

## WAITING by NIKKI ATKIN-REEVES

### Cast:

#### Parts for the boys:

Matt - 20 years old  
Chris - mid-teens  
Terry - mid-teens  
Mick - 17 years old  
Voice 4 - a man  
Matt's Dad  
Terry's Dad  
Mick's Dad  
Bouncer  
John - teenage boy  
Danny - teenage boy  
Child's Father  
Doctor

#### Parts for the girls:

Shona - 15 years old  
Sheena - mid-teens  
Sam - mid-teens  
Sherry - pregnant, age 15  
Voice 1 - another teenage girl  
Voice 2 - another teenage girl  
Voice 3 - an old lady  
Voice 5 - another old lady  
Chris's Mum  
Terry's Mum  
Michelle - a teenage girl  
Carly - a teenage girl  
Jade - a teenage girl  
Shona's Mum  
Nurse  
Woman with hernia  
Child  
Mick's Mum  
Mick's grandmother

The above cast of 33 can be doubled as much as is feasible. A sensible doubling for 16 students would be:

#### Boys:

Matt  
Chris and Doctor  
Terry and Bouncer \*\* and Child's Father  
Mick  
Voice 4 and Terry's Dad  
Danny and Matt's Dad and Shona's Dad  
John and Mick's Dad

#### Girls:

Shona and Mick's Mum\*  
Sheena  
Sam and Child  
Sherry  
Voice 1 and Carly and Nurse  
Voice 2 and Jade and Woman with Hernia  
Voice 3 and Mick's Gran  
Voice 5 and Chris's Mum  
Michelle and Terry's Mum and Shona's Mum

\* and \*\* you may decide that both these characters need to be potent symbols of 'waiting' - see more detail in the Production Notes. In which case, Sheena could play Mick's Mum and John could play the Bouncer.

Though further doubling is possible I believe that the smallest number that could play this piece effectively - given that it is such an ensemble work - is: 16 players - 7 boys, 9 girls.

The play is about one hour fifteen minutes long. For examination purposes it would be possible to choose scenes involving characters that would reduce the length and the cast size. This play was written as a commissioned piece of theatre.

### *EXTRACT ONE*

*Preset: A line of actors, along the back of the stage, in a ramshackle queue. They keep*

*the obligatory three feet apart, not looking at one another. Their focus of vision should be the audience as though they are expecting something to come from them. As the audience are coming in, there should be the occasional shifting of position on stage, which is accompanied by a shuffling or stamping of the feet, so that the slow dullness of waiting is percussed by the actors themselves.*

*As the waiting continues, the percussion of shifting position and foot stamping should gradually speed up until the line becomes broken up and people make movements that are big enough to force them to turn to the person next to them. Their focus, as they pair up, should still be the middle distance, so that no contact is made between the partners.*

*To the increasingly strong rhythm a kind of passionless dance ensues where the pairs begin to move around the stage, steering their partner towards the object of their focus, the stronger pursuing their own objective, the weaker being taken with them. A disorganised ballroom dance of couples fills the stage and then, using the rhythm as the key, begins to subside back into a line again.*

*The rhythm by now has got fairly fast and the scene culminates with a line of people stamping hard and fast in desperation and then hopping from one foot to another, agitated, as though absolutely desperate for the loo, which in fact they are.*

*The line moves to become a queue all facing in the same direction - out front. Simultaneously, the actors shout:*

ALL CAST  
Hurry up!

*The following lines are divided up between cast members:*

I'm going out tonight, can't wait.  
I love getting ready to go out.  
It's usually better than the actual night out.  
I'm excited; anything could happen.  
Boys! Hundreds of boys all in one room, brilliant!  
There's going to be girls in little tight dresses. Dancing!  
I wonder who'll get drunk?  
I wonder if I'll get off with anyone.  
Two hours, I'll be there.  
If I get in.  
Got my sister's I.D.  
Driving Dad's car tonight; I can't believe he let me.  
It's Friday!  
Happy hour!  
Music.  
Light show.  
Snogging in corners.  
The Warehouse.  
Friday night!  
Friday!

