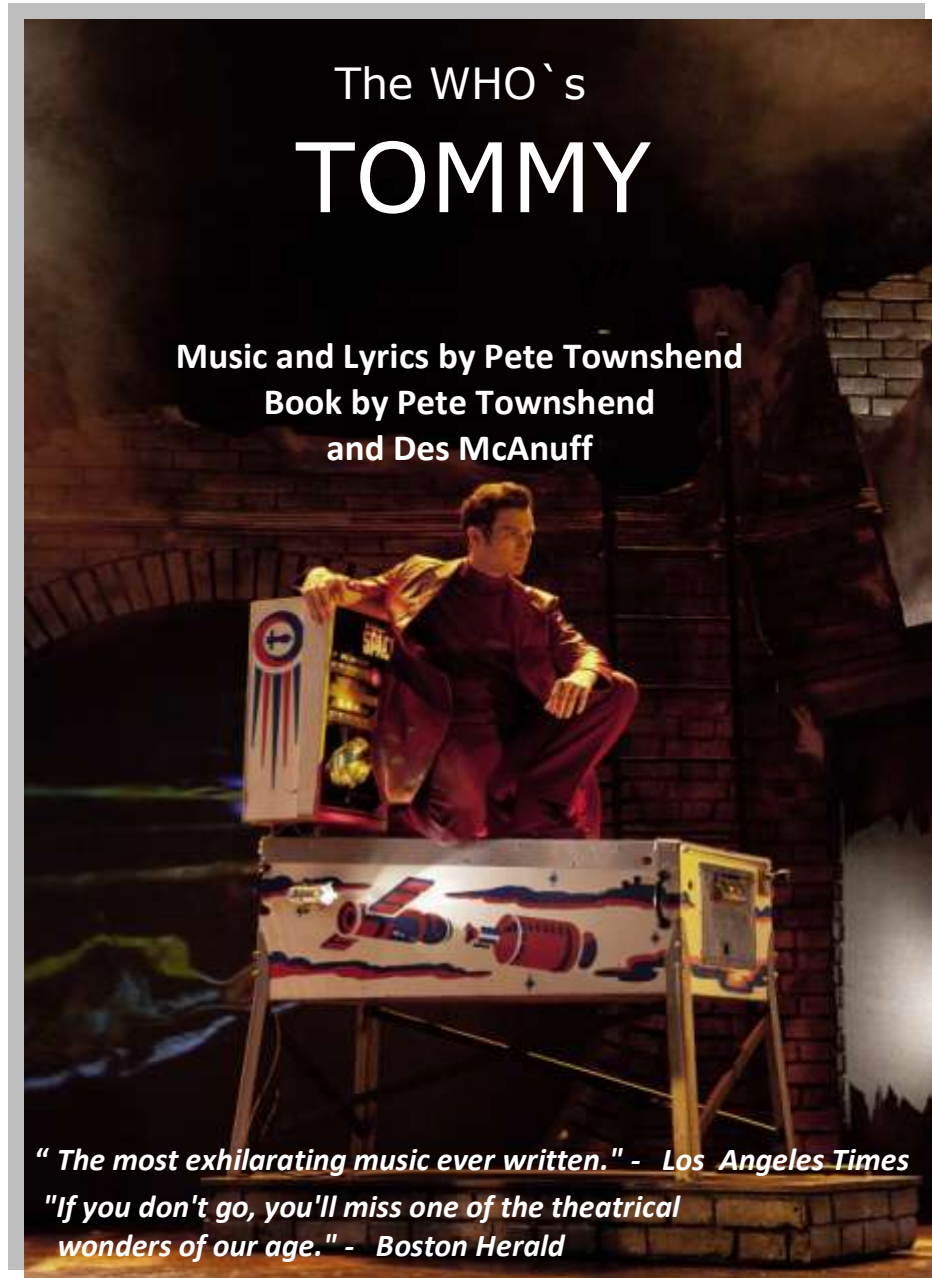


The English Theatre Frankfurt
Musical Production 2011/12



"Somewhere between arousal and a prayer, between raw blues and high opera: Pete Townshend's insistent, accelerating intro to "Pinball Wizard" is seven bars of the most exhilarating rock ever made." - The New York Times

Teacher`s Support Pack

ETF Theatre in Education Service



1. Introduction

The Who's *Tommy* is a roof-raising musical explosion based on The Who's 1969 concept album. This **exhilarating** story of hope, healing and the human spirit is filled with iconic hit songs like "Pinball Wizard," "See Me, Feel Me," "Acid Queen" and more. Pete Townshend's Tony Award-winning tale of a young boy's journey from pain to triumph is the most electrifying evening of rock and roll ever to play in a theatre!

2. The Who

The Who are a 60s English rock band that included Roger Daltrey (vocals), Pete Townshend (guitar), John Entwistle (bass) and Keith Moon (drums) and became famous for their rock music and stage presence. In the early days, Daltrey, Townshend and Entwistle played American-influenced blues and country music.

3. Roger Daltrey performs at the Hammersmith Apollo in London.

During one show in London in 1964, Pete Townshend accidentally broke the head of his guitar on the ceiling. Angered by the smirks from the crowd, he decided to play it up and actually smash his guitar on stage. The next performance, Keith Moon smashed his drum set and instrument destruction became a **staple** of The Who's shows. Their first hits in the U.S. were "Happy Jack" and "I Can See for Miles." After playing at famous festivals like Monterey Pop (in California in 1967) and Woodstock (in New York in 1969) their fame increased, and it reached a high point with the release of *Tommy* in 1969. Indian mystic Meher Baba was a huge influence on Townshend, and Townshend said "*Tommy*" was an exploration of his ideas on different states of consciousness. The Who were **inducted** into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 1990.

