that *Bouncers* had become a parody of itself over time, certain routines got put in. So the accumulation of routines, he wanted to chuck all of that away and get back to doing something very simple, very stark and menacing. In a way it was good because I didn’t have any images of other iterations of *Bouncers* in my head, whereas some of the other guys did. John also employs actors with a great company spirit. I’ve been made to feel very welcome as the new boy.

It was great that the way he wanted to go with it was that you were always the bouncer, you were never an actor playing the bouncer then an actor playing the girl, you were always being the bouncer playing the other characters. When you become another character, you’re that bouncers judgement on the other character, but also, ‘how does the bouncer feel about being that character?’ When you’re the bouncer and you’re playing the girls, with the handbag, the first beat to that is the bouncer is feeling awkward, being judged by the other bouncers and being laughed at. You don’t have to do much, you just hold the handbag up, the awkwardness is funny and how you play on the audiences reaction ‘I’ll come down there and kick your head in’ which is what you want to get, that sense of actual menace and threat. John comes out with a lot of insightful things. “When the bouncers shift into heightened poetic language it’s because they are oak-aged in the world of the club”, it’s like they’ve been there for centuries. He knows what he wants and he articulates it very well.”

Actor Interview

EDEXCEL

Unit 2: Exploring Play Texts

Response to Live Performance

How much comes from the script, how much comes from John's direction?

"I approached it as I would any play. It was an incredibly truncated process, we only had a week to do it. I learnt it and within the first four hours of the first day, he'd choreographed it. By lunchtime we'd blocked the whole play, which you don't retain, but then you have an idea of the shape of the play. The rest of the week was just going over and over it. Then your job is to interpret it in a way that's suitable. He wants an aesthetically bold show. You're not on a wide leash."

In the intro to *Bouncers*, John says that because there is no set or props, the performers are quite exposed, everything comes from the performers

"I started out doing a lot of physical theatre. My youth theatre was taken over by Jen Heyes who was doing her [university] theatre dissertation. We did Shakespeare and Norse myths just on a floor cloth, no set. It was all about creating physical work. She loved Complicité (British physical theatre company). That was a great grounding in ensemble work."

Are there any specific rehearsal techniques that John uses?

"I don't think you've got time in a week to play games, do hot seating. You're literally just drilling it with precision. That's what he wants, absolute precision in what you're doing. The whole rehearsal process is a pursuit of that precision. One of the things that he does do, which a lot of directors do, he directs anecdotally. All of sudden, you go off on a tangent for an hour where he talks about what it was like where he grew up or Bruce Lee or rugby. After a while you realise that is as valuable as the specific notes that he's giving you about the characters because he's written about the world that he's from and he's telling you about that world, you can then pick bits out and apply that to what you're doing. He talks around the subject."

Teachers is perhaps more autobiographical, when I saw John direct that, he talks a lot about the real-life basis for those characters. The characters in *Bouncers* are perhaps less based on specific people, more cartoony...

"Yeah, but everything in *Bouncers* is based on stuff that he's seen. The horrible sexy Suzy story where she's eating a pizza and there's a guy behind rutting in to her, that's something he's seen. I think you need to heighten it to take a bit of the sting out. You can play it as a caricature because that's funny. It's so quick and all the changes, you need to give the audience a kind of short hand. You give the audience a snapshot of who these people are because it's so rapid-fire. Way back, these were people that he had seen but if he wants you to see them as a caricature then they're written as caricatures so that they can work on stage and you can quickly get it."

Writing a Review

EDEXCEL

Unit 2: Exploring Play Texts

Response to Live Performance

There are as many ways of writing a review of a show as there are reviewers, but there are certain things that are always useful for people reading the review to know.

Time/date/venue:

Producer(s)/ director:

Designer(s):

Writer:

Cast:

The story and/or themes of the performance:

It is also important that a reviewer makes it clear how they felt about the show. Here are some ideas to consider:

What did you enjoy about the actors' performances?

What dramatic techniques did they use? Would you have made the same choices?

Notes on the set; what were the benefits of the design in supporting the structure of the text?

Music and Lighting play a major part in this production due to the very minimal set. At which points do these two design elements best support the action on stage and why?

