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Northern Broadsides in partnership with York Theatre Royal

# The Man with Two Gaffers

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A new adaptation of Goldoni's A Servant of Two Masters by **Blake Morrison**

Directed by **Barrie Rutter**

Designed by **Leslie Travers**

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## Education Pack

Northern Broadsides © Autumn 2006

## Introduction

This pack is designed as an aid to Key Stages 3 & 4 English Language, Drama, PHSE and Citizenship. It accompanies the Northern Broadsides' workshops and gives a detailed insight into the 2006 touring production of *The Man With Two Gaffers* directed by Barrie Rutter. The purpose of the workshop is to provide some useful tools for looking at the play. Whilst this workshop will not help directly to answer GCSE English or Drama questions it will hopefully provide ways of making the text and the show more interesting and accessible.

*The Man with Two Gaffers* is a new adaptation of Carlo Goldoni's classic *The Servant of Two Masters*, written especially for Northern Broadsides Theatre Company. Blake Morrison has adapted the classic commedia dell arte play into a moving eighteenth century regional farce. This adaptation is the fourth collaboration between writer Blake Morrison and Northern Broadsides.

## **Sources**

### **Commedia dell arte**

Commedia dell arte roughly translates into "comedy of the artists". It was a popular theatre genre dating from the sixteenth century up to the early nineteenth century.

*"During the sixteenth century in Italy, actors took pre-existing folk forms, improvised masking, music and dance and developed them into a theatrical medium."*

Commedia dell Arte: An Actors Handbook by John Rudlin

There are various speculations about its actual origins. Some suggest that it was inspired from carnival and the artistry and eventually performance of charlatans trying to sell their cures, miracles and prophecies to the crowd. For over two hundred years the art form

dominated the various sovereign states of Italy and toured further a field to France, Germany and Poland. Its characters and scenario continue to infiltrate other mediums such as puppetry (**Punch and Judy**) and the Christmas pantomime. At its height there were troupes based in France and Italy performing for both commoners and aristocracy, indoors and outdoors, both masked and unmasked and improvised and scripted. Its subsequent demise could be attributed to numerous causes: the new wave of realism and naturalism which swept Europe during the nineteenth century, the success of the unmasked scripted work, or even the negative reputation it was getting from the use of obscene jokes and characters. Ultimately it became buried, only faint traces of characters and scenario in the accounts of writers and poets and at the seaside puppet show. It is only in the last fifty years that investigation and study/training has begun to recapture some of commedia's popular artistry.

Exploration of the traits of commedia: the characters, the servants and their masters, the masks, the scenario and the comic business or **lazzi** has given modern practitioners an insight into this exciting historical medium. Now it is used to equip modern artists with some key tools for physical theatre and



comedy.

**French and Italian Comediennes 1670**  
**Anonymous at the Comedie Francaise, Paris**

### Characteristics

The main elements present in commedia dell'arte were the characters and the comic scenario. The characters were derivatives of masters/old men and servants/**zannis**. These characters were continually placed in problematic or farcical situations that were further exasperated by the characters' status, tempo and intention.

The two stock masters or old men were **Pantalone** and **Il Doctore**.

- **Pantalone** was generally known as a rich but miserly Venetian merchant. Commonly a widower, he was usually either attempting to marry his daughter or ward to the highest bidder or was after a young heiress or the female servant. His status as an older man dictated slow progress across the stage. The elongated nose mask mirrored his intentions of sniffing for either money or a piece of skirt
- **Il Doctore** by and large was the resident academic of the company. He was always either a medical or scholarly doctor. He would continually spout incorrect philosophy or Latin whilst drinking or being cuckolded and would boast of his intellect whilst being duped by his servant. He would regularly be at cross-purposes with Pantalone either over money or women. His mask, a half mask covering forehead and nose, exaggerated the characters belief of his own intelligence and innate wisdom.

The two stock servants were version of **Harlequin/Truffaldino** and **Brighella**

- Harlequin/Truffaldino was a servant who frequently managed to complicate matters for himself through his single mindedness. His main concern was his stomach and how to fill it.
- **Brighella** was the clever servant, the trickster, the instructor and the schemer of intrigues and plots. Often playing the innkeeper, he was the servant with the highest status; he played confidant to the Lovers and to the Masters.

The other characters, which added to the scenario, included the lovers who

were more in love with love than each other and Columbina, the female servant the close friend and witty female counterpart of Harlequin and Brighella.