*Matt, Chris, Terry and Mick, the four main boys pair up with Shona, Sheena, Sam and Sherry, the four main girls, as follows; Matt and Shona, Sherry and Mick, Sam and Terry, Sheena and Chris. They stand back to back and do not relate to each other at all during the following lines, which take place as if in the bathrooms of their eight respective homes. The rest of the cast stay at the back of the stage. They keep a slow rhythm going with their feet, but the sound must not be obtrusive. All are miming different ready-to-go-out essential teenage things: spot squeezing, eyebrow plucking, shaving, trying on expressions, dancing in the mirror, putting on makeup .... etc.*

SHONA

God! I've only been in here about twenty minutes! God! How do you expect me to get ready? You don't understand how long it takes; I bet you didn't even have make-up in your day! God!

MATT

Hurry up? How long do you spend in here? Hours! All I'm trying to do is get ready to go out and now you're nagging me! You used to nag me because I never went anywhere near the bathroom! Make up your mind, Mum!

SHEENA

I'm not talking to you like anything, I'm just explaining why I need to be in here so long! If I had my own room .... I'm not starting, I'm just stating a fact! You know what she does to my makeup!

MICK

I'm hurrying up, but I've got a crisis! Lois! Where's your cover-up stuff? ..... It's orange! Oh great, I've got a massive orange spot on my nose. I look like Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer! [*Slight pause.*] What if I get a snog? It's going to rub off all over her face! [*Hurriedly begins wiping away the spot cover-up.*]

SAM *starts wiping away condensation on the mirror*

Why is it that you can't get near enough to the mirror when you want to squeeze a zit? It steams up every time I get anywhere near it. Right, that's it, I'm going to hold my breath. [*Holds her breath and moves in towards the mirror, intent on squeezing a spot.*]

TERRY *practising snogging in the bathroom mirror. His first words are muffled as he is mid-kiss.*

I'll be out in a minute! You want me to look nice, don't you? You want to be proud of me, don't you? You don't want me to smell like Matt, do you? Well then, it all takes time! You'll have to hang on!

SHERRY

Hang on, Mum, I'll be out in a minute! It's freezing in here; can't we turn the heating up a bit? But I'll be warm enough when I get there. No, no one wears coats. I told you ...it's really sad to wear one ... [*Makes faces to herself in the mirror, appraising her face and then trying to see her body in a face mirror which will only allow her to see herself in section. This is a very serious act of self-regarding. She pays particular attention to her bottom, and then over-long on her stomach. It should be long enough for the audience to feel that there is something amiss, but not definitely that she is pregnant.* ] O.K.! I won't wear the crop top! I'll be out in a minute ... just got to go to the loo! [*One more look in the mirror at her stomach and then freeze.*]

CHRIS

No, Dad, you can't come in now. Once you're on the loo, that's it, I'll never get in here again. You'll just have to wait. Got to look my best for the ladies, eh Dad? [*Chris turns to the audience and addresses them directly.*] Forty-eight minutes, my dad's record on the loo. It was his own fault - showing off with a vindaloo. He'll have to wait ...

*Simultaneously all four couples make the decisive move out of the bathroom and then move - practising dance moves, poses, pouts, etc. - to the back of the stage, remaining at the back as the rest of the cast moves downstage as the queue.*

VOICE 1

Eight o'clock start it says; two hours to go ...

VOICE 2

Starts at eight, arrive at ten.

VOICE 3

Ten to nine this bus comes, ten to nine, you're not telling me that's good service!

VOICE 4

But I'll be late! Hurry up bus!

VOICE 1

Eight o'clock start doesn't mean start at eight, it means that's when the host is ready..it doesn't actually mean that you should be there for eight ... don't you know anything?