„*Tommy*“ has been revived in countless **iterations** over the past four decades: from a movie to a Broadway musical to a symphony and even a ballet. "My *Tommy* is much more like the original conception," Daltrey tells *Rolling Stone*. "It's more like the Who were on record than we ever were on stage. It's interesting to hear it in its pure form with all the backing vocals

and other instruments. There's also quite a few songs from the album that the Who never even played. I'm doing the whole thing."

Daltrey first got the idea to stage *Tommy* earlier this year when booking acts for his annual Teenage Cancer Trust charity shows at the Royal Albert Hall.

His aim is to approach the material from a new perspective. "My narrative has more to do with the listener listening to the album," Daltrey says. "I've always felt that my perspective of *Tommy* has always been from inside it – not from outside. I think that the secret of the success of those albums in those days was the fact that the listener was getting their their own subjective view of what little bit of them in 'see me, me.' Indeed, I feel like everybody going through their life. With this show, **on a spiritual journey.**"

Vocabulary Aids 1

exhilarating – making you feel happy, excited, energetic

staple- used all the time

to induct- to introduce into an organization

iterations – saying or doing something again and again

it was about. There is a feel me, touch me, heal there's a bit of that in all stages of **I'm trying to take you**

To help realize his vision, local college students to be projected on screens wanted to get *Tommy* for the Sixties and Seventies. I'm completely knocked out done with it.

Daltrey commissioned create visuals that will during the show. "I today," he says. "Not It's very, very different. by what they have

It's very difficult to explain what exactly it is, but it's a lot of beautiful animation and a lot of really, really avant-garde ideas. It's wonderful to look at."

Read more: <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/roger-daltrey-to-play-deep-cuts-by-the-who-on-tommy-tour->

Assignment 1:
Comment on Daltrey`s assumption!
 Usually an audience in a theatre simply wants to be entertained.

What does being **taken on a spiritual journey** mean to a spectator?
 How did you feel when watching the show? With which character and situation could you identify?
Share and discuss different statements in class!

4. Characters

- **TOMMY / THE NARRATOR**

The 18-year-old Tommy who narrates the story and appears to Tommy at ages 4 and 10.

- **MRS. WALKER** Tommy's mother.



- **MR. WALKER**

Tommy's father who was believed to be dead for the first 4 years of Tommy's life.

- **UNCLE ERNIE**

- Tommy's drunk, demented uncle.

- **COUSIN KEVIN**

Tommy's cousin. A bully.

- **SALLY SIMPSON**

One of Tommy's fans.

- **THE ACID QUEEN**

A harlot with supposed healing powers.

- **THE BOYFRIEND**

Mrs. Walker's lover after she believes Mr. Walker to be dead.

- **THE HAWKER** A man who leads Mr. Walker and Tommy to the Acid Queen

5. Synopsis

Act I

The year is 1940. The audience sees a montage of Mr. and Mrs. Walker meeting, their marriage, the **deployment** of Mr. Walker to WWII and his capture in a Prisoner of War (POW) camp (“Overture”).

Mrs. Walker and Uncle Ernie are informed that Mr. Walker is missing and **presumed** dead. A nurse enters and hands Mrs. Walker her son (“It’s a Boy”). The years pass, and we see Walker released when the war ends in 1945. Still believing Mr. Walker to be dead, Mrs. Walker takes a new lover, with whom she celebrates her birthday (“Twenty-One”). When released Captain Walker enters the home and sees the new boyfriend, there is a **scuffle**, and Mr. Walker ends up shooting the boyfriend. In an attempt to keep Tommy from violence, Mrs. Walker turns him towards a mirror. Mr. and Mrs. Walker aggressively tell Tommy to forget what he’s seen. The police traumatized, gazes at the older version of Tommy and only visible to appears (“Amazing Journey”).

Vocabulary Aids 2

deployment – use and organization of soldiers in a war

presumed – to believe something as true

scuffle – a short fight

to no avail – useless, without success

taunt and bully – to try to make someone angry by threatening, provoking or even hurting him

1945. Still believing Walker takes a celebrates her the recently the home and sees **scuffle**, and Mr. boyfriend. In an seeing the towards a mirror. aggressively tell seen. The police traumatized, gazes older version of young Tommy)

Captain Walker is tried but found not guilty. The family celebrates but is shocked when they realize the cost: Tommy is now deaf, dumb and blind. A battery of doctors and nurses examine Tommy **to no avail** (“Sparks”). The year is 1950. The Walkers take 10-year-old Tommy to church and to a family dinner (“Christmas/ See Me, Feel Me”). Back home, the Walkers worry about whether to leave Tommy with a drunken Uncle Ernie (“Do You Think It’s Alright”), but they convince themselves that Tommy will be fine. When his parents get home, Tommy stares into the wardrobe mirror. His reflections become the Narrator (“See Me, Feel Me - Reprise”).

Tommy’s next babysitter, Cousin Kevin and his friends, **taunt and bully** him mercilessly (“Cousin Kevin”). The group then takes Tommy to a church youth group where, to everyone’s astonishment, he plays pinball brilliantly (“Sensation”). Encouraged, the Walkers try yet another doctor, a psychiatrist, who tests Tommy without success (“Sparks - Reprise”). Mr. Walker is approached by The Hawker who promises a miraculous cure for Tommy (“Eyesight to the Blind”).

