



The Winterling
By Jez Butterworth
Presented by Paragon Theatre
Oct 17-Nov 14, 2009
Study Guide prepared by Sarah McAfee



Intro

Imagine for a moment that you are a toughened, London gangster. Your gang cohorts, in fact your lifelong closest friends, have locked you in a room and beaten you. You have escaped to Dartmoor, a loamy, cold, and dripping landscape. With every step, your feet sink just a little bit lower into the muck. In the distance, you see grim hope in the flickering light in the windows of the farmhouse at the top of the hill. Imagine even further that the derelict farmhouse is your home. You have squatted there for a year. You have no electricity, no running water, and no income to purchase comforts. The only heat in the building comes from the fireplace downstairs where you do all of your cooking. This is the setting in which all of the characters of Butterworth's *The Winterling* find themselves. The choices that they make from here will affect one another with chilling ultimate consequences.



Playwright

Full name: Jeremy Butterworth

- Born 3/4/1969, Southwark, London. Grew up on a cul-de-sac in St. Albans, a town about 20 miles north of London.
- Attended Cambridge, which he describes as three years of doing 80 hours of theatre a week, and going to one lecture.
- Had his breakthrough hit, *Mojo*, in 1997, starring Harold Pinter. Pinter became a mentor to him, the person to whom Butterworth first sent new plays, and also to whom Butterworth garners much comparison.
- In his mid-30s, Butterworth, his wife, and two small children moved to a smallholding swine farm in Somerset (about 80 miles west of London, and about 45 miles east of Dartmoor), raising and slaughtering their own pigs.
- Has written 7 plays: *I Believe in Love*, debuted 1992; *Huge*, debuted 1993; *Mojo*, debuted 1995; *The Night Heron*, debuted in 2002; *The Winterling*, debuted in 2006; *The Parlour Song*, debuted in 2008, and *Jerusalem*, debuted in 2009.
- 7 movies as well: *Huge*, *Fair Game*, *The Last Legion*, *The Birthday Girl*, *Mojo*, *Christmas*, and *Night of the Golden Brain*.
- Has won three awards: the Laurence Olivier Theatre Award in 1996 (1995 season) for Best Comedy Performance for *Mojo* at the Royal Court Theatre, the 1995 London Critics Circle Theatre Award (Drama Theatre) for Most Promising Playwright for *Mojo*, and the 1995 London Evening Standard Theatre Award for Most Promising Playwright for *Mojo*.

http://www.thevillager.com/villager_22/jezbutterworht.html

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2009/mar/24/jez-butterworth>

<http://www.doollee.com/PlaywrightsB/butterworth-jez.html>

<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0125336/bio>



Director's Concept

THE WINTERLING

Directors' Concept by Taylor Gonda and Holly Ann Peterson
Paragon Theatre Fall, 2009

What we want to say:

The Winterling is a play about choices, not only the specific and deadly choice that must be made by the end of the play, but also the choices that the characters have made that have lead them to this point, to this moment where life and death is at stake. It is about the revealing nature of choice. How, when faced with two roads, the path that one chooses speaks of one's true character, for good or ill. The three gangsters in our play arrive at the abandoned cottage at various times with the façade of the civilized world intact, but in the primitive and unforgiving environment of Dartmoor, the moors and the bogs and the cold and the forest break down the characters so that all pretense is eroded, all formality is revealed as false, and ultimately, they must decide to be bold or cowardly. To toe the line or not. To face reality or continue to live in an artificial existence. To stay or go. To live or die.

How we want to say it:

The look and feel of the play should have everything to do with the amount of MOISTURE found in Dartmoor. The average rainfall is over 60 inches a year, and considering the fact that the moors rarely ever freeze, the winter months our play is set in are wet, cold, sludgy, and muddy... generally horribly mucky conditions. Due to the lack of conveniences of civilization in Dartmoor, the cottage and all of its inhabitants are at the mercy of these elements.