VOICE 2

What's a host?

VOICE 3

You used to get a good regular service before they deregulated these buses. You can't tell me they cater for the old folk any more .... Reg gave his car up in 1974 during the fuel crisis. He's always been a patriot ... You'd think the least they could do would be to get a regular bus service going. It's alright for the young, but I can't stand like I used to and these little plastic ledges in the shelters are no good to me. What am I supposed to do with them? Sit on them, or put my shopping on them?

VOICE 5

You wouldn't get your bottom on that, dear, you'd barely perch on that. I think it's for little children; they can pop their little bottoms on while they're waiting.

VOICE 3

And they're not ones for waiting, are they? Mind you, they're not the ones who have to catch the bus in the evening, are they? You know, a taxi would cost twelve pound fifty.

VOICE 5 *in disbelief*

No!

VOICE 3

Oh, they're making a mint, the taxi drivers, you can be sure. You should see the house that the man from Country Cabs owns. Circular drive and all new double glazing. Oh yes, that's the job to go into nowadays, the skilled workman isn't appreciated. Did you see the Barry Beagle Quipstop last night? Oh, he's a case, isn't he?

*Voice 5 turns to answer and 3,4 and 5 freeze.*

VOICE 2

Twelve pounds fifty. That wouldn't be much split between all of us, would it?

VOICE 1

Just wait. We don't want to get there too early; I told you ... it's not cool.

VOICE 2

I'm freezing.

VOICE 1

Should have worn a coat, then.

VOICE 2

Sherry wouldn't lend it.

VOICE 1

Yeah, well she's a cow ...

*Sherry and Sheena move downstage and join the queue..*

VOICE 2

All right, Sherry? You haven't got your P.V.C. coat on, then?

VOICE 1 *unsure as to whether she was overheard by Sherry*

All right Sherry? All right Sheena?

VOICE 2

Shall we split a cab? It'll only be about three quid each. I'm freezing standing here.

SHEENA

You should have worn a coat.

VOICE 2

Yeah.

SHERRY

You could have borrowed my coat if you'd asked. Come on, then, let's get a cab. I can't be bothered to wait.

VOICE 1

But we'll be early!

## EXTRACT TWO

*Like a dance, the two sets of characters move past one another, picking up on the*

*rhythm that Voice 4 established with his obsessive pacing.*

MATT'S DAD

You can borrow the car on condition that you don't drink. Have you got that, Matthew? If I catch one whiff of alcohol on your breath when you get in - and I'll be waiting up - that will be the last time you drive it. Do I make myself clear? Good lad. Now, go out and enjoy yourself. [*He punches Matt payfully on the shoulder and Matt holds out his hand for the car keys.*]

CHRIS'S MUM

Are you sure you've got everything, love? Well, have a lovely time, and take care in the car with Matthew Wright - if you smell one whiff of alcohol on his breath, get out. You're too precious to me ... [*Folds over his hand and puts money in it.*] Any doubt, love, you just get a taxi.

TERRY'S MUM AND DAD

In by eleven, d'you hear?

MICK'S DAD

Be good, son, and if you can't be good be careful, know what I mean? Here you go, mate. Have a drink on me!

MICK, TERRY, CHRIS & MATT *simultaneously*

Don't wait up!

*Matt moves around the stage to the following dialogue, picking up Chris and Mick. Terry remains downstage, waiting.*

MATT

Matthew Wright for the Ferrari team, burns up the laps after one of the quickest pitstops in the history of Formula One racing and, as he roars past the chequered flag, you can smell the burning rubber ... [*He roars past Chris and the cast do a squealing-round-the-corner sound effect.*] Right, Chris, get in...we're going to get slaughtered tonight, mate!

CHRIS

Yeah.

MATT

Yeah ... [*They repeat the roar around the stage with sound effects by the cast and stop in front of Mick.*] Mate! In!

MICK

Great.