The scenarios were diverse but always exhibited the best and worst traits of the characters. The format of the improvised script was generally comprised of the set up, the complication, the exaggeration of the obstacle and the solution.

#### ACT 1

*Prologue. Traditionally prologues had little to do with the actual entertainment, but were stock introductions by one of the characters, often Pantalone, IL Dottore or Colombina (see pp.131-2). Sometimes they might be given by a minor character who would not appear in the action itself....*

*Exposition of events so far: optional scene played out by the characters as background to the story.*

*First scene in the present – establishing a simple, uncomplicated normality.*

*First complications introduced and leading to a cliff hanger-ending on a reaction of surprise and despair.*

#### ACT II

*Resume of first act, possibly as a musical interlude*

*Continuation of a series of complications, each building on the other, with attempted solutions breeding even greater problems.*

*And all with increasing tempo.*

#### ACT III

*Take up all the complication so far and add more*

*Another resume..*

*Extreme consequences of complications are reached: a solution is imminent.*

*The solution – the revelation and unmasking of any disguised characters.*

*Finale – a joyous celebration, forgiveness all round, possibly after a ritual beating or comeuppance for Il Capitano or Pantalone*

Commedia dell'Arte an Actors Handbook by John Rudlin

**Write a list of characters and the type of actions that occur in two pantomimes. Now compare the list to the characteristics of commedia dell'arte. What are the similarities and the differences?**



## **Carlo Goldoni**

Born in Venice in February 1703 Carlo Goldoni was to become one of Italy's most renowned and gifted dramatists. Often referred to as the Italian Molière or even occasionally the Italian Shakespeare. He wrote over 150 dramatic works. He is also accredited as the Italian reformer or the destroyer of Italian Commedia dell'Arte, by introducing written dialogue, a variety of



**Carlo Goldoni 1883 Dal Zotto Campo San Bartolomeo, Venice**

characters based on real life, and the abolishment of masked characters. However his success and his legacy of eighteenth century Venetian comedies remain extremely popular.

### **Life**

Carlo Goldoni was interested in drama and its delightful players from an early age. His grandfather Gulio Goldoni was an avid supporter of theatre and the pleasurable life style that accompanied it. He played host to the best actors, companies and musicians that Venice had to offer. Goldoni's father Julio Goldoni was more reserved and frugal

than his father and interested in Goldoni establishing a more reliable career. But Goldoni had other interests, aged 12 he completed his first comedy and later when studying in Perugia, aged 15 managed to run away with a theatre troupe. Despite his father's care, Goldoni even managed to get himself expelled from Pavia college aged 19 for the satire he wrote on the local ladies. His father, a doctor, persevered and after a period of shadowing his father, Goldoni decided to enter the legal profession. He graduated to the status of advocate in Venice when he was 25, but he continued to write plays and experience drama. His first professional drama that was offered to a company was his dramatic opera *Amalsunta* in 1732. The piece was met with derision and mockery at the read through. He was informed that though he had followed the rules of classic Greek drama he had neglected the practicalities of the working Italian theatre. Goldoni promptly burnt the script and despite the problems of interstate conflict he continued to work as an advocate and associate with

### *Venetian Theatre*

*Everyone of the 150,000 inhabitants seemed dedicated exclusively to pleasure. Carnival lasted from Christmas to Shrove Tuesday and then reigned again from the first Sunday in October till Advent and for fifteen days at the Ascension...There was sixteen theatres as opposed to two in London and three in Paris.*

*The Servant of Many Masters by Timothy Holme*

players.

In 1736 he married his Genonese Nicoletta and worked as a lawyer in Genoa and then in Pisa. Throughout the next seven years he continued his dramatic interests and contacts in Venice. **Belarius** was his first performed work in 1734 at the San Samuele Theatre. In 1745 he received a commission from the great Harlequin actor **Antonio Sacchi**, who was working with the **Imer Company**, for *A Servant*

with *Two Masters*. This commission and the play's subsequent success were mainly due to Goldoni's ability to write for great actors. Immediately afterwards Sacchi commissioned Goldoni again, this time giving him complete artistic freedom. Goldoni wrote *Harlequin's Child Lost and Found*, the play that would eventually take him to Paris. He remained in Pisa until another actor **Cesare D Arbes**, the **Medebac Company's** Pantalone, commissioned him to return to Venice and be their playwright. The collaboration with the Medebac Company lasted from 1749 to 1752 and included his legendary feat of 16 plays in one season. After transferring to the **San Luca Theatre** he continued to work on his reforms and dramas until 1762 when he came into opposition with playwright **Carlo Gozzi**. Gozzi was a playwright of the established Italian tradition and a member of the aristocracy. He among others led a number of literary attacks against Goldoni. In 1762 Goldoni succumbed to the pressure of these writers and accepted a two-year commission from Paris. He never returned to Venice but worked with royalty and received a royal pension until six months before his death in February 1793.