As mentioned in the concept paragraph, we would like to see a BREAKING DOWN effect. The characters and their pretenses are ERODING, so too should the design, while remaining grounded in realism. Some words that come to mind are: Neglect, untamed, misuse, primordial, ancient, primitive, brutish, raw, rough, savage, uncivilized, wild, instinctual, visceral

Some visual cues: Moss, peat, mud, filth, dirt, mold, rot, rust, overgrowth

"I like London. I like pavement. I like to walk out the door and not sink up to my tits in primordial sludge. I don't like trenchfoot. I don't like sheep. I don't like Dartmoor. I don't like the country. It's covered in shit." - Patsy

SET: Stone, moisture, and neglect

The cottage that the play is set in may have been there for a few hundred years, though it could also have been built very recently as building methods have not changed much over time. There is extensive use of stone and mortar for walls,

and thatching for roofs in Dartmoor. We imagine the earth around the house intruding upon it. Its borders are blurred as civilization is eaten away by roots and animals and rot. We like the basic layout as described in the stage notes, and would like to not stray from realism as much as possible.

LIGHTS: *Dusk to Dawn to Daylight*

The lighting should reflect the idea of breakdown through the transition from dusk to dawn to daylight. Realistically, there is no electricity in the house. Practical lighting will most likely come from the fireplace, kerosene lamps, windows, the moon, candles, etc. We envision lighting that can add to the dampness, gloom, foreboding, etc... The sense of dread.

SOUND: “Deafening cacophony of war.”

The scripted sound cues such as planes overhead and sheep are essential. We would like the plane cues especially to be disorienting and jarring. If there is need for additional sound or music, it should be subtle, atmospheric, and non-lyrical. We would like it to heighten the sense of danger. We will definitely need pre-show and lobby music which should reflect the design concept.

COSTUME: *City vs. Country*

The costumes are contemporary. It is essential that West, Wally, and Patsy’s costumes reflect their being “businessmen” from the city, while Lou and Draycott’s costumes reflect their being from the country. We imagine Patsy and Wally in similar attire, being in the same gang, but with differences reflecting their respective characters. West’s costume should help us understand his journey from the city to the country. Lou is eclectic in her style. Most of her belongings have been stolen. Draycott is basically homeless. He probably dresses in many layers, wearing everything he owns at one time. Here are some challenges we see: West’s two suits, underwear as a major part of the costumes, mud on Wally and Patsy upon their arrival to the cottage, and Patsy’s bloody nose.

PROPS: *Repurposed & Disrepair*

The props should be sparse; only what is absolutely required, and in the reality of the world, all items should be either found or stolen. Items can be repurposed, i.e. a hoe can be used as a fire poker, etc... What would they find in and around the cottage? How might they use it? In what state of disrepair might it be? With regard to cigarettes, we would like accurate packages and cigarettes, but no one will actually smoke on stage.



Synopsis

The play opens in a cacophony of bombs, guns, and sheep. West waits in a desolate and abandoned farmhouse, preparing for guests. He begins to call for his dog, Dolly, but is interrupted by planes overhead. Enter Draycott, who invites West to join him in a trip to watch badgers being gassed in a nearby town. West declines. Draycott then asks for medication for a hip he claims to have chipped. West tells him to continue moving before the hip seizes up. Draycott then asks if the arrangement he has with West to sleep on the porch is still convenient. West initially agrees, and then decides that the arrangement will not be convenient, and begins to encourage Draycott to leave. As a parting shot, and with a sinister sense of foreshadowing, Draycott returns to the mention of the badgers, saying that they will be killed, and never know what hit them. West leaves to continue his search for Dolly.