CHRIS AND MATT

Yeah! Burn up! [*All three roar around the stage with the same sound effects. They come to an abrupt halt parallel to Voices 3, 4 and 5. Voices 4 and 5 are as if they are just about to get on the bus. Voice 3 is waiting behind them. Matt behaves as if held up behind the bus. He mimes honking his horn, the rest of the cast supplying the sound effect.*]

MATT *shouts at the bus*

Hurry up!

VOICE 3 *anxious*

Hurry up!

CHRIS

What you waiting there for, you fat dollop. We've got right of way!...

EXTRACT THREE

MATT

Mick!!! Oy, Mick mate, who was Terry coming with?

MICK

You, mate. You said you'd pick him up at eight-thirty, remember?

SAM

Told you!

MATT *rounding on Mick*

Well, why didn't you say?

MICK

I forgot. Doesn't matter; he'll turn up. Mate, drinking competition! Down in thirty seconds! I'll go first, right - who's timing?

JOHN

Yeah, I'll do it. Who's got a watch?

CHRIS

Yeah, I have, mate.

JOHN

What's the time, then?

*Chris turns the hand which is holding the pint over to look at his watch. Predictably.... This is what John intended to happen.*

CHRIS

Oh ha ha!

*Back to the girls' loos, where Jade and Sherry are standing looking over a pregnancy test.*

JADE

You're joking! You never did that in here!

SHERRY

Well, where else was I going to do it? Couldn't do it at home in case my mum found out. Couldn't do it at school or everyone would know. The doctor knows my dad so then my dad would kill me - where else could I do it? Anyway, shut up, I'm timing it.

*Counts down the remaining thirty seconds of the test as in parallel the lads are drinking down their pints. They are surrounded by a group of onlookers; Sherry and Jade are isolated, conspirators. The whole cast counts down from thirty with interjections from the following characters.*

ALL

Thirty, twenty-nine, twenty-eight, twenty-seven ..

JADE

Oh, my god, what if you are?

ALL

... twenty-six, twenty-five, twenty-four, twenty-three, twenty-two ...

SAM

Why can't you just go and get him?

CHRIS

You're spilling half of that, Matt; get it down your neck, mate!

ALL

... twenty-one, twenty, nineteen, eighteen, seventeen, sixteen, fifteen ...

SHERRY

If I am, I don't know what I'll do; I'm only fifteen.

ALL

... fourteen, thirteen, twelve, eleven ...

SAM

You'll be too pissed to drive if you carry on drinking like that.

ALL

... ten, nine, eight ...

SHERRY

I can't look!

ALL

... seven, six, five ...

CHRIS

Looks like you're going to win, Matt.

ALL

... four, three ...

JADE

I'd like to have a little baby - live in a little house, me, my baby and a gorgeous bloke.

ALL

...two ...

SHERRY

Or just you and the baby.

ALL

One!

*The cast surrounding the drinking competition cheer. They surround Matt who has won.*

CHRIS

You won, mate!

JADE

Oh my god, Sherry, I'm really sorry.

*Pause. During this time, the parallel scene with the rest of the club has broken up, but Sam is still tackling Matt about not picking up Terry. She is even more angry as the drinking competition interrupted her and gave her time to stew.*

JADE *looking at Sherry intently*

Or are you happy? [*Gabbling in her worry and embarrassment*] I mean it's not that bad, it could be worse. When are you sixteen? Oh, yeah, June - see, you'll be legal by the time it's born. You might get your own place and everything. I've always wanted my own place: no hassle from your mum and things, have your music up as loud as you want, I mean ... in a way you're lucky really, aren't you?

SHERRY

I'm on my own.

SAM

You can't just leave him waiting, I'm all on my own.

MICK

So's he, love!...

#### EXTRACT FOUR

SHONA *approaching Matt and shouting*

Matt, just go and get him; it's not worth the argument.

MATT

No way. I'm here now; he'll just have to get the bus or something if he wants to come.

