



RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

Listening to the Rain

A Tribute to Anthony Minghella

Director Acty Tang

Choreographer Gary Gordon

Short film director Anton Krueger

Truly, Madly, Deeply (part 1)

Mosaic

Truly, Madly, Deeply (part 2)

Hang Up

Days Like These

INTERVAL

Whale Music

Truly, Madly, Deeply (part 3)

On Anthony Minghella (1954 – 2008)

Before he was an Oscar-winning writer and director, Anthony Minghella studied Drama at the University of Hull in the United Kingdom, and later lectured there while pursuing a Doctorate. He did not attempt to write an original narrative until his final year as a student, with music and film having been his early influences. Of the theatre of his student days in the 1970s, Minghella said:

'The British theatre at that period was fascinating and rather brilliant. It was Edward Bond, Howard Barker, David Hare: really substantial writing that was analytical in the sense that these writers were looking at how the world worked. With great authority, they were bringing together social and political behaviour, whereas I was trying to write about people through their personal behaviour. ... Even people who were interested in my writing were rather disappointed in how politically unanalytical it was.'

In the 1980s he worked as a writer for television and radio; among his output were the pilot and further episodes for the popular series *Inspector Morse*. His plays in this period were remarkable for incredible insights into the social faultlines that impact on private lives, revealing external experiences within intimate portrayals of characters and relationships, and through ironic comedy. His 1986 work, *Made in Bangkok*, received a Plays and Players Critics Award for Best New Play.

The 1991 film, *Truly, Madly, Deeply* was first made for the BBC *Screen Two* series, but achieved a cinema release, launching Minghella's film career. From *The Independent's* obituary, quoting Roger Clarke: 'I once asked Anthony Minghella why he never moved to Hollywood after his success with *The English Patient*. "I'd go nuts," he replied.' In 2000 he made an adaptation of Samuel Beckett's *Play*, and in 2006 his radio play *Eyes Down Looking* was created in celebration of Beckett's 100th birthday. He also directed Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* for the English National Opera in 2005. Shortly before his death, he co-wrote and directed the pilot episode of *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*, filmed in Botswana.

Minghella was married to Hong Kong-born choreographer Carolyn Choa, and is survived also by a son and a daughter. He passed away on 18 March 2008 in London, a week after surgery to remove cancer of the tonsils and neck. He is remembered both for his warmth as a director towards actors and collaborators, and his intellect and resolve to oversee the fulfilment of his epic creative visions.

Acty's note on directing Minghella's plays

We have a full palette for you tonight: a play, two dance texts, a film text, and a short film, all from the work of Anthony Minghella before *The English Patient*. We wanted to honour the diversity of his creative output, and also to provide a valuable educational experience by involving a range of people. First-year students, Masters graduates and staff members worked alongside one another; dancers and actors collaborated; and we invited Lynette Marais from the National Arts Festival, and students from the Music department, to help us celebrate Minghella's creativity.

Listening to the Rain has tried to capture the richness of textures in Minghella's films and theatre. This richness comes from detailed observation of human interactions – he sometimes referred to his writing as 'mumble writing', such was the degree of authenticity – but also an unabashed depth of feeling and empathy, because he wrote of people whose yearnings were continually frustrated. Such complex material requires subtle acting. Minghella's realism requires light, spontaneous, almost casual playing; his deep insight requires the actor to bare her soul. In rehearsal, I tried to engender precise crafting, intelligent textual understanding and emotional responsiveness in the actors, all at once. It was demanding work, and I hope our effort in striving towards this ideal will be a valuable and lasting educational experience for the students.

I also constantly reminded myself that Minghella's vision cannot simply be found in the words. It is in the silences, the melancholic pattering of the rain, where Minghella gave us the most poignant moments. I sometimes think of Minghella's plays as Samuel Beckett in everyday language. Where Beckett is often hieratic and thus difficult, Minghella's accessible language is deceptively difficult too. It resonates in unspoken yearnings and regrets, and the meanings of a particular line can take a few rehearsals to flesh out.

Minghella wrote: 'The only cinema worth talking about is the cinema which aspires to poetry. ... I think it's an indictment that it rarely happens in the English language. While the American cinema is far too concerned with transparency – because transparency is exportable – poetic cinema celebrate the opaque, it doesn't genuflect in front of clarity.' It is the poetry of the interior space that makes Minghella's work truly remarkable.

Which explains Minghella's interest in diverse mediums of performance. I believe that, in the indeterminate language of dance theatre, and in the ghostly, unseen presences behind a radio voice, Minghella found a kind of depth and opaqueness, the conditions necessary for poetry to emerge. So it was also through my own experiences of being powerfully moved by dance theatre that I grasped how to approach Minghella's work, and how to attempt to honour his ideal.

Acty Tang

Gary's note on seeing Minghella's work:

A few years back in the early 1990s when I was teaching in London at the Laban Centre, I saw a programme by the internationally acclaimed London Contemporary Dance Theatre. It is now one of many defunct dance companies in the world. At that time, it was acclaimed for its 'virtuoso dancing' in a contemporary style – it had started in the 1960s with a strong Martha Graham technique – and for an extensive repertoire representing many contemporary choreographers.

One of the features of that particular programme that I saw was that it included 'magnificent live music'. But what intrigued me most was a duet by the choreographer Jonathan Lunn, *Hang Up*. It was set to a written text by the playwright Anthony Minghella. The character of 'She' was performed by the actress Juliet Stevenson. Jonathan Lunn danced in the work with Lauren Potter who was later to feature in Lloyd Newson's *Strange Fish*. It was the first time I had seen a developed and crafted dramatic text used as an emotional soundscape for dance performance. It was a sumptuous text described in the publicity material as '...an acutely observed comedy of relationships'. The detail, subtle expression and complex phrasing in both the sound and physical texts were quite exceptional – and made a strong impression on me, coming from a background and training in both drama and dance.