A favourite/ most effective moment?

How does this performance compare to other, similar shows that you have seen in the past?

Young Writers@TRW

Theatre Royal Wakefield run a scheme offering free theatre tickets to young people (14-25) who would like to write reviews of the shows that they come to see.

If you would like to know more about this scheme then please contact:

Amy.Charles@theatreroyalwakefield.co.uk

The John Godber Company and Theatre Royal

Wakefield Co-Productions

In March 2011 John and Jane Godber launched the **John Godber Company** announcing their new home would be the **Theatre Royal Wakefield**. The Theatre now co-produce the company's UK tours, with the majority opening at the Wakefield venue. The company currently tour two to three shows per year.

The Theatre Royal is just over ten miles from the village of Upton where John Godber was born.

At the launch, Murray Edwards, Executive Director of Theatre Royal Wakefield said:

- *"This is exciting news for the Theatre and the Wakefield District. In celebration of our new partnership, John has written a new play entitled The Debt Collectors which will start touring in the Autumn of this year. We look forward to this new era with great anticipation."*

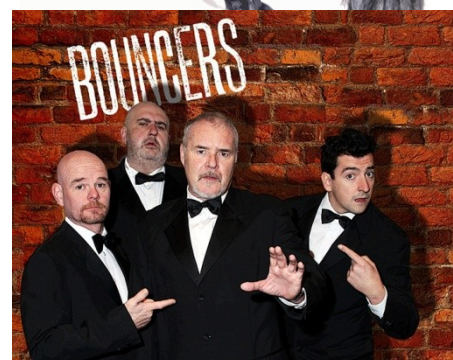
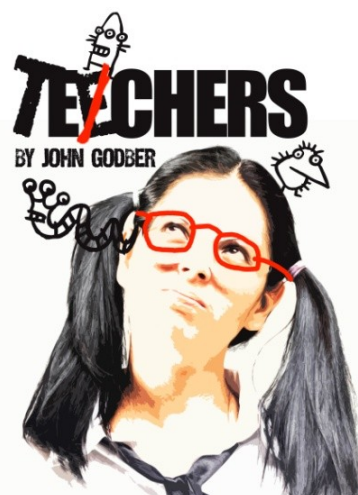
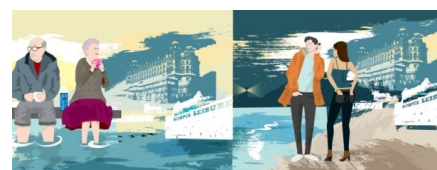
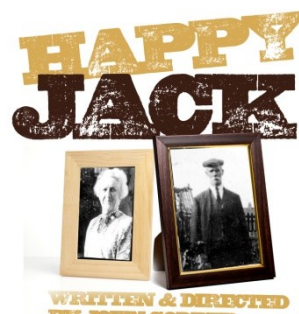
John Godber's move to Wakefield had a huge significance for him both professionally and personally. He said *"When considering a home for my new Company it made perfect sense to come back to my Wakefield roots, I have no doubt the new partnership with Theatre Royal Wakefield will be a happy and productive one."*

Since the beginning of the relationship nearly four years ago, eight productions have played to a total audience of over 105,000 people.

Debt Collectors, Autumn 2011
Weekend Breaks, Spring 2012
Lost and Found*, Autumn 2012**
Happy Jack, Autumn 2012
Losing the Plot, Spring 2013
A Kind of Loving, Spring 2013
Teechers, Autumn 2013 and Spring 2014
Bouncers, Spring 2014
On the Piste, Autumn 2014

*Co-written with Jane Thornton

**Co-produced with Stephen Joseph Theatre Scarborough



John Godber : Profile

John was born the son of a miner in Upton, West Yorkshire. He trained as a teacher of drama at Bretton Hall College. Whilst he was Head of Drama at Minsthorpe High School, the school he attended as a student, he won every major award at the National Student Drama Festival between 1981 and 1983.

John's plays are performed across the world. He has the distinction of being one of the most performed writers in the English language. He has won numerous awards for his plays, including a Laurence Olivier Award and seven Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Awards.