They take Mr. Walker and young Tommy to the Isle of Dogs, a courtyard filled with drug users and drunks, to find a harlot called The Acid Queen. She attempts to coax Tommy into consciousness with drugs (“Acid Queen”). Mr. Walker, horrified, runs away with Tommy. The act ends in 1958 as a group of teenagers await 18-year-old Tommy’s appearance (now the same as the Narrator) at the amusement arcade (“Pinball Wizard”).



Act II

The year is 1960, and Tommy has become the pinball champion and hero of the neighborhood boys (“Underture”). Mr. Walker, still in search of a cure, convinces his wife to try once more (“It’s a Boy - Reprise/There’s a Doctor”). They take Tommy to a specialist who turns him to a mirror. Tommy sings with his 4 and 10-year-old selves, who appear only to him in the mirror (“Go to the Mirror/Listening to You”).

As Cousin Kevin and his friends toss a ball, they surround Tommy and ask if he’s been cured (“Tommy, Can You Hear Me?”). At the Walker house, Tommy’s parents express their frustration and the strain Tommy’s condition has on their relationship (“I Believe My Own Eyes”).

As Tommy stares into the mirror, Mrs. Walker picks up a chair, hurls it at the mirror, shattering it (“Smash the Mirror”). After reliving the murder scene from 14 years ago, he screams and he is free. Tommy celebrates his new-found consciousness, as the Walkers, Uncle Ernie and the Minister all come **to marvel** at his recovery (“I’m Free/Pinball Wizard - Reprise”). Still shocked from the turn of events, Tommy decides to leave home.

Vocabulary Aids 3

to marvel – to express surprise and admiration

pummeled –to be beaten with fists

to capitalize on – to profit from

to don - to put on

The year is 1961 and Tommy, now a huge pinball star, enters the stage riding a pinball machine. He is surrounded by reporters. His parents tell the press that they don’t see much of him anymore.

Years pass. When interviewed, Cousin Kevin tells reporters he has always believed in Tommy’s greatness. Tommy goes on stage and climbs atop a huge, mirrored pinball

machine. He **dons** a mask that blinds, deafens and mutes him and rides the machine (“I’m Free - 2nd Reprise”). An unseen crowd roars (“How Can We Follow”).

Uncle Ernie tries **to capitalize on** Tommy’s stardom by selling Tommy souvenirs in a carnival-like setting (“Tommy’s Holiday Camp”). Cousin Kevin tells the story of one of Tommy’s fans, teenage Sally Simpson, and we see it played out: against her parents’ wishes, Sally manages to sneak out of her house and attend Tommy’s concert. She gets on stage and tries to touch Tommy, but when he pushes her aside, she falls and is **pummeled** by the guards (“Sally Simpson”). Tommy, in horror, realizes how caught up in the celebrity machine he has become. He invites Sally and his other fans back to his house (“Welcome”).

At the Walker’s residence, Sally asks Tommy how she can be more like him and less like herself (“Sally Simpson’s Question”). He is confused and says he waited years to be like them. Disenchanted with their hero, the crowd turns on him and leaves (“We’re Not Gonna Take It”). Tommy hears the voice of his ten-year-old self. He turns to his family, whom he has ignored during his stardom, and embraces them in acceptance (“See Me, Feel Me - Reprise/Listening - Reprise”). The show ends as everyone but Tommy exits. The 4-year-old Tommy, 10-year-old Tommy and adult Tommy look out in different directions.

Notes on Synopsis for the Frankfurt production (by Ryan McBride)

London is bombed. A child is conceived. The child witnesses his father murder his mother’s lover. He is traumatised by the event. Becomes death, dumb and blind. He is completely isolated – trapped in his own head. His guilt-ridden parents turn to *MEDICINE, RELIGION, PSYCHIATRY, DRUGS* to save him but all of them fail to cure him.

I think that Tommy is a metaphor for post-war Britain. Like Tommy, Britain was deaf, dumb and blind after being traumatised by the war. Have we ever recovered from the war? Our cities razed to the ground. Thousands of our civilians slaughtered. And even though we won the war we lost everything – our economy, our empire, our society. Everyone looks at the pre-war years as the golden years, the age of innocence... In the aftermath of World War II we closed in on ourselves, became more insular, more isolated ... we turned to medicine, religion, psychiatry and drugs but ultimately they failed us. Like Tommy we plugged ourselves into machines, TV, Xbox, Wii to feel something, to get a sensation from something...

Act I is split between Tommy’s parents trying to cure their son and Tommy’s older self trying to help Tommy through his trauma.

When we dip into Tommy’s minds we need to see the War, the effects of the Blitz on London, we need to see the iconography from the times fucked up and distorted and we need to see him wrestling with his senses – his ears, eyes and mouth: deaf, blind and dumb. What does Tommy’s alternative reality look like?

In MEDICINE we need a sequence where the poor boy's senses are medically tested. I see him at the mercy of doctors and machines.



In RELIGION I see the Vicar and his congregation becoming ecstatic in their attempts to heal the sick child and then, having failed to cure him, they reject him because he is a reminder/symbol of their spiritual barrenness.

In PSYCHIATRY Tommy should be wired in – we need to go into his mind again but with the doctors shocking him with electricity, invading. MEDICINE is about the Physical Body and PSYCHIATRY is about the Mental / Inner.