After a time, two muddy and sopping gangsters, Wally and Patsy, enter. Patsy expresses great displeasure at the surroundings, the fact that their car has gotten stuck, and the overly dry muffin that they had picked up on the way. Wally reminds Patsy that he should be quiet and keep to himself, and not make himself nervous and give himself a nosebleed. As Patsy begins to question what drove this old friend of Wally's away from the city and into the moor, West reappears. West greets his friend brusquely and asks why they are muddy. Wally relates the hardships of the trip he and Patsy made from London. West and Wally reminisce without reminiscing, and West insinuates that Wally has undergone plastic surgery or other dermatological anti-aging process, and that it makes Wally less of a man, then asks the whereabouts of their other friend, Jerry. Wally dodges the question with the explanation that Patsy has come along instead. After some badgering by West (during which Wally refers to West by his given name of Len), Wally admits that Jerry committed suicide by jumping in the Thames. West changes the subject back to getting to know Patsy. Wally and Patsy explain that Patsy is the son of Wally's new live-in girlfriend or common-law wife, Rita, and therefore stepson to Wally. West then takes the humiliation one more level, talking both Wally and Patsy into removing their pants so that they may dry by the fire. West also cajoles Patsy (via conversation with Wally) regarding choice of drink. Patsy turns down the red wine, requesting scotch instead. West departs to locate a bottle of scotch, and Wally berates Patsy for the request. Patsy chooses the opportunity to request further information about the mission that Wally has called him to join. He further accuses Wally of having an attack of nerves, and turning into "Sweaty Wally." Wally returns the jab with the indication that Patsy could easily be replaced. West returns with a bottle of inexpensive scotch, and they toast one another. West turns the conversation to Patsy's mother, leading Wally to send Patsy back to the car stuck in the muck and to seek Wally's cigarettes. Wally tries to start conversation with West about how well West must sleep out on the moor. West turns this into a discussion of sleep amounts and effectiveness as a person. West explains that nothing that wants to survive allows itself to sleep while living on the moor. West takes the conversation back to their

other friend, Jerry. West again makes insinuations about Wally's relationship. They reminisce about past trips and mob jobs. Wally attempts to focus the conversation by telling the story of the series of missed phone calls that led he and Patsy to go to Dartmoor to see West. Patsy returns, having visited the fort, and posits that the builders put it in the wrong place. Patsy then takes over the conversation, with a description of the relationship between Wally and Rita. Patsy also explains the difference between the father-son love that he and Wally share, and other types of love between men. West apologizes for his earlier insinuations, then he and Patsy once again discuss the fort, coming to the purpose of the stone circle to the east of it. In another moment of foreshadowing, West elicits from Patsy that the ancient stone circle was used for human sacrifice. At this time, Patsy's nose begins to bleed. Patsy asks about the girl whom he saw in the upstairs window.

At the open of the second act, which happens a year before the first act, West enters into the farmhouse where Draycott squats. In a parallel note to the visitors in the first act, West is drippy, mucky, cold, and miserable. Draycott sets some pig hearts to cook in the fire, and explains his sources of food, showing West the ropes of eking a living from the various shop owners around. He also offers an exposition about badgers, growing into a story of trying to become part of a cricket team. A plane roars overhead, launching Draycott into a diatribe about a run-in with the Royal Air Force. West asks who owns the house, eliciting a lengthy family history from Draycott—the truth of which, like all his stories, would be difficult to verify. He describes cleaning the house and the area from the dogs, vagrants, and deviants. He invites West to live with him, and help clean up the place. At this time, Lue enters, and ignores the barrage of questions, insults, and recriminations that Draycott throws at her. In another moment to parallel the first act, a half a bottle of scotch becomes the topic of conversation, and Draycott exits upstairs in search of the scotch with which he hopes to ply Lue so that she'll perform sexual favors in return. After some time spent meeting and avoiding each others' eyes, West can no longer take the tension and extracts conversation from the otherwise mute Lue. They discuss Draycott, who according to Lue is a fine knitter. She also intimates that Draycott is not always completely honest in his grand opinions of himself and his worth. Lue also produces a litany of locations where she has watched West, and he describes a time he saw her while riding a bus. Lue asks if West has ever traveled abroad, and whether or not he has a passport. She delineates the plans she has made for a trip, down to the amount of money she needs for each part, and the forms she must complete to make it happen. She needs West to help her with the form, to sign the form, certifying that her picture is her. He refuses to help her, and she hounds him until he describes a period of vicious beating given to him by his two good friends, Wally and Jerry (whose real names are Dennis Coker and Jerry Allen) as punishment for falling asleep during a stakeout job. Lue demurs, and West offers to try to help. Lue offers, as payment for his assistance, a puppy that she has found out on the moor. Draycott re-enters, offering scotch to Lue, who finishes the bottle in one swig and then promptly leaves without performing any of the favors Draycott was hoping for. Draycott becomes furious and West turns