SHONA

You know there aren't any after nine.

MATT

Looks like he's got a night in then!

*Sam, Carly and Jade group together behind Shona. Seeing this, the lads group together behind Matt.*

SHONA

Just go and get him!

*During this and the following, a barrage of insults flies between the two sides.*

MATT

No!

SHONA

Get him!

MATT

No!

*Matt walks away. Shona tries to turn him round and pull him back. He resists being pulled round and carries on walking. Shona tries again to turn him round, flying at him. He half turns and lashes out at her in irritation - not a punch, just a gesture like someone brushing away a fly. She stumbles back and trips over Carly, who is close behind her to give Shona back-up. Shona falls, hits her head and remains on the ground. The accident should not look dramatic, just like the kind of accident where someone would usually get up, brush herself and walk away. But Shona remains on the ground. Everything goes very quiet. If possible, the music should be slowed down so that it sounds distorted. Everyone is frozen to the spot. After about thirty seconds, Matt nudges her head with his foot.*

MATT

Get up, Sho. [No response. He adopts a slightly jokey tone, but his face betrays his anxiety.] Come on, Shona. A laugh's a laugh. [No response. Matt bends down.]

SAM *feeling guilty*

Is she okay?

MATT *not listening because he is trying to listen to Shona's breathing*

Shona?[No response. He suddenly shouts at Mick in pure fear] What are you waiting for, you prat? Call an ambulance! Shona!

*Suddenly all becomes confusion as the club scene breaks up and the music becomes very loud. A moment of storm after the build-up of the argument scene. The effect of the argument scene should be that it all happened too quickly, on an off-beat.*

*Cast should whirl about the stage to mask the exit of Shona and Matt. Then just as suddenly, all should be calm, the stage clear bar Terry, who is standing alone, pacing around in a circle. The sound effect of an ambulance rushing by causes him to look up, follow its progress down the road and then stare into the middle distance again. He looks at his watch and begins to walk away when he hears the sound of a car approaching. He follows the progress of the car and it becomes evident that he recognises Matt's car. The sound effect shows that it is not going to slow down. Terry begins to run after it and runs off-stage.*

TERRY

Mate!...

## EXTRACT FIVE

*Shona's Mum approaches first, unsure, then resolute. She speaks from a distance of about ten feet, projecting over the patient lying supine on the trolley. There are patients in between them, waiting, who become involuntarily involved with what happens next.*

SHONA'S MUM *to her husband*

No, love, I want to talk to him. Just let me do that. [To Matt] I just want you to know ....I just ....I want you to know how it felt. That night. Waiting for her. Why didn't you let us know sooner? What were you doing taking her to a night-club anyway? She's fifteen.

SHONA'S DAD *interrupting*

What was a man of twenty-one / doing going out with a schoolgirl anyway? Are you some kind of pervert? Because if I find out you've been having sex with her \* as well, I'll bloody swing for you.

MATT

/ Twenty. \* I haven't.

CHRIS *sotto voce to Matt*

You said you had!



*Dissolve into Shona's Mum alone, looking out into the audience in a pool of light, unable to relate to anyone else in the scene until she has finished this speech. It is painful but important for her to recall.*

SHONA'S MUM

I was freezing, waiting in the front room in my dressing-gown. I knew something was wrong - her father didn't believe me / but I knew. You have a sense as a mother. Every car that went past I thought was yours - that exhaust problem - I heard it on twenty cars that night. When it came to midnight ... well, I suppose it's not that late - I stayed out till midnight when I was a teenager - but I couldn't go to bed. So I waited until the all night news, because you never bring her home later than that. You've always been such a good lad until ... then. Why didn't you phone?

SHONA'S DAD

/ I told you not to fuss. You worry too much about her.

MATT I phoned as soon as I could; it was tricky.

SHONA'S MUM

Tricky! You put my daughter into a coma and it's tricky! If she dies ... if she dies ....