In ACID QUEEN – Tommy should experience's a trip. It should be quite fucked up. During this trip though we need to see Tommy getting closer to the surface of reality

ACT II – Got to turn Tommy into a RELIGION with all the relevant iconography. The masses want answers and ERNIE and KEVIN exploit TOMMY by turning him into a cult leader. Tommy wants to help – is unaware he is being exploited by his relatives and also his new disciples. He gets caught up in the religious fever, becomes the Lord Of The Dance. Its only when Sally is injured that he sees his 'disciples' for what they are. They're lost lonely beings who desperately want something to believe in. He says STOP. They won't. So he offers them a reality that can only reject – a puritan lifestyle that requires them blocking their senses and tying themselves to the machine. They reject him. Tommy returns home to the fucked up family he left behind – maybe they can start again?

We need to exploit cult British iconography I think – Does Tommy don a Union Jack suit once he becomes the Cult Leader for instance? I've added the song YOUNG MAN BLUES to capture that sense of 60's rebellion where the younger generation said fuck this. The war fucked us up so we're going to embrace peace and love and pretend it never happened.

People follow TOMMY because they want answers. They're living in the wasteland of post war Europe. What should they believe in? Give us something to belong to! Tommy is momentarily the answer.

INFO:

Catatonia is a state of neurogenic motor immobility, and behavioral abnormality manifested by stupor. It was first described in 1874: *Die Katatonie oder das Spannungsirresein* (Catatonia or Tension Insanity).

Patients with catatonia may experience an extreme loss of motor skills or even constant hyperactive motor activity. Catatonic patients will sometimes hold rigid poses for hours and will ignore any external stimuli. Patients with catatonic excitement can suffer from exhaustion if not treated. Patients may also show stereotyped, repetitive movements.

They may show specific types of movement such as **waxy flexibility**, in which they maintain positions after being placed in them by someone else, or *gegenhalten* (lit. "counterhold"), in which they resist movement in proportion to the force applied by the examiner. They may repeat meaningless phrases or speak only to repeat what the examiner says.

6. Approaches to the Musical

The movie came out in 1975 and garnered Academy Award nominations for Ann-Margret (Best Actress) and Pete Townshend (for scoring and film adaptation). It followed The Who's 1969 album that Townshend masterminded with songs that put a period on a decade that brought baby boomers through two Kennedy assassinations, a civil rights movement, Woodstock and a moon landing. Then Des McAnuff's 1992 La Jolla Playhouse production ran on Broadway for over two years and garnered five Tony Awards including Best Score. So it begs the question: How do today's 20-something actors put their own stamps on such an iconic piece?

.....Voices of Different Directors:

6.1 Oanh Nguyen Brings *The Who's Tommy* to Anaheim's Chance Theatre July 2010

The trick to directing *The Who's Tommy* for director Oanh Nguyen is referring to the script – and only the script. “I’ve never seen the movie and I don’t intend to,” says Nguyen, who also co-founded the Chance Theater in 1999 and is its Artistic Director. “Maybe when the run’s over we’ll watch it as a cast. But, from what I hear,” he adds, “this show will be very different from the movie.”

As for the rest of the cast, Nguyen adds, “It’s just finding the right balance and the right chemistry. We had a lot of great voices come out to audition, so we were lucky in that

respect. But it's a large cast – about 18 – and very challenging costume-wise. Everyone's got six or seven changes. The whole show has been tremendously challenging, from the music to the narrative to the design elements. But we have the added bonus of using a new projection system thanks to a sponsorship." That projector, Nguyen notes, will help to identify time and place "and images that'll help us get inside Tommy's brain."

Nguyen chuckles when he admits *Tommy* is the first operetta he will have directed. "I've done a lot of Sondheim," he says. "But those are more like plays with music. This is different. It's been a big learning experience for them," Nguyen admits, "because of the new technology we're dealing with. Our audiences will have never seen anything like it here."

There may be smoke and mirrors but they will not be there as a means to deceive anyone.

Director Oanh Nguyen says casting the adult Tommy was not all that difficult. "But we had a tough time finding the two little Tommy boys. They're 6 and 11. That was an interesting process because of the subject matter. Plus, it's a musical. We had to reassure their parents that the Acid Queen wouldn't do anything too vulgar. Thankfully, both boys have been on stage before and they know each other.

6.2 Interview with Ryan McBryde, director of the ET Frankfurt 2011 production

Q. With your previous productions ("The Full Monty", "Hair", "Spring Awakening" at the English Theatre you have shown that you are able to present the original material of a musical in a new and successful way. Isn't that incredibly difficult with "Tommy"?

A. This musical contains so many subjects (war veterans meets rival, child abuse, disabled child becomes a hero, hero becomes "Messiah," whose commercial success turns into his downfall) that even Pete Townshend himself has needed several years to finishing a musical version... (*Laughing*) I would be lying if I said it was simple.