In commemoration of his life in Paris the Comedie Francaise staged his most successful French play *The Beneficiate Bear* and in Venice his statue was erected near St Mark's Square in 1883.

### **Goldoni's Reforms**

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Goldoni's reforms were based on his desire to create realism and get away from the cheap tricks and bawdiness to which many theatre companies had resorted. His plays were continually testing the boundaries of commedia dell'arte through his portrayal of characters, their masks and their language. These reforms though varied in their success and applications directly contributed to his voluntary exile from Venice.

During his lifetime, Goldoni was constantly meeting and becoming acquainted with diverse and interesting characters. His *Memoirs* are a running commentary of the names and faces that he encountered in his native Venice and abroad in Milan, Pisa, Rome and Florence to list but a few. It was through these observations and his observations of actors, which allowed him to write from real life. These diverse characters from all edges of society were also part of Goldoni's artistry. He was able to portray the lowlier members of society favourably and realistically, which not only were delightfully received but also challenged certain aspects of the social hierarchy.

These studies of characters and in particular actors also led Goldoni to his attitude to masks. Masks, he believed, acted as a barrier for actors and that the real drama existed on their actual faces. He felt that actors could display more with their faces than the stock features

*“Basically Goldoni was concerned with bringing character, social criticism, and moral purpose to the stage, and for the achievement of this objective he required a realistic framework. By character, he meant individual, specialised character distinct from the wider, generalised character familiar to Commedia dell’ arte, by social criticism, he meant the presentation of scenes of ordinary life such as were being cultivated by sentimental dramatists in France and England; and by moral purpose, he meant the exhibition of plots which should not merely please but should also instruct the audience.”*

The World of Harlequin by Allardyce Nicoll

on their masks.

Goldoni's creation of characters and his abolition of masks caused some criticism among his peers and his audience. But one the major disapprovals was based on his use of language and some of the inaccuracies in his foreign plays. Goldoni, even when writing verse was continually condemned for his use of common language. In response to these allegations he even moved himself to Tuscany for a while to learn Tuscan. His

language, as Baretta one of his critics proclaimed, "is the most nauseous medley of words and phrases, taken from several Italian dialects, and Tuscanized in the most ridiculous manner, besides being seasoned with abundance of Gallicisms." Goldoni's irreverence to classical or studied Italian though criticised was still popular with audiences who understood and identified with the dialects that they encountered in their everyday life.

This popularity of Goldoni and his prolific range of drama not only allowed him to reform his theatre but also put the cogs into motion for a different type of drama to emerge in Italy. His pursuit of realism led him to the comedy of the characters that he met through his life and to his continued successes on today's stage.

***The Servant of Two Masters / Il servitore di due padroni / Arlechino servitore di due padroni (1745)***

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*The Servant of Two Masters* started life as a commission from the great Harlequin actor Antonio Sacchi. An actor whom Goldoni himself declared was one of the three best actors of the world. Goldoni wrote the scenario first for the Imer Company in Venice. This was followed by the published version in 1749, which included his dialogue, rather than any improvisation. The play is a perfect mix between commedia and Goldoni's reforms. It contains the characters and slapstick of commedia and introduces more individual characters like Beatrice, who dresses as a man not only to continue the business arrangement with Towler but also for her independence. However its initial success would have mainly been due to the talent of Sacchi, who was admired by Goldoni and also by the great Casanova.

### **Blake Morrison**

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Accomplished writer and poet, Blake Morrison, was born in Skipton, Yorkshire.

