

THE LONDON NEW JERUSALEM OLYMPIC CIRCUS 2012 : AN ALTERNATIVE SCENARIO FOR THE OPENING CEREMONY based on ideas from members of the East London Community

The Concept: The Olympics are a global travelling circus and in this scenario the circus theme is explored as both metaphor and idiom to tell the story of east London and the Olympics. The story begins in the future when the country has been subjected to global warming and London has become a wasteland. In the centre of the set there is Pook's Hill, where William Blake, the chief narrator, is stationed with Will and Lyra, the child protagonists of Philip Pullman's trilogy *His Dark Materials*, and their accompanying daemons. The story unfolds as a reworking of Rudyard Kipling's historical romance for children, *Puck of Pook's Hill*, only this time it is not about the folk heroes and devils of an Imperial island story, but of a post Imperial city – London Babylon 2012. The narrative shows the impact of urbanisation, industrialism and global capitalism on the people of London and their response to the resulting problems of poverty, overcrowding, ill health and environmental pollution. The experience of immigration and war is also documented through the words, images and music of east enders. The final sequence goes back to the future, a better future depicting the greening of London and the role which sport, music and cultural recreation can play in the building of a new Jerusalem from the ruins of London Babylon.

The set initially shows a globally warmed 'Constable Country', with a dried up river bed, scorched fields, dozens of look alike Olympic mascots (Wenlock and Mandeville) patrolling as security guards as the Five Olympic Circus rings are constructed, each consisting of a circular stage. The rings are connected by 'roads' 'canals' and 'railways' built by groups of workers, which are then transformed into a catwalk, cycle track etc. Each ring is spotlighted in turn as the focus of the story and in the course of the performance a 30 foot high scaffolding tower is erected on each stage out of pre-fabricated components, in a structure representing the different impacts of globalisation. One of the towers supports screens used to project images and film sequences and another provides a canvas for a team of graffiti artists to compose a mural in real time. The other towers provide a framework for circus performance. The rings and towers are connected to compose the Olympic logo and in a final sequence are transformed with wild climbing plants to create the hanging gardens of London New Babylon, inspired by Constant Nieuwenhuys vision of a 'ludic city'.

The Five Rings, represent the five pillars of working class life :The Family (green ring); The Street (black ring); The Palace of Delight (pubs, clubs, parks and other venues of popular entertainment and recreation:yellow ring); The Workplace (in turn a tailor's workshop, a car factory and a design studio :red ring); Schools for a Better Life (Popular education,Community and Youth organisations, Faith organisations : blue ring)

Each stage has a *ring master* who introduces one of the scenes and also reads extracts from selected texts:

William Blake is M/C and Narrator in Chief, representing the voice of artists, poets and urban visionaries located on Pook Hill. Acts as link between the scenes.

Sylvia Pankhurst, the voice of women, stationed in the green ring.

Walter Besant, the voice of political reformers and educationalists in blue ring

Dr Barnardo, the voice of social philanthropy in the black ring

Joan Littlewood, the voice of popular theatre and entertainment in yellow ring

George Lansbury, the voice of the labour movement and municipal socialism in the red ring

In addition each section of the programme is prefaced by a short comedy routine on the chosen theme to illustrate the contribution made by diverse communities to the British sense of humour.

The programme is presented in *Five Scenes*, each representing a major dimension of East London's history and cultural traffic with the world.

PROLOGUE

"As evening drew on we went to what was left of Tower Bridge to watch 'The Paralympic Dream', marvelling at the flickering figures as they vaulted over the sandbagged parapets in their giant wheelchairs. Our gaze was drawn downriver to the famous motto: *Amplius, Charius, Colossicus* written in neon lipstick against the city's darkening rim. It was time to visit the stadium and sample the remaindered glory of the Games. There was almost no-one there. We sat, eating our sarni-snax in the empty seats. It was dark and cold. We had not brought torches or our thermal underwear. We could hear rats scampering after picnic droppings across the ruined terraces. Then, in the uncanny silence, we heard it - the soft rain of running feet, whispering at us from every direction, intimate yet far away and not drawing nearer, echoes of some other scene, not on any map we knew yet dimly remembered, not so much a souvenir, more like déjà vu....."

