**DNA Original Staging**

Below, Simon responds to questions from a school about his original designer the 2008 premiere:

What was the original stage type at the National? Thrust/End on?

It was designed for the Cottesloe Theatre (now renamed the Dorfman) which can be configured in a variety of different ways (end on, in the round or thrust) but we performed it end on. It was in a season of other work that was also end on (and we had limitations on the time to change the configuration) but also because it worked well in relation to our desire to use projection.

Why did you as the designer chose that stage design?

DNA was part of a triple bill of plays (along with The Miracle and Baby Girl) all of which shared the same stage design. This was partly from a practical point of view, due to the limited time to do major changes to the set in the interval between plays, but also crucially conceptually we wanted to create a minimal design that all the plays would share. Central to this was the idea of using projection to help support the narrative but also to create a distinctive video design look for each play.

The design consisted of an open square stage with a projection screen that appeared to float in the space at the rear of the stage. The stage surface was textured to look like black tarmac and was framed by a drain cover around the perimeter (in the play The Miracle the stage was wet with puddles as if it had just rained).

For DNA the video had a forensic quality slowly moving through and exploring the spaces in which the play is set including a wood and a playing field. The three plays had quite a few different locations so the use of video allowed the action to flow uninterrupted by scene changes.

How do you think the stage design enhanced the experience for the actors/audience?

I wanted the design to really focus the audience attention on the actors and the narrative but also to provide an appropriate atmosphere for each scene, I think it achieved both. One of my favourite aspects of the design was how it explored the sense of these characters being somewhat isolated, killing time, alone in these space on the edge of a city. In one scene the video featured a blue sky and very slowly for the duration of the scene a tiny plane with vapour trails slowing crossing the void.

If you could have staged it on a different stage type would you have? Why/why not?

I think DNA would also work really well in the round or in traverse due to the intense psychological nature of the piece.

What elements of colour (lots of blue!) did you use to create mood and atmosphere?

The photographs on my website probably looks a lot more blue than the actual production did due to the limitations of photography; certainly the video wasn’t as blue as it appears on some of those shots! But having said that it was a very cool colour pallet. In the video I treated the footage so that a single colour e.g. the orange of a football goal net was heightened while colours around it we’re more monochrome to help focus in on certain details. The costumes were also quite controlled – greys, blues, white.