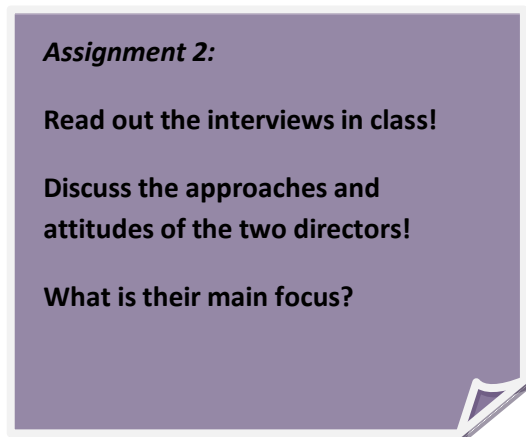
Tommy is my sixth collaboration with designer Diego Pitarch and we spent a great deal of time struggling to define exactly what Tommy is about. It's an epic story. Guilty parents attempt to cure their traumatised deaf, dumb and blind child, who only responds to pinball machines and his own reflection. When his mother smashes the mirror he is obsessed with, he is miraculously healed and swiftly becomes a cult hero of messianic proportions ... its insane! It's very easy to turn "Tommy" into a rock concert, a show that is simply about singing with "The Who's" fantastic songs. But it's my job to make audiences care about the characters and the story. After exploring many different avenues we finally found an exciting way of tying it all together.

Q: Frankfurters are "Tommy" experts. The musical ran here for more than one year at the Capitol in Offenbach. What will be different from the German premiere of 1995/1996 with the black haired Tommy.

A: I don't want to give too much away. I'm aware "Tommy" has a successful track record in Frankfurt. The English Theatre has had more advance bookings for "Tommy" than any of its other musicals and they've already added four more matinees before Christmas. This really does put the pressure on. Fans of the show have a very fixed idea of what the show is. I hope

our version of the show allows them to see it again from a new perspective. I can guarantee our production of "Tommy" will be very different from the Offenbach production. I spent a lot of time researching psychosomatic blindness and dissociation through trauma. Ultimately, that's what the show's about: a little boy who's thrown into a severe traumatic state after witnessing his father kill someone. Tommy is trapped inside his own head and that's something I was very interested in exploring.

Q: Will we see a Pinball Wizard in 1-meter-high Doc Martens, as once with Elton John in this role?

A purple rectangular box with a white border and a folded bottom-right corner. It contains the following text:

Assignment 2:

Read out the interviews in class!

Discuss the approaches and attitudes of the two directors!

What is their main focus?

A: I'm afraid not. Ken Russell's film is an extraordinary event. You get the impression he spent a little too much time with the Acid Queen and the finished product was not so much a film as an extended music video. It's very impressive though. There are some breath-taking ideas and visual delights. But sadly no Doc Martens in our show.

Q: What are your favourite songs from the musical?

A: They're all so catchy. I'm a big fan of "Eyesight To The Blind" and "Sally Simpson."

Q: Please help our visitors who are struggling with "Tommy": what is the message of this rock opera and why should they not miss the show?

A: Tommy is a high-voltage, rock and roll extravaganza exploring the traumatised mind of a young boy. In our version we are very much in Tommy's head. The first half shows us how he became deaf dumb and blind and follows his desperate parents as they attempt to cure him. The second half focuses on his miracle cure and his subsequent rise to superstardom. It's the same creative team as *Spring Awakening* and *The Full Monty* and we hope "Tommy" will be the theatrical equivalent of an exhilarating roller coaster ride!

7. Comparing Reviews

7.1 At Hollywood's Ricardo Montalbán Theatre, the music proves to be an adaptation's driving force.

By Charlotte Stoudt Special to **The Times June 23, 2008**

That ecstatic sense of liberation drives "The Who's Tommy," Townshend and Des McAnuff's theatrical adaptation of the band's 1969 concept album, now at the Ricardo Montalbán Theatre in Hollywood. That deaf, dumb, blind kid is back, and his hit list -- "I'm Free," "Pinball Wizard" and the sublime "See Me, Feel Me" -- sounds better than ever.

The big to-do of this production is its use of high-definition 3-D Sound, a new audio system

designed by James Johnson. When you find your seat, a Bose headset is waiting. These headsets receive a mix unique to each night's performance: the sound produced by the live actors and musicians in the moment, and recorded cues -- a parachute drop during a World War II air mission, or an eerie distortion of a wolf cry, played when creepy Uncle Ernie (Hank Adams) is on the prowl.

It seems like a contradiction to go to a live event and put on headphones, but the experience neither makes nor breaks the evening. There are moments when the wall of sound effects makes for a dazzling head trip, others when it disconnects you from the actors on stage. But why not experiment with a classic that thumbed its nose at the rules?

Ken Russell's tripped-out 1975 film didn't exactly follow Syd Field's screenwriting rules, and the subsequent stage adaptation abbreviates the narrative to a visual haiku. The result has the feel of a parable: inexorable but without much psychological shading.

The violence that precipitates Tommy's shutdown should be brutal, shocking, even erotic. Yet the murder feels like a pre-show fight call, when actors mark their blocking as a warmup to the big onstage event. The moment should resonate through the show -- but it doesn't.

It's tricky when a rock opera's protagonist spends the first half of the show catatonic, and only after intermission does the production come to dramatic life. (The orchestra, led by Dan Redfeld, is excellent.)

Director Brian Michael Purcell has assembled a strong cast, but its talent often seems overwhelmed by the soundscape. Ripley, who captivated last year in the Blank Theatre's "Little Fish," looks stranded here, her wide eyes in search of an actual scene. Schmid's pensive Capt. Walker fares a little better, but you wish they both had more to sing.

The show really has only one character: little Tommy, still as a statue until he breaks his mirror and spell of silence. We see him at age 4 (L.J. Benet), 10 (Lorenzo Doryon) and then as a teen (Aleks Pevec). Lean, athletic, with a mop of Roger Daltrey-esque curls, Pevec focuses the show, letting the music drive his physicality.