MATT

I was at the police station. I gave myself up straight away. I didn't know what to do - go with her in the ambulance / or own up. I only tapped her; it wasn't that hard - not like you'd hit a bloke and I swear I never hit her before. I waited in a cell all night. I sat there all night. I didn't even have my coat on; it was freezing. And I was thinking, all night, about what I'd done, wanting to rewind that moment. Wishing I'd said: 'Yes I'll go and get Terry, no problem, Sam.' I'd had a drink; it was a pound a pint and I'd been drinking chasers too. \* I couldn't drive; I'd have been picked up. [*Pause.*] It was only a tap, on my life, only a tap. When they came for me in the morning and they let me go home, well, I felt wrong. I thought I'd punched her out, I never thought she'd be in a coma. Honest, it was just a tap!

SHONA'S MUM

/ You left her!

SHONA'S DAD

\* Have you driven her home before when you've been drunk?

SHONA'S MUM

If my daughter dies ... you'll go to prison.

*Big pause.*

MATT

I know. I want to. I want it to be me lying there. Why should I be out, free, when she's trapped? I want to be in prison too.

*Shona's Dad takes Shona's Mum away from Matt. They resume their seats and stare ahead, waiting. The man waiting for the bus - Voice 4 - walks in. Everyone turns round to look at him, as you do. He looks around for someone to help him. A nurse bustles past, the only other activity in the scene as everyone else is preoccupied with their waiting. Voice 4 looks around as though searching for someone and then stops the nurse.*

VOICE 4

Maternity?

NURSE

Second on the left, Dickens Ward. We call it Great Expectations .. do you get it? Pregnant, expecting? Well, it's funnier if you've worked here for a while. Anxious father?

VOICE 4

What?

NURSE

Worried father. [*Slight pause*] Are you expecting an expectation? [*Voice 4 doesn't react*] Is your partner on the ward?

VOICE 4

Well, yes, I had a phone call. She thinks she's in labour. Do I go straight up?

NURSE

No hurry. Is it your first? [*Voice 4 nods*] Yes, I thought so. No need to worry, the first one usually takes a long time coming. You're probably in for a bit of a wait...

## EXTRACT SIX

DANNY... When's the bus due, Sherry?

SHERRY

Five to.

SAM

Why is Terry always late? Do you reckon he'll make it?

JOHN

Do you reckon Shona'll make it?

*Silence. Everyone looks down at their feet, embarrassed. Long pause, then Danny says*

DANNY

Here. Sherry, if Shona dies and you have a girl, you could call it Shona, couldn't you?

*Bigger silence. More embarrassment. They freeze, waiting. FX heartbeat of someone running. Enter Terry at the back. He is late for the bus.*

TERRY

I'll never make it. What time does it go? Five to. If I run ... [*His voice trails off as he puffs and pants. Freeze.*]

*Enter elsewhere Voice 3 and Voice 4. Voice 3 looks exhausted.*

VOICE 4

Well, I thought, John, but then with our surname I suppose you're asking for trouble in the playground. Then I thought Terry, but there's already been a famous Terry Thomas, hasn't there? Anyway, we agreed eventually on Samuel.

VOICE 3

That's a nice name. They're coming back, the old names, aren't they? My friends' husband was a Samuel, but we all called him Sam. They do get shortened, you know.

VOICE 4

Yes. Well at the moment we just call him Trouble because he keeps us awake all night.

VOICE 3

Oh yes, they'll do that.

VOICE 4

To be honest, it's quite a relief this time, waiting for the bus. I haven't had any time to myself for weeks.

VOICE 3

Sorry. Do you want me to be quiet then? Only I miss my friend you see ...

VOICE 4

Funny, isn't it, how you wait nine months for something to happen, and when it does happen you wish you could have another nine months of waiting.

VOICE 3

She's gone for some results.