Key texts : Richard Jeffries 'After London'- Michael Moorcock 'Mother London'.

Soundtrack :The Clash 'London Calling'.

SCENE ONE

'If it wasn't for the houses in between' explores the experience of urbanisation and the popular response to being uprooted from the countryside as a result of the enclosure movement. It shows life in the Victorian slums and tenements of the East End, the street markets, the importance of urban parks, and allotments and the creation of a vibrant street multi-culture amongst the poor, slum clearance and the coming of Tower blocks. The scene includes:

The exodus from the countryside - the building of the Circus rings – the creation of a street adventure playground – a 'Keystone' cops and robbers sequence - 'The Big Stink, the Big Bang and the Big Drop' : Cirque du Soleil dramatise the Silvertown Munitions factory explosion and Ronan Point Tower block Disaster – Fun Palace: Pub and Disco Choreography- Bhangra Town.

Key Texts: John Clare 'The Mores'; John Barrel 'The dark side of the landscape'; William Blake 'London'; Henry Mayhew 'The Tenement' - Jack London 'People of the Abyss' - Arthur Morrison 'The Child of the Jago' - Lynda Nead 'London Babylon' - Iain Sinclair Dining on Stones – Raphael Samuels East End underworld - Patrick Wright Journey Through the Ruins - R Lichtenstein On Brick Lane; Melanie McGrath Silvertown- Monca Ali Brick lane.

Images : Daumier Over London; Documentary archive footage of Brick Lane, Limehouse and the West India and Royal Docks ; Photographs of The Silvertown explosion; The Ronan Point disaster; John Claridge and Bill Brandt: Photographs of the East end 1950-70; Jock Mcfadyen Paintings of east London; London Docklands Community Poster campaign

Film excerpt : Bronco Bulldog

Playlist includes: Gus Elen 'If it was'nt for the Houses in between'; Medley of Cockney Music hall songs; Knees up Mother Brown, My Old man's a Dustman and other pub songs- Iain Dury Plaistow Patricia - The Clash 'Police and Thieves'- Dave the Drummer 'Night out in Hackney' - Pet Shop Boys 'East end boys and West end girls' - Ralph McTell 'The Streets of London'; Asian Dub Foundation :Bhangra Remix

SCENE TWO

The Forward march of Labour shows the building of the docks, canals and Stratford Railway Town, the campaign against child labour, the history of trade union and workers struggles, and the transition to a services and knowledge based economy, culminating in the closure of the docks and the building of Canary wharf (represented by a scaffolding tower). The scene includes the following sequences:

- A staging of excerpts from Charles Parker and Ewan MacColl's radio ballads about the building of the railways and roads.
- The Sweeps Revenge, a ballet choreographed by Mathew Bourne which interprets Blake's two poems about the plight of child sweeps, and draws on the English tradition of guising, mumming and black face, as well as Benjamin Britten's opera to depict child labour on the streets and factories of Victorian London and the links made between their plight and the campaign to abolish slavery.
- A parade of trade union banners carried by union members from east London, past and present and led by the East London brass band and Dagenham Girls Pipers.
- Strike! An audio-visual sequence depicts the Bryant and May's Match Girls Strike, the strikes of 1911 and the General Strike of 1926 as watched on TV by the Royle family.
- Complicite theatre group dramatise the transition from tailors workshop to car production line to design studio.
- Campaign against the Closure of the Docks and the construction of Canary Wharf
- A Foggy Day in London Town. The pollution caused by smokestack industries segues into the fog of war.