It's in Pevec's pinball scenes that Purcell and choreographer Denise Leitner really find their groove. Tommy's fans morph into an ecstatic collective in the face of their messiah's power, and the whole thing kicks into unbridled life.

We finally see what Tommy, rock 'n' roll and good theater can do -- collapse the boundaries between self and other, pain and release, fury and exultation. Listening to him, we get the music. From him, we feel the story. Headsets are a fine accessory, but what takes you to the mountain is the Who's immortal music, so good that every generation knows it was written just for us.

MUSICALKLASSIKER IM ENGLISH THEATRE

Assignment 3: Compare the two reviews!

Write a review on the ETF production in English!

Discuss your reviews in class!

Tommy: Sehen, hören und fühlen

Die Rockoper von The Who, "Tommy", sorgt in der Neuinszenierung von Ryan McBryde im English Theatre für Furore. Noch vor der Premiere hat der Ansturm auf die Karten begonnen, völlig zu recht, wie sich am Samstag zeigte.

42 Jahre sind vergangen, seit dem die britische Rockgruppe The Who das Album Tommy auf den Markt brachte, 1975 wurde die musikalische Geschichte des jungen Tommy Walker verfilmt, unter anderem mit Tina Turner als Zigeunerin. Spätestens als das Musical, der Begriff Rockoper beschreibt es besser, 1995 seine Deutschlandpremiere im Offenbacher Capitol feierte und über ein Jahr lang dort lief, war klar, dass es sich bei "Tommy" um einen Dauerbrenner handelt, der sich auch hierzulande immer noch einer großen Fangemeinde erfreut. So ist es auch nicht verwunderlich, dass die bloße Ankündigung des English Theatres, das Musical in sein Programm aufzunehmen, zu einem noch nicht da gewesenen Ansturm auf die Tickets führte, so dass bereits am Tag der Premiere, also am vergangenen Samstag, klar war, dass Tommy ein Erfolg werden wird.



(all production photos in this material are from the ETF 2011 production - Copyright Bobby Anders)

Zumal die Produktion so richtig gut und - das muss man ganz klar sagen - sehr aufwändig ist, was Licht- und Animationseffekte angeht. Erzählt wird die Geschichte eines jungen Mannes namens Tommy Walker, der sich während der Behandlung durch einen Arzt erinnern soll, wie es zu seinem seltsamen Trauma-Zustand gekommen ist. Als Tommy vier Jahre alt war, musste er mitansehen, wie sein Vater, ein lange vermisster Rückkehrer aus dem zweiten Weltkrieg, den Geliebten seiner Mutter erschoss. Die Eltern beschwören den Jungen, er habe nichts gesehen und nichts gehört und solle niemandem etwas von dem Erlebten erzählen. Als bald ist das Kind stumm, blind und taub und verursacht bei den Eltern einen großen Kummer, denn keine Behandlung scheint dem Sohn zu helfen. Der wehrlose Tommy wird herumgereicht, als Versuchskaninchen missbraucht und von seinem Cousin und seinem Onkel gepiesakt. Nur am Flipperautomaten blüht der traumatisierte Junge auf. Er scharft sogar eine Fangemeinde hinter sich, und auch der Blick in den Spiegel scheint ihm eine Hilfe zu sein. Als Tommy plötzlich wieder seine Sinne zurückerlangt, wird er zu einer Art Messias, doch das währt nicht lange...

Drei Personen verkörpern Tommy, Leo Miles spielt inbrünstig und sehr bühnenpräsent den erwachsenen Charakter, während in jeder Aufführung zwei Kinder in die Rolle des jungen Tommy schlüpfen. Insgesamt 18 Kinderdarsteller wurden für das Musical verpflichtet, die im Wechsel den herumgereichten, traumatisierten Jungen - der zur Versinnbildlichung eine Maske trägt, die seine Gesichtszüge verdeckt - verkörpern. Das von Diego Pitarchs entworfene Bühnenbild zeigt ein Ruinenszenario des von Bomben getroffenen Londons und unterstützt die beklemmende Wirkung des Musicals, dass so ganz ohne Kitsch auskommt und von der gewaltigen Musik des genialen Pete Townshend lebt. Eine sechsköpfige Band untermalt die äußerst gelungene Darstellung der 14 Personen auf der Bühne. Erstaunlich ist, wie viele der Darsteller gleichzeitig mehrere Rollen ausfüllen und in jeder Szene erneut zu überzeugen wissen. "See me, feel me, touch me, heal me" - aber gerne doch.

14. November 2011

8. Working with the script – The final scene

(The family joins with TOMMY.

TOMMY, MRS. WALKER,
LISTENING TO YOU, I GET THE MUSIC;
GAZING AT YOU, I GET THE HEAT.
FOLLOWING YOU, I CLIMB THE MOUNTAIN.

TOMMY, WALKER, MRS. WALKER
I GET EXCITEMENT AT YOUR FEET.

(TOMMY turns to us)

RIGHT BEHIND YOU, I SEE THE MILLIONS;
ON YOU, I SEE THE GLORY.

FROM YOU, I GET OPINIONS;
FROM YOU, I GET THE STORY.

(22 Heathfield Gardens disassembles. TOMMY and his family are joined by others they've met along the way. THEY all face us)

ALL

LISTENING TO YOU, I GET THE MUSIC;
GAZING AT YOU, I GET THE HEAT.
FOLLOWING YOU, I CLIMB THE MOUNTAIN.