*Freeze.*

*Centre stage a desk with telephone and two chairs.*

DOCTOR

Yes, I'm afraid it's malignant. Stubborn little chap, isn't it? Well, not to worry, we'll start you on the radiotherapy today and begin a course of chemotherapy in two weeks.

OK?

VOICE 5 *unsurprised, but still in shock*

Will I die?

DOCTOR

Well, we're all going to die someday - only certainty in life.

VOICE 5

Will I die soon?

DOCTOR

Who can tell when their number will be up. I could walk out of here and be hit by a car... or suddenly drop down dead of a coronary. [*Warming to his theme*] Or get electrocuted by the dicey wiring in the kitchen that I never got around to seeing about; I could drown in a sailing accident; be stabbed by a mugger; my wife could poison me; death comes to us all, my dear.

VOICE 5

But will I die soon?

DOCTOR

We'll have to see how the radiotherapy goes. Keep your chin up!

VOICE 5

So, wait and see then?

DOCTOR

That's the ticket.

*The Doctor and Voice 5 move apart and freeze.*

*On a higher level upstage, are Shona's Mum and Dad. The telephone left on the doctor's desk is also lit. There is the sound of a phone ringing, very loud and jarring. At the first ring, Shona's Mum runs for the phone and picks it up, breathless. Shona's Dad hangs back, anxious.*

SHONA'S MUM

Hello? [*The relief*] Hello Mum. [*Shona's Dad looks relieved and moves back to his position of alertness.*] No, no change. No, Mum, I told you yesterday, they'll phone if there's any change. Yes, I thought it was them just now. No, still the same. Well, they won't let it go on forever, mum. No, mum, don't upset yourself. Come on, mum, don't worry, it'll be all right... just keep hoping, eh? That's better. No, I'm not trying to give you the brush-off, mum, honest, it's just ... you know, in case they ring. Phone you tomorrow, then. Yes. Or before if there's any news. Well, n'night then, mum. That's it, mum, just wait and see. N'night.

*Shona's Mum puts the phone down and freezes.*

*Downstage Mick comes to life, looking out for buses, bored. Terry sees him and runs up.*

MICK

We missed it.

TERRY

Oh, not again, I can't believe it. I thought I left in time as well.

MICK

It was just pulling away when I came around the corner. Wish I had a car. I spend half my life waiting for buses.

TERRY

Yeah. [*Pause during which Terry wants to ask Mick if he's told his parents about Sherry and Mick wants to tell Terry that he hasn't told his parents about Sherry.*] Mate?

MICK

Yeah?

*Pause.*

TERRY

If you could have all the time you spent waiting for buses back, you know, at the end of your life, what would you do with it?

MICK

What, you mean all the time like this?

TERRY

Yeah, all this wasted time, what would you do with it?

*Long pause.*

MICK *shrugs his shoulders*

Well, dunno really ...

*Pause*

TERRY

No ... nor me ...

*They are both lost in reverie until:*

MICK

Shall we walk then?

*Terry shrugs and they both walk off stage. The groups of other people also begin to leave, slowly or fast, no longer waiting.*

*EXTRACT from Production Notes*

## **PRODUCTION NOTES + TECHNICAL CUES. ETC.**

### **INTRODUCTION: THEMES, THE PLAY'S INTENTIONS.**

The play introduces a number of serious themes, which are explored both seriously and through comedy. The idea of 'waiting' is an umbrella under which many ideas can be touched on: waiting for a bus, waiting for your friends to pick you up, waiting for news - good and bad. The physical act of waiting - and the locations in which one waits: waiting-rooms, bus-stops, queues - are embraced by this piece, whose whole mood and action involves pitching the audience helter-skelter from one experience to another, through its very physical treatment.

Serious themes are involved: waiting for the results of a biopsy, waiting for a late 'period', waiting for the pregnancy test to work, waiting for Shona to come out of a coma, waiting to have a baby, to become a father, to see the doctor.