Sometime later in 1992, I saw *Mosaic* presented by BBC2's *Dancelines* series. It was a short dance film for two women choreographed by Jonathan Lunn. Here again, the work featured actress Juliet Stevenson and dancer Lauren Potter. Not surprisingly a text was part of the collaboration and featured Anthony Minghella. The published work is now described as '...a dance text for two women. One speaks but doesn't dance; one dances but doesn't speak'. So my introduction to the writings of Anthony Minghella was through these dance performances.

Later of course, I saw his films *Truly, Madly, Deeply*, *The English Patient* and *The Talented Mr Ripley*. So when a friend told me that he had died last year, I felt a real need to offer some kind of tribute from this department. Anthony Minghella had inspired me on a number of levels. I often refer to his dance texts in courses; the impressionist style of his theatrical encounters; as a choreographer I engage in similar collaborations with playwrights. I so enjoy the mix of dance and drama in his dance texts and the complex and detailed layering of images, memory and language that underscores relationships and emotions in his writings.

I do hope you enjoy this tribute to the work of Anthony Minghella.

Professor Gary Gordon

Truly, Madly, Deeply

Directed by Acty Tang

Shaun Acker | Jamie
Chloé Hirschman | Nina

Scenes from the 1991 film that launched Minghella's film directing career. It was a BBC Films production, starring Juliet Stevenson and Alan Rickman.

Mosaic

Choreographed and directed by Gary Gordon

Alex Sutherland
Nomcebisi Moyikwa

Mosaic was written for choreographer Jonathan Lunn, for a 1992 dance film as part of BBC's *Dancelines* series. Juliet Stevenson and Lauren Potter performed in the film.

Hang Up

Choreographed by **Gary Gordon**

Directed by **Acty Tang**

Tristan Jacobs | He
Zanne Solomon | She
Kyle de Boer | Dancer
Alex Richardson | Dancer

Hang Up was originally written as a voice accompaniment to a duet by choreographer Jonathan Lunn, for London Contemporary Dance Theatre at the Sadler's Wells Theatre in 1987. It was subsequently broadcast as a radio play on BBC Radio.

The telephone is a ubiquitous device in stories about relationships, whether on stage or on film. Things have changed since the advent of the cellphone, and this production has been adapted to reflect today's internet communication technologies and the cross-continental lives of many South African relationships. But the struggle to negotiate yearnings across distances remains essentially the same.

Days Like These

Directed by **Anton Krueger**

Lynette Marais | Woman

A lyrical short film written in 1989. We are very pleased that Lynette Marais agreed to appear in this production. Lynette was the director of the National Arts Festival for 20 years and was conferred an Honorary Doctorate at this year's graduation at Rhodes University.

Whale Music

Directed by **Acty Tang**

Mary Leinberger | Caroline

Christine Balt | Stella

Pumelela Nqelenga | Fran

Alex Sutherland | Kate

Bridgett Phatudi | D

Siobhan Lumsden | Nurse

This play was originally performed at the University of Hull in 1980, where Minghella was lecturing and studying towards a doctorate. The play was later produced at the Haymarket Theatre in 1981.



Music

Wayne Greenbeg | Cello

Cathy Hodgson | Piano

Rachmaninov, Vocalise in E minor

Fauré, Après un rêve



Production Credits

Directors & Choreographer	Acty Tang Gary Gordon Anton Krueger
Stage Manager	Kutloano Kunutu
Production Manager	Jacques de Kock
Set Designer	Roux Engelbrecht
Set Construction	Willie Coombs
Costume Designer	Gavin Krastin
Lighting Designer	Acty Tang
Musicians	Wayne Greenberg Cathy Hodgson
Sound Compilation	Acty Tang
Lighting Operator	Kutloano Kunutu
Sound Operator	Jacques de Kock
Crew	Verusha Naidoo Karin Reum Dohné Damons Josh Martin Melissa Pentz Otshepeng Desireé Rapula Roscoe Ratangee PJ Waugh
Projector Operator	Sifiso Sikhakhawe
Theatre Administrator	Kate Bold
Poster & Programme Design	Bronwyn McLean
Front of House Manager	Natasha Lech
Resident Photographer '09	Sophie Marcus

Drama Department and Theatre Complex

Chief Technical Officer	Oliver Cartwright
Head of Wardrobe	Rita Westbrook
Design & Technical Supervisor	Roux Engelbrecht
Secretary	Vusiwe Mnyobe
Messenger & Clerk	Vuyelwa Nonie Hoza
Stage Hand	Welcome Mgwanci

Theatre Management Committee

Chair	Mr Tim Huisamen
HOD Drama	Professor Gary Gordon
HOD English	Professor Paul Walters
HOD Music	Professor Marc Duby
School of Languages	Professor Russell Kaschula
Theatre Director	Ms Alex Sutherland
Senate	Professor George Euvrard
Senate	Dr Anton Krueger
Senate	Dr Tim Radloff
Finance	Mr Mike Olivier
Estates	Mr Cromwell Dyala

Drama Department | Events 2009

June **National Arts Festival**
Student Festival

August - September **Young Directors' Season '09**
Annual showcase of young directorial talent. Honours and masters students select cutting edge productions which examine, expose and entertain.

October **Theatre in Motion '09**
Physical Imagination Takes Flight
Postgraduate choreography, physical theatre and dance.