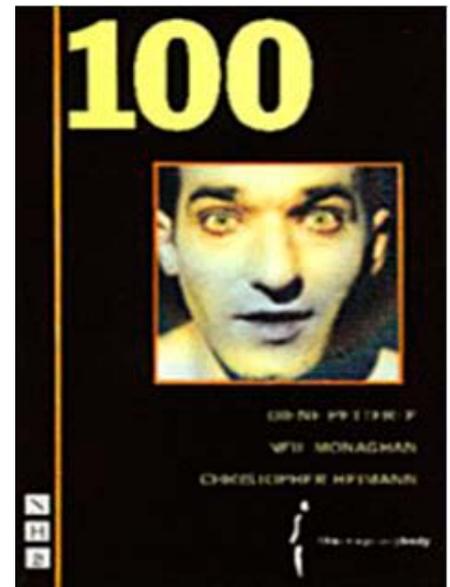


100

NEIL MONAGHAN, DIENE PETTERLE, CHRISTOPHER HEIMANN



The first production of “100” was at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2002 where it won a Fringe First Award for ‘Innovation in Theatre and outstanding production’. Following this success it was then performed in London at the Soho Theatre and enjoyed both a UK and an International tour. In the Introduction to the play it refers to the theme of death and dying and that the question that arises in the play is what may be essential in life. What would it be like to stop, step out and look at our lives and reconsider our choices in life?



THE STORY

The story of the play is simply this: Imagine that you must choose one simple memory from your life and capture it with a magical camera - everything else would be erased. Imagine that choosing this memory is your only way of passing through to eternity. Imagine that you have just one hour to choose. This is the premise behind *100*.

Some critics have compared the plot of the play to the film **Afterlife** by Hirokasu Koreeda. He was born in Tokyo, and originally intended to be a novelist but in the end went on to direct films and the plot of his film **Afterlife** is that after death people have just one week to choose only one memory to keep for eternity.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE PLAY

The structure of the play is quite simple. Following the introduction where we meet most of the characters we have a series of episodes where the characters act out their different memories. The order of the memory scenes is as follows:

Alex's memory
Sophie's memory
Ketu's Memory
Alex and Nia's memory
Sophie's memory
Sophie's memory
Ketu's memory
Nia's memory

THE CHARACTERS

We can see from the list of episodes there are four characters that are given the chance to choose one simple memory from their lives. They are Alex, Ketu, Sophie and Nia. We meet the first three in the first few pages of the play but Nia does not appear until page 18. That's when she joins in Alex's memory.

There is one other character - The Guide. He is a very mysterious character and when you discuss this character, refer to Charon, the character in Greek mythology who was the ferryman of Hades (the underworld) who carried the souls of the newly deceased across the rivers Styx and Acheron that divided the world of the living from the world of the dead. This role would be a challenge to any actor because there are so many different aspects to his character. The stage directions describe him as *"a man in his fifties. As we can see, he is something of a chameleon. He is able to change his physical and vocal characteristics with*

remarkable speed.” During the course of the play he becomes ‘sinister’ (page 12), he ‘preens’ (page 13), he becomes impatient (page 15), he shouts (page 20), he tries to annoy Alex (page 26), his manner becomes that of a barrister (page 41), and for once he is lost for words (page 62). It is also said of him that *“he appears more of a jester or a clown”* (page 12). At the beginning of the play the other characters tried to ask him who he was. Was he Death, God, the devil or the wood spirit? He refused to give them an answer. At the end of the play The Guide is alone with Alex on stage and again we question who he really is and what actually happened to him because Alex looks at him and begins to realise:

“All this time I thought you were some kind of angel of death...but you’re just like me.” (page 62). Is he really like the ones he tries to persuade to choose their one memory? Did he at one stage fail to do so himself?

ALEX

is a young man, self assured and brash with a childlike quality that makes him attractive and likeable. He is the one who is always ready to challenge and more than once he is chastened by The Guide. His first memory is that of a motorbike race - but we soon find out that it was all in his imagination. Nia confronts him with the words *“You never raced”* (page 19).

NIA

is an attractive woman in her thirties. She and Alex have been lovers. However it is a real revelation for both to find out their true feelings about each other. This makes their choice of a joint nirvana impossible. Alex is the one left at the end unable to choose the memory that will take him to eternity.

SOPHIE

is a woman in her late twenties to early thirties. She is a workaholic who is forced to reconsider her frantic existence and discovers how hollow her great achievements really were.

KETU

is an African villager. When he enters the stage at the beginning his movements are described as having “*something distinctly animal about them*” (page 9). He is a kind of Galileo who is regarded by his peers as a dangerous heretic for believing that the world is not flat. His sense for an eternal truth is not something that he could ever have achieved until his death. He hangs himself. Like the others who move on, he has to reconsider his life and found deeply personal peace.

THE STAGING OF THE PLAY

The play can be performed on a bare stage with minimal props. In the original production the only props were bamboo sticks and an orange. This will have to be discussed. Is this the only choice for performing the play? Would it benefit from having more props and possibly different levels on stage to convey the different memories? In the stage directions it does refer “*to four, apparently randomly placed, boxes.*” (page 9)

Originally too the play was performed by a cast of five but there is the option of playing with a larger cast. Would this be a better option or would keeping to the original choice be more effective?

The actors are expected to use only their bodies and voices - and bamboo sticks in the original production - to recreate different activities and locations - a French motorbike race, a village, a rainforest, a London tube train and a busy company office.

This is an excellent piece of physical theatre and a challenge to any group of actors.

By keeping to a cast of five only it must be remembered that they will be expected to help out within the memory scenes to act out episodes from each other’s lives, transforming into other

characters and objects as necessary.

In Sophie's memory for example (pages 36-49), the other actors take on the roles of other characters - Mr Gray, Jerry, Phil and Lucy.

In Ketu's memory the other actors not only take on the role of other characters but transform themselves into other objects. They transform into rainforest trees. They transform into other travellers in a canoe. They engage in rural activities thus establishing a countryside. They then go to take on the role of a group of Elders chatting and discussing his situation with Ketu.



When considering **costume**, again it can be the same as the original production. The four characters who had to choose their own memory wore shabby underclothes. The script does not specify this therefore this is a matter for discussion. The costume for The Guide would be different. It must be decided what costume would best convey the mystery of this character. Would he be dressed all in black? Or would he be dressed all in white? Since one stage direction described him as being *more of a jester or a clown* - would a costume depicting this be more appropriate?

Lighting would play an important part in the production. The space is described as "*the Void, an otherworldly place, perhaps outside time and space.*" (page 9). The Lighting Designer will have to choose his colours carefully and consider the intensity of his lighting. He can also consider the use of selective visibility, helping to focus the audience's attention only to certain areas or performers. One good example for the use of selective visibility is where Ketu decides to hang himself. The other actors create a tree and Ketu approaches the tree and attaches a rope to one of its branches. He hangs himself!

There is a lighting change at the end of each memory episode and also the camera flashes when each character passes on to eternity.

The play was described by one reviewer (Philip Fisher) as a "*philosophical treatise, a comedy, a piece of physical theatre and above all, a pleasure.*"

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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100 production, Dewi Glyn photographer

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