Assignment 4:

Describe the visual signs and the stage action of the final scene at the ETF!

Which message do you see and feel behind it?

*Write a short story:
"Tommy's future life"*

I GET EXCITEMENT AT YOUR FEET.
RIGHT BEHIND YOU, I SEE THE
MILLIONS;
ON YOU, I SEE THE GLORY.
FROM YOU, I GET OPINIONS;
FROM YOU, I GET THE STORY.
LISTENING TO YOU, I GET THE MUSIC;
GAZING AT YOU, I GET THE HEAT.
FOLLOWING YOU, I CLIMB THE
MOUNTAIN.
I GET EXCITEMENT AT YOUR FEET.
RIGHT BEHIND YOU, I SEE THE
MILLIONS;
ON YOU, I SEE THE GLORY.
FROM YOU, I GET OPINIONS;
FROM YOU, I GET THE STORY.

(During the last verse TOMMY has been

enveloped by the ENSEMBLE. As they start to clear we see TOMMY is back in his metal casing exactly as he was at the top of Act One.

WALKER and MRS WALKER stare at him with guilt-ridden anguish for a moment before turning their backs on him and walking away.

SPECIALIST (*Voice Over*)

Don't lose hope, Mr and Mrs. Walker. We won't give up on him and neither should you. Who

knows what's going on in that head of his. There's every chance that Tommy could one day

make a complete recovery. Until then we'll watch over him. Make sure he has everything he needs.

The WALKERS exit.

Beat.

(Slowly, spoken, almost mechanically)

TOMMY CAN YOU HEAR ME?

TOMMY CAN YOU HEAR ME?

TOMMY CAN YOU HEAR ME?

CAN YOU HEAR ME?

9. Special female Characters and Roles:

9.1 Sally Simpson

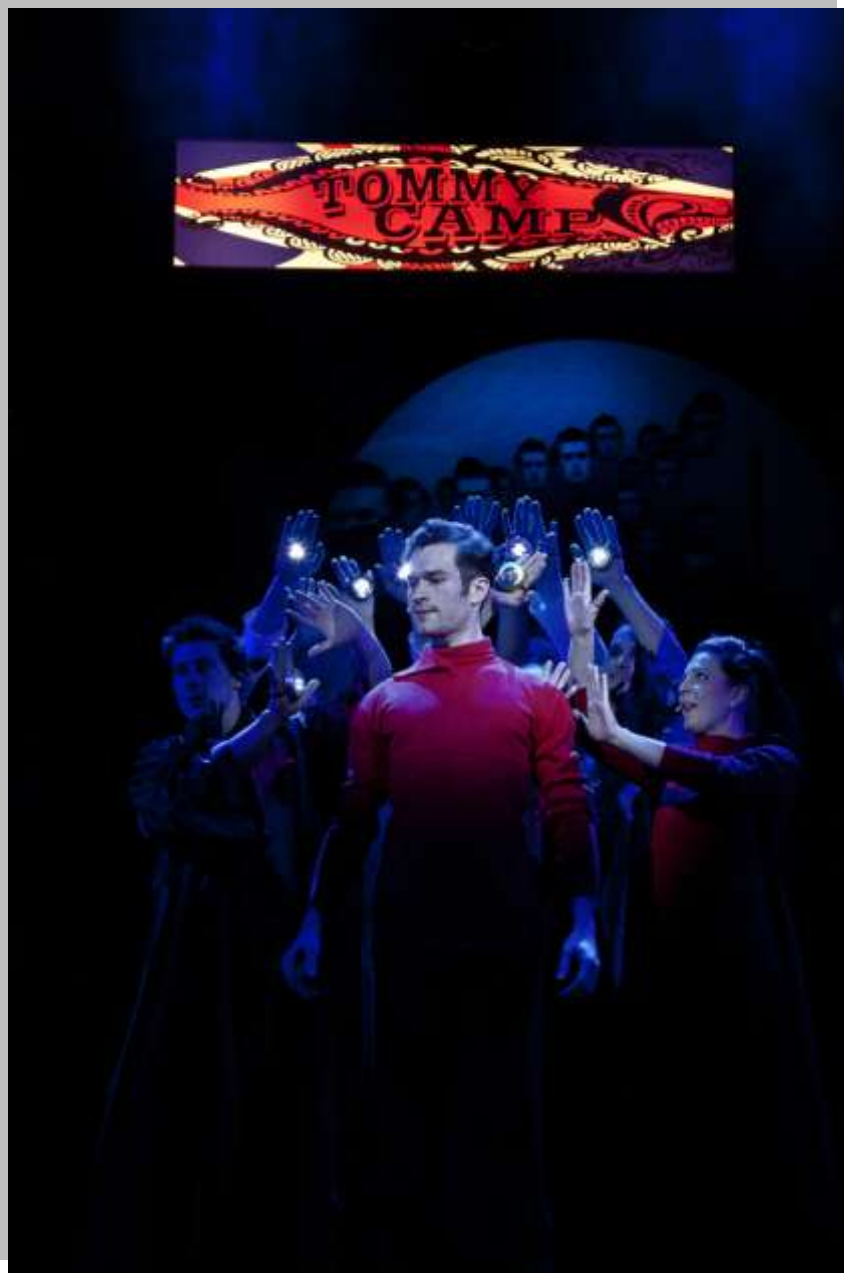
Sally sneaks out of her house to see Tommy in concert toward the end of Act II. She gets on stage and tries to touch Tommy. He pushes her away and she's beaten by security guards. It's the moment when Tommy, caught up in his own celebrity, realizes the mistakes he has made in his adult life. He invites Sally back to his house where she asks how she can be more like him. She leads him toward his redemption.