His plays include: Bouncers, Up 'n' Under, April in Paris, Teechers, Blood, Sweat and Tears, Cramp, Happy Jack, September in the Rain, Salt of the Earth, Passion Killers, Happy Families, Up 'n' Under II, Gym and Tonic, Dracula, Lucky Sods, Hooray for Hollywood, Weekend Breaks, It Started With a Kiss, Unleashed, Thick As a Brick, Big Trouble in the Little Bedroom, Seasons in the Sun, On a Night Like This, Our House, Departures, Men of the World, Reunion, Screaming Blue Murder, Black Ties and Tales, Perfect Pitch, Going Dutch, Christmas Crackers and Crown Prince.

His most recent play, Losing The Plot, was a co-production with Theatre Royal Wakefield which garnered critical acclaim and rave reviews from the national press after touring to 14 venues across the country before being revived at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in the Summer.

Within his extensive career in writing and directing in TV and film, John also devised the BBC2 series Chalkface, and his screenplay My Kingdom for a Horse, starring Sean Bean, was nominated for an Alternative BAFTA Award.

John's first feature film, Up 'n' Under, was released in January 1998. In 2005, he co-wrote Odd Squad for BBC2 with his wife, Jane, which was shot in Hull using local actors. Odd Squad won two British Academy of Film and Television Arts Awards in the Schools Drama category and in the BAFTA Original Writer section.

John has an MA from Leeds University, an hon DLitt from Hull University, an hon DLitt from Lincoln University, a DUni for the Open University and was a PHD research student for five years at Leeds University. He is a professor of contemporary theatre at Liverpool Hope University, a visiting professor of drama at Hull University, a professor at Sheffield Hallam University and a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.

John was Artistic Director of Hull Truck for 26 years, taking it from bankruptcy in 1984 to its new home in a £15 million theatre in 2010. In 2011, he set up The John Godber Company with his playwright wife, Jane, and formed a partnership with Theatre Royal Wakefield to produce two tours of his work each year. Since then his plays have continued to tour the UK and have been seen by over 105,000 people.

Glossary

Below are a list of some of the terms that you will come across in this education pack and definitions of their use:

- Action:** What is happening on stage.
- Body Language:** How performers communicate emotions physically.
- Brecht, Bertolt:** (b.1898-d.1956) German playwright and theatre practitioner whose theories on Epic Theatre outlined non-naturalistic approaches to performance (including the principle of verfremdungsteffect) . An acknowledged influence on John Godber.
- Characterisation:** A performer's vocal and physical behaviour, specific to a particular character.
- Climax:** A gradual building tension, leading to a sudden explosion of heightened action/ emotion.
- Contrast:** Two or more opposite elements which, when seen next to each other, highlight differences.
- Costume:** The clothes/ outfits worn on stage by performers to signify which role they are playing.
- Designer:** The person responsible for the way certain production elements look eg, Lighting Designer, Set Designer etc
- Director:** The person who oversees rehearsals and offers feedback to performers/ gives creative input. Often responsible for the overall 'feel' of a performance.
- Form:** The way that the content of a performance is presented to an audience/ the framing of ideas.
- Gesture:** Physical movements used by performers

Glossary

Lecoq, Jacques:	(b.1921-d.1999) French performer and practitioner known for his work using mask work, mime and play
Levels:	Varying points on a scale, a character's level of importance/ emotion etc.
Lighting:	The way that the set, stage and performers are illuminated.
Mime:	Silent performance, often featuring a much heightened level of tension and exaggeration of normal movement.
Naturalism:	A style of performance where actors and designers try to create the illusion that what is happening on stage is 'reality'.
Plot:	The story being told, the reasons for the action to unfold
Producer:	Will finance or find finance for a production. Responsible for the 'business' elements of a performance.
Props:	Items brought on/off stage by performers to assist in characterisation/ action/ plot development.
Proxemics:	How directors/ performers use spacing on stage to demonstrate relationships
Rhythm:	The pattern of pauses and emphasis in sound/ speech.
Set:	The way that a stage is dressed in order to convey a sense of place or a certain emotion/ theme
Staging:	Where the performers/ set/ action is placed on the stage

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