And the not so serious cover: waiting to use the bathroom, waiting for the bus, queueing to get into the night-club, waiting for your friends to pick you up.

Gradually, apart from the eight youngsters who are the main focus of the piece, we learn about the lives of other characters: their loneliness, their nosiness, the way they fill their time. Some of the 'voices' take on depth as we become involved with their problems. The problems of being a teenager remains the main interest but we are offered a balance by looking too at the problems and worries of parenting, of old age and of serious illness.

Waiting is a necessary evil of life and a waste of precious time. The waste of time is underlined in a section in which a group of patients in a waiting-room voice their regrets

- the things they haven't had time to do. Contrasts are shown between the young people who have a number of ways of 'killing time' and the older generations, for whom time is a far more precious commodity. Further contrasts show the lads timing a drinking competition, whilst Sherry times her pregnancy test.

Thus we are constantly swung between tragedy and comedy, old and young and this helps the play sustain interest as well as becoming an intrinsic part of the performing style. Contrasts in pace are the backbone, with links between scenes and translations into different areas being achieved by ensemble work around queues or large group movements. The end result is thought-provoking. We have been whirled through many ideas, but are given no answers. The conclusion seems to be that waiting is an inevitable part of life, as are regrets.

## **CHARACTERS**

The characters are very broad, mainly stereo-typical. All of them need to be played with energy and clear outlines. With many parts doubled, the necessity to project strong characters, with identifiable ways of movement and vocal tones is increased. With the groups of teenagers, aim to give each character a difference to make them stand out for an audience. This can be partly done with costume - though in an ensemble piece, costume too may need to be minimal.

Most of the teenagers in the piece are around fifteen or sixteen, except Matt, who is 20 and Mick, who is 17.

All the Lads: stereotypically laddy. Shouting out comments to girls, egging each other on to greater excesses - drink, driving, football, etc. Only Matt grows up a little as he takes in what he has done to Shona and accepts responsibility. Mick we see evading the problem of Sherry's pregnancy; he never really comes to grips with it and shows her no support.

All the girls: stereotypically caught up in boyfriends, clothes, drinking, clubbing. They are supportive of each other up to a point. They are shown to be very shallow. Concerns over Sherry's pregnancy don't address real issues or problems. Fears over Shona are hardly touched on. Sherry takes more of a journey of progression as a character: we see her with some sympathy as she finds out she is pregnant, goes for an abortion and then decides to keep it. However, she shows little understanding of what this decision will make to the rest of her life.

VOICE 3 - an elderly woman, gossipy, full of complaints. The reference to Barry Beagle and his show, identifies her as Mick's Gran - or at least, that could be argued, so that it makes a sensible doubling.

VOICE 5 - another elderly woman. She should be a more sympathetic character as she is identified gradually as dying from cancer.

VOICE 4 - male, first-time father-to-be, impatient and nervous.  
The other Voices are teenagers.

MATT'S DAD - stereotypical trying to be macho and laddie [playful punches etc.] to communicate with his son.

MICK'S DAD -stereotypical tough Dad who doesn't listen or feel sympathy for his son. He hates his music and has already decided that he's a waster. His over-bearing attitude probably compensates for his own inadequacies - a low-level job, etc.

The Mum's are shown stereotypically as worrying, over-fussy, but they are more sympathetically portrayed than the Dads.

## **SETTING.**

This would be best done on a bare stage but if time and resources allow, an imaginative background could be created to enhance the piece. To allow for numerous exits, entrances and a more imaginative use of space, consider having screens, or free-standing flats, say three - one in the centre, one angled to either side. Queues and other movement sequences can then use the other exits that this would create. On the screens, projections can be shown, to back-up the scene occurring on stage: outside and inside a night club, a hospital waiting-room, a bus queue, as appropriate. Or, video moving images could be used similarly, especially effective in the movement sequences. Alternatively, if flats are used, these could display blown-up images associated with the idea of waiting...