9.2 The Acid Queen

As for putting her own stamp on the role, Barton says she first looked at what the woman wants. “Sure, she agrees to try to cure Tommy but she has her own needs, too, in terms of money and drugs. Vocally it’s interesting because I’m following after women like Tina Turner and Cheryl Freeman – women with huge presences and amazing voices. So how am I going to attack this?” Barton had to stop listening to the album. She says. “I knew I wasn’t going to do a copy-cat version of them. But the song ‘Acid Queen’ mixes rock and soul, which makes me happy. Once I knew what The Gypsy wanted, I could figure out the vocal technique.” Barton grew up doing traditional vocals in musical theatre. “But when I write music, I do it in a rock style. *Tommy* is one of those musicals I’ve really loved because it’s from a rock album.

It really hits home for me. And in this case, it's been fun letting my singing and thoughts on the character influence each other."



10. Themes

10.1 Celebrity Culture

Our society is fascinated with the celebrity culture. Often the more outrageous someone is, the more publicity he or she receives!

The celebrity culture refers to the culture of popularizing certain people who have certain attributes that society deem exceptional. In this modern era, these attributes may or may not be genuine. Back in the days of actors, actresses, singers, authors, producers, artists, sports people and dancers and so forth, people needed to have certain talents and virtues to be known throughout society. Now it is common for people to be well-known and in television talk shows and celebrity magazines due to their unethical

behavior or belligerent self-promotion. People sometimes attempt at becoming famous by various means such as entering reality TV or dating someone of high status. The glorification of people who seek stardom has made the celebrity culture based on infamy not fame. That is the main reason why many people dislike celebrities.

Unfortunately the celebrity culture has and always will have an influence on society. As they are constantly in the media, they have become role models for adolescents and teenagers. Interest in celebrities makes for a multi billion dollar business in celeb sites. This has raised a number of issues, many of them controversial and causes major debates concerning the influence of these famed people. For example, the appeal of drug and alcohol abuse has increased due to images of intoxicated celebrities spread across magazines and television. Furthermore casual celebrity sex appears to be the norm amongst the youth. Unfortunately

nothing can be done to monitor who does or doesn't become famous as the power in is in the hands of the media. They are able to control what our children see. Unfortunately sex, drugs, rock and roll and any form of controversy is where the money lies.

10.2 Celebrity culture 'harms pupils'

Children's educational aspirations risk being damaged by the cult of celebrity, teachers' leaders have warned. Teachers fear their pupils' obsessions with footballers, pop stars and actors are affecting their progress in school, and limiting their career aspirations.

Some 60% of teachers said their pupils most aspired to be David Beckham, in a survey for the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL). More than a third said pupils wanted to be famous for the sake of being famous.

Some 32% of the 304 teachers quizzed said their pupils modelled themselves on heiress Paris Hilton.



David Beckham was the most popular celebrity among pupils

'Hard work'

Elizabeth Farrar
Primary school teacher
from Scunthorpe
warned: "We are deeply
concerned that many
pupils believe celebrity
status is available to
everyone.

“ They believe that they are much more likely to achieve financial well-being through celebrity ”

"They do not understand the hard work it takes to achieve such status and do not think it is important to be actively engaged in school work as education is not needed for a celebrity status." Too many pupils believe academic success is "unnecessary" because they think they are able to make their fame and fortune quite easily on a reality TV show. "They believe that they are much more likely to achieve financial well-being through celebrity than through progression to higher education and a 'proper' career."

"Those celebs who are excellent sportsmen or excellent actors are often overlooked and not shown as desirable to kids." Nearly three-quarters of teachers said they thought a focus on celebrity culture could have a positive effect as well as a negative one.

The worst excesses of celebrity culture may lend themselves to lurid headlines, but it is worth remembering that there are many more celebrities who set a good example on a local and national level.

Vocabulary Aids 4

Bias: a tendency or inclination. For example, a liberal or conservative bias would give a skewed version of the news.

Sensationalism: the act of over-hyping events or being deliberately controversial to obtain attention.

Assignment 5:

People do crazy things when they become obsessive fans. One example is the vampire/werewolf craze brought on by the *Twilight* books and movies.

In groups:

- **RESEARCH** the impact of the *Twilight* craze (or pick another trend) on society.
 - **DISCUSS** the questions below.
-
- How does *Twilight* present the role of men and women in romantic relationships?
 - How would different age groups view the books and movies? Are they appropriate for young viewers?
 - Does the book/movie have a message or moral? Is it positive or negative?
 - How do dedicated *Twilight* fans act? Do you think that kind of behavior is acceptable or fanatical, like the fans in *Tommy*?
-
- **GATHER** a few news sources (magazines, newspapers, blogs)
-
- **ANALYZE** the people and stories.
-
- **DISCUSS** the following questions:
 - Who do we idolize as a culture?
 - What are some characteristics of these people? Are they good role models?
 - Can you name anyone who purposely tries to stay out of the spotlight? Why?
 - Some famous people, like actor George Clooney, use their celebrity status to draw attention to worthy causes. Is that a good use of their fame?
 - What do you think the media should focus on?