the tables on Draycott, confronting him with a story of the two playing gin rummy the previous week. West accuses Draycott of getting him drunk and then rifling through his bag. West reveals his gun and tells Draycott to leave.

Act III opens the morning after the evening of Act I, with Patsy attempting to warm up in various ways. He meets Lue, and offers her a cigarette. He explains about his nosebleeds, and sleeping patterns, and not needing a lot of sleep. Lue describes her friendship with West, and asks why Patsy has come to visit. Patsy offers varying stories, each more implausible than the previous, as to his trip out to visit, then finally tells the truth, that he answered a call and has absolutely no idea why he traveled to Dartmoor. Lue begins to explain her desire to travel. She has procured her passport, and wants to travel somewhere that has hot weather year-round, but cannot because her suitcase is broken. She asks Patsy if he is Jerry. He says that he is not. Lue then describes seeing him in her dream. West enters and inquires about the quality of Patsy's sleep. Patsy reveals that he had not slept, and then offers to help Lue with her suitcase. Lue and Patsy go upstairs. Wally enters from outside, and he and West exchange pointed pleasantries about the quality of sleep. Wally says that he had gone for a walk, but never found the fort West had described. Wally also found a river that had frozen solid, and skated on it some. He managed to get the car out of the bog where it had stuck, and he is ready to return to London. They begin to exchange departure pleasantries, and Wally invites West to return with him. West expresses confusion due to the car only having two seats and asks what he has to do in order to earn the right to return to London. Wally explains, obliquely at first, that the mob bosses encouraged Wally to take Patsy to see Len, and for Patsy not to return. When West hesitates, Wally offers for West to wait in the car while Wally takes care of business, but West says that he will take care of the deed. Wally gives West a bag into which to put Patsy's head, as their employer will want to see it for proof. Wally exits to wait in the car. Patsy comes downstairs, ready to leave, when West gives him the realization that Wally brought Patsy here for West to kill him. Patsy counters with the exposition that Wally has brought Patsy out here to kill West. They realize that the mob does not care which dead head returns to London. Lue comes downstairs, excited because her suitcase is fixed. West tells Patsy that he cannot kill him and that he will stay behind in the country, as he has still not yet found his missing dog, and he urges Patsy and Lue to leave immediately, out the back door, and go on that trip Lue has always wanted to take. They leave. West returns to calling for the dog. Draycott enters, asking if he has come at a good time. West sings a lullaby as the lights fade out.



Character names

Draycott: There are nine towns in England whose names include Draycott. As a surname, it means the Dry-Built Cottage, much like the farmhouse in which all the action takes place
<http://www.searchforancestors.com/surnames/origin/d/draycott.php>

Len West:

At times, Wally refers to West by the more formal “Mr. West”. At other, more intimate, times, he uses only the first name, Len.

Len: The boy's name Len is a variant of Lenny (English) and Leonard (Old German), and the meaning of Len is "lion strength".

West: English and German: from Middle English, Middle High German west ‘west’, hence a topographic name for someone who lived to the west of a settlement, or a regional name for someone who had migrated from further west.

<http://www.thinkbabynames.com/meaning/1/Len>

<http://www.ancestry.com/facts/west-name-meaning.ashx>

Wally (Dennis Coker):

Wally: It is of Old French origin, and its meaning is "Welshman". From "waleis". Originally a Scottish surname which refers to foreigners from the south. As a slang word, a “wally” is an inept fool.