Key texts: Humphrey Jennings 'Pandaemonium' - E.P.Thompson 'The making of the English Working Class' – Peter Linebaugh 'The London Hanged' – William Blake 'The Chimney Sweep'- Charles Booth 'London life and labour' – Lemn Sissay poem 'Strike'; Colin Ross 'The Death of the Docks- Iain Sinclair Downriver'

Images : Documentary Archive footage of the Docks, Stratford Railway Town - The 1911 Strikes- The General Strike - The Royle family - Ricky Gervais 'The Office' - Walter Raban 'The Thames Film' – Docklands Community Poster Campaign

Playlist: Medley of Industrial ballads – Benjamin Britten 'The Little Sweep' - Charles Parker/Peggy Seeger/Ewan MacColl 'Ballad of John Axon/ Song of a Road' - Dagenham Girl Pipers: Medley – John Ireland 'Man in his labour rejoiceth' - East London Brass - Billy Bragg Between the Wars/ There is a power in the Union - Machine: a Fire opera – Gershwin 'A Foggy Day in London Town'.

SCENE THREE

Oh what a Lovely War depicts the experience of East Londoners, as combatants and on the home front in two world wars, campaigns against war by pacifists and feminists and the local impact of the war against terrorism.

- '*The Blind leading the blind*' sequence is built around a restaging of Joan Littlewood's production of Charles Cilton's play. Constable country is planted with crosses. A long line of wounded soldiers, blinded by mustard gas and holding on to each other winds its way around the arena as we hear songs, poems and soldier's stories.
- '*Apocalypse Now*' portrays the Blitz as an audio visual spectacle, with explosions, sirens, searchlights. As the fog of war descends on the stadium., east enders begin a long trek out into the countryside, carrying with them material they have salvaged from their bombed out homes. They use this material to begin to build new homes and also construct a tower based on Heath Robinson's Multi-movement Bomb Catcher.
- '*London 7/7*' A memorial tribute to those who lost their lives in the attack

Images: Documentary archive footage of the blitz- Humphrey Jennings films: The First Days/ Fires Were Started/London Can Take It

Texts : Angus Calder 'The People's War'; Gilda O'Neil 'My East End' Noreen Branson 'The Home Front'

Playlist includes: Song Sequence from 'Oh What a Lovely war'; Medley of First WW songs- Noel Coward 'London Pride'; Vera Lynn 'We'll meet again'; Britten's 'War Requiem'; Harrison Birtwhistle 'Panic'; James MacMillan 'The Berserking'.

SCENE FOUR

Maybe its because we're Londoners explores the experience of arrivant communities and official and popular responses to their presence.

- '*Travelling People*' depicts the dislocation experienced by new arrivants

- *'They Shall Not pass'* : a choreographed sequence depicting the Battle of Cable street,
- *'Ragtime from the rag trade'* features a fashion parade of young models showing a history of teenage fashions linked to the East End rag trade, and accompanied by music since the 1950s from the teddy boys, mods and rockers, Greasers, skinheads, beats and hippies, New Romantics, Goths and Grunge, Hip hop and Rasta, Rap and Bhangra.
- A scaffolding tower is constructed by a group of taggers from Hackney Wick who use it to paint a mural depicting scenes from the Wick in real time.

Key texts : Monica Ali *'Brick Lane'*; Emanuel Litvinoff *'Journey through a Small Planet'*; Arnold Wesker *'Chicken soup with Barley'*; Rachel Lichtenstein *'In Brick Lane'*; Roger Mills *'Everything happened in Cable Street'*; John Gorman *'The Other Stratford'*-

Playlist: Flanagan and Allen *Maybe its because I'm a Londoner – Remix-* Charles Parker/Peggy Seeger/Ewan MacColl *Travelling people-* The Jam .Billy Bragg *England/half English –*Ian Dury *Peter the Painter -* Saint Etienne/ *Lord Kitchener London belongs to me –*Sonny Boy Williamson *Trying to live in London-* Linton Kwesi Johnson *New Cross Massacre -* Dizze Rascals *East end Madness -* Asian Dub Foundation - Nitin Sawhney

SCENE FIVE

Cycling Towards Jerusalem celebrates the role which sport, recreation and popular culture has played in improving the quality of life in East London and Britain over the past century.