Dennis: The boy's name Dennis is of Greek and English origin, and its meaning is "follower of Dionysius". Dionysius is the Greek god of wine, responsible for the growth of the vines in spring and the originator of winemaking; he is equivalent to the Roman god Bacchus. Biblical: a judge of Athens who was converted to Christianity by the apostle Paul.

Coker: English: habitational name from a group of villages in Somerset named with Coker, from a Celtic river name meaning ‘crooked’.

<http://www.thinkbabynames.com/meaning/1/Wallace>

<http://onlineslangdictionary.com/definition+of/wally>

<http://www.thinkbabynames.com/meaning/1/Dennis>

<http://www.ancestry.com/facts/coker-name-meaning.ashx>

Patsy: The boy's name Patsy, also used as girl's name Patsy, is a variant of Patrick (Latin), and the meaning of Patsy is "patrician, noble".

A patsy is also a person easily taken advantage of, cheated, blamed, or ridiculed.

<http://www.thinkbabynames.com/meaning/1/Patsy>

<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/patsy>

Lue: The girl's name Louise is of Old German origin, and its meaning is "famous warrior". Feminine form of Louis; French version of Ludwig. Louisa was more common in the 18th and 19th centuries. Saint Louise (16th century) was co-founder with Saint Vincent de Paul of the nursing order Daughters of Charity. Also sounds like: loopy, loony, lulu (all meaning crazy), or loo (also British slang for bathroom).

<http://www.thinkbabynames.com/meaning/O/Louise>



Setting

Devonshire, UK: where you can do everything from surfing to getting stuck in a peat bog

It is the home of clotted cream and scrumpy.

Largest towns are Plymouth and Exeter.

Sir Francis Drake launched from there on campaign to defeat the Spanish Armada.

Known for lace-making, including the wedding gown of Queen Victoria, and the christening gown of her firstborn son. The gown is still used by the royal family.

The reason for all the thatched roofs comes from the building materials used for the cottages--they are mostly mud and straw, which would not support anything heavier than a thatch.



Dartmoor is a roughly 370 square mile section of moorland in Devon.

It was the setting for Conan Doyle's *Hound of the Baskervilles* (another story of murder and dogs on the moor)

Known for stone circles.

Said to be the haunt of pixies.

Most of the land is privately owned by the Duke of Cornwall, some small parcels are owned by businesses or public interests, and the rest is common land.

Receives an average of 80 inches of rain per year

Average low in winter is 34, average high in summer is 64.



Major Motifs and Themes

Choice: Choice implies selection, options. The choices made by some characters, and characters who never grace the stage, have chilling and ultimate consequences for other characters—circumstances in which they have no choice.

Sleep: discussion of sleep happens often in *The Winterling*: Jerry and Wally punish West for falling asleep. West offers several glimpses into the sleeping patterns of great men. Patsy discusses how little he sleeps. Jerry has even taken the ultimate sleep by jumping into the Thames and committing suicide. Sleep is seen as a weakness.

Power and Authority: This ties into the motif of choice. West has put himself in charge of the farmhouse, therefore giving him the authority to decide who stays and who goes. Wally has the authority of the gang from London, first to torture West, and then to take Patsy to be killed and to return with West.

Masculinity: Masculinity is a subset of the motif of power and authority, and also draws parts of the motif of sleep. Wally, Patsy, and West needle one another and try to establish dominance by continually questioning one another's proclivities toward more feminine concerns such as appearance, feelings, and needing poncey things like sleep.



Words and meanings

Winterling: an animal of one year, usually used in describing an animal on a farm such as a sheep or a goat. The dog, Dolly, is

one year old.