Send in the Clowns A parade of clowns who are Spitting Image versions of Lord Coe, Boris Johnson, David Cameron, Mrs Thatcher, Prince Charles et al. A TV transmitter tower is constructed on the stage and the rings are aligned to form the Olympic logo while the stadium is lit in claret and blue (West Ham colours). The five towers are linked by high wires and filled with acrobats performing various feats, jugglers throwing Olympic rings across the arena....

On yer Bike an audio-visual history of cycling from errand boys to bike couriers, penny farthings to BMX, and from the Suffragettes to Reclaim the Streets. Groups cycle round the arena track whistling and singing accompanied by a choir and the East London Brass band in a special composition by Jonathon Dove. In each ring a different sport is choreographed : Boxing Swimming, Football, Table tennis, Cricket.

Jerusalem Revisited The finale is introduced by Rooster Byron's valedictory speech from Jezz Butterworth's play *'Jerusalem'*. The scene then features Sylvia Pankhurst on the High Wire slowly cycling around the stadium showering it with leaflets for *'Reclaim the City'*, while below on the walkways 300 cyclists from Critical Mass circle the stadium singing Jerusalem, led by a member of the Clarion Cycling Club. In a facsimile of the original Olympian ceremony, a hundred homing pigeons are released into the night sky carrying the Olympic message back to all part of the country as the towers are wrapped in hanging plants while the audience join in the singing of Jerusalem followed by a pyrotechnic display.

Key texts: Jez Butterworth 'Jerusalem' -John Burnside 'Lady Cyclists' - Sylvia Pankhurst on Cycling - Alan Sillitoe 'The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner' -Brian Glanville 'The Olympian'; Seamus Heaney 'Markings' - John Clare Poem- Laurie Lee 'Cyder with Rosie'- Flora Thompson 'Lark rise to Candleford'- Melanie Mcgrath 'Hopping: an east London memoir' - Robert Mcfarlane 'The Old Ways' - Richard Mabey Weeds- Roger Deakin 'Waterlog'- ;Anne Stevenson 'Himalayan Balsam' – Peter Linebaugh – 'The Magna Carta manifesto: Liberty and Commons for all'

Images : Monty Python Silly Olympics – Montage of scenes from Twenty Twelve sit com – East London Sporting Highlights - Humphrey Jennings 'English Harvest' - Jason Orton Photographs of Thames gateway

Playlist : - Stephen Sondheim 'Send in the Clowns' - Small Faces Itchicoo Park- John Martyn Primrose Hill - Blur For Tomorrow - The Kinks Waterloo Sunset - Mendelsohn 'Oh for the wings of a dove' - I'm forever Blowing Bubbles -Bill Bragg Jerusalem - Mike Horovitz Song of Experience - Jerusalem Mash up : dance music sequence with reggae, folk, rock, bhangra, drumnbass and techno-trance versions - Benjamin Britten : Mid summer Night dream overture; Thomas Ades Caliban's aria - Vaughan Williams Pastoral Symphony/ Lark Ascending - Elgar Cockayne overture – Parry :Jerusalem

Indicative Credits

Director Julien Temple; Script Advisors: Patrick Wright, Philip Pullman and Jez Butterworth ; Choreography :Mathew Bourne and Simon McBurney; Music Advisors Billy Bragg, Jonathon Dove; Visual Consultants : Jock Mcfadyen, Peter Kennard

Cast : William Blake : Mike Horovitz;Sylvia Pankhurst : Imelda Staunton; Walter Besant :Michael Gambon ; Dr Barnardo: Timothy Spaul ; Joan Littlewood: Barbara Windsor; George Lansbury: Bob Hoskins

Comedians: : Jack Dee, Billy Connelly, Sacha Barron Cohen, Lenny Henry and Omid Djalili

Performers from the Cirque du Soleil, Complicite Theatre Group, students and staff of London circus and ballet schools. A Volunteer Cast of workers, dancers, jugglers,tumblers, athletes and cyclists drawn from East London schools, sports and youth organisations, community centres and pensioners clubs. Members of the Clarion Cycling Club and Critical Mass.