<http://tinyurl.com/mq2aqh>

Inglenook Fireplace: literally, "chimney corner," type of fireplace with origins in the medieval world where an entire room would be built around a fireplace. The rooms have been reduced to large insets around the fireplace or stove with some sort of seating built in. (Director's Glossary)

Bonce: head (Director's Glossary)

Verily: in truth : certainly

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/verily>

Skittling: a slang term for a way to play cricket, which is not very sportsmanlike (Director's Glossary)

Riven: to wrench open or tear apart or to pieces

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/riven>

Stone (weight): British Unit of measure, usually for weight of people. Approx 14 lbs (Director's Glossary)

M4: Highway in GBR which links London to West Wales (Director's Glossary)

Sporran: Scottish Gaelic for 'purse'; a traditional part of Scottish Highland dress. It is a pouch that performs the same function as pockets on the pocketless Scottish kilt. (Director's Glossary)

Lord Horatio Nelson: a British flag officer famous for his service in the Royal Navy, particularly during the Napoleonic Wars. He won several victories, including the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, during which he was killed. Trafalgar square - basically the middle of London - is named for the battle and is the home of Nelson's Column - a famous statue (Director's Glossary)

Bomber Harris: Sir Arthur Travers Harris, Marshal of the Royal Air Force , 1st Baronet GCB OBE AFC RAF (13 April 1892 – 5 April 1984), commonly known as

"Bomber" Harris by the press, and often within the RAF as "Butcher" Harris, was Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief (AOC-in-C) of RAF Bomber Command and later a Marshal of the Royal Air Force during the latter half of World War II. (Director's Glossary)

Yorkshire Ripper: an English serial killer, convicted in 1981 for murdering 13 women, and attacking several others. He is currently serving life imprisonment in Broadmoor Hospital. Aka Peter Sutcliffe, aka Peter William Coonan (Director's Glossary)

The Three Degrees: a female Philadelphia soul and disco vocal musical group, formed in 1963 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Director's Glossary)

Bromsgrove: a town in Worcestershire, West Midlands, England. Could also refer to a neighborhood in London (Director's Glossary)

Portakabin in Hove: portable building designed and built to be movable rather than permanently located. A common modern design is sometimes called a modular building (Director's Glossary)

Claridge's: Claridge's is a luxury hotel in Mayfair, central London. It is located at the corner of Brook Street and Davies Street (Director's Glossary)

Highbury: probably referring to Highbury Stadium, otherwise known as Arsenal Stadium. Arsenal Stadium was a football stadium in Highbury, North London, which was the home ground of Arsenal Football Club between 6 September 1913 and 7 May 2006. It was popularly known as Highbury due to its location and was given the affectionate nickname of "The Home of Football" by the club. (Director's Glossary)

Richard Branson: a flamboyant and competitive English industrialist, best known for his Virgin brand of over 360 companies (Director's Glossary)

Mullered: beaten, in competition or physically beaten up (Director's Glossary)

Roy Castle: an English dancer, singer, comedian, actor, television presenter and musician. He was a talented jazz trumpet player. He had suffered from agoraphobia. For the greater part of his career as an entertainer he was unhindered by the condition - but his role as the main presenter of Record Breakers proved challenging at times. Unfortunately for Roy, many of the multi-person record-breaking attempts were recorded in the vast BBC TC1 studio at Television Centre. At 995 square metres (10,250 ft²), TC1 is one of the largest television studios in Europe. The prospect of several hundred hula-hooping schoolgirls or bag-piping soldiers inside a large studio would cause Roy great anxiety. However, he prided himself on being a professional entertainer and he improvised many novel ways of managing his condition. For example, when filming in TC1 he would arrange with the producer to have a large wicker laundry

basket placed out of camera shot, into which he would dive to take refuge from his panic attacks. His co-host Cheryl Baker would often sit on the basket, thus providing Roy with the comforting knowledge that the lid could not be accidentally removed. (Director's Glossary)

Parapet: a wall-like barrier at the edge of a roof or structure. It may serve to prevent unwanted falls over the edge or it may be a defensive, constructional or stylistic feature. (Director's Glossary)

Short Midwicket: a defensive fielding position in cricket - kind of like a "rover" in softball or baseball - an outfielder who plays in close (Director's Glossary)

Squaddies: Soldiers (Director's Glossary)

Kerry Road: road in London on the south side of the Thames near the East End and Greenwich (Director's Glossary)

Sparko: to pass out, become unconscious (Director's Glossary).