As well as Professor of Creative and Life Writing at Goldsmiths, London, Blake is a poet, novelist and journalist,

*"In the midst of my labours and occupations, I received a letter from Venice, which threw all my blood and spirits into commotion. It was a letter from Saachi. This comedian had turned to Italy; he knew I was at Pisa; he asked me for a comedy; he even sent me the subject of one, which he left me at freedom to work on as I pleased. What a temptation for me! Saachi was an excellent actor; comedy had been my passion; I felt my old taste, my old fire and enthusiasm reviving within me. The subject proposed was "The Servant of Two Masters"; and I easily saw what might be made of it with such an actor as Saachi. I was therefore devoured with a desire at trying my hand again...I knew not what to do...law suits and clients crowded over me...but my poor Saachi...but the servant with two masters...Well, for this time...but I cannot...yes I can...At length I wrote an answer that I would undertake it."*

### The Memoirs of Carlo Goldoni

best known for two family memoirs and a study of the Bulger case.

He has also translated and adapted plays including three plays, which were all commissioned and performed by Northern Broadsides Theatre Company – *The Cracked Pot* in 1996 (an adaptation of Heinrich von Kleist's *Der Zerbrochene Krug*), Sophocles' *Oedipus* in 2001 and *Antigone* in 2003. *The Man with Two Gaffers* is his fourth collaboration with the company.

Publications include:

*And When Did You Last See Your Father?*

*As If*

*Selected Poems*

*The Justification of Johann Gutenberg*

*Things My Mother Never Told Me*

*Oedipus/Antigone*

### **The Man with Two Gaffers synopsis**

Skipton, 1850s - a celebration is underway at The Black Horse Inn to mark the engagement of Stephen, son of the Reverend Lumb, and Clarice, daughter of Dales farmer Samuel Towler. During the proceedings, the servant Dodge arrives and announces the arrival of his gaffer, Charles Ramsey. This news comes as a surprise to all since Charles is believed to have been killed in a fight with Frank Flowers (the lover of Charles's sister Charlotte) who is now on the run from the police. In truth, Charles was killed, but not by Frank. Charlotte has come disguised as the dead Charles to put the record straight – *so from this point, for Charles read Charlotte.*

Unfortunately Charles had originally been promised Clarice's hand in marriage and Samuel Towler duly cancels the nuptial plans with Stephen. Clarice and Stephen are horrified and unbeknownst to her, Clarice is engaged to a woman! Meanwhile, Beckwith, the innkeeper, recognises Charlotte but promises to keep her identity a secret. Dodge sets eyes on Esme, the housekeeper to the Towler's and falls in love with her.

Later, Dodge is approached by Frank who is seeking a servant. Dodge accepts Frank's offer thus becoming a man with two gaffers, convinced that he can pull off the ruse and thus double his income. Frank and 'Charles' lodge at The Black Horse Inn and both send Dodge to collect mail from the post office. Dodge mixes up the letters, giving Charlotte's letter to Frank who subsequently learns that she is in Skipton in disguise. He sets out in search of her.

Meanwhile, Clarice is in despair as she doesn't want to marry 'Charles'. Charlotte reveals that she is a woman in order to end her suffering and they hug. Towler witnesses this, and believing Clarice has agreed to the wedding, runs to tell the Reverend. Stephen is furious at the wedding plans and wants to fight Towler. The Reverend prevents him saying the wedding has been decided.' Charles 'enters and they fight. He disarms Stephen and threatens to kill him when Clarice enters. 'Charles' lets Stephen go, reminding Clarice of her vow of silence. Clarice tries to assure Stephen of her love, but he doesn't believe her. He leaves seeking revenge.

In the second act, Dodge is seen meddling with the trunks of both gaffers. He inadvertently places a photo of Charles in Frank's trunk. It was one which Frank had given to Charlotte so when he sees it in his trunk, he wants to know where it came from. Dodge spins an ever more complicated web of lies to get himself out of trouble, saying he worked for a gaffer who recently died and whose servant - Bob Easter – gave him the picture. Frank believes this dead man may have been Charlotte in disguise and, distraught, seeks out the non-existent Bob Easter for some answers.

'Charles' finds one of Frank's love letters in her trunk. Dodge spins the same tale about the dead gaffer. When asked if he was called Frank, Dodge says yes. So now both lovers believe each other to be dead. Charlotte confesses she is a woman and exits in despair. Towler then realises that Charles does not exist and Clarice can wed Stephen after all. Stephen is delighted.

Meanwhile, Charlotte and Frank try to commit suicide and meet by chance. They are overjoyed and plan to return to Bradford to clear Frank 's name. But how did all these misunderstandings come about? Dodge convinces both gaffers separately that the responsible party was the fictitious Bob Easter. He then asks for permission to marry Esme.

However, as a result of the misunderstandings, she is promised to the other servant (who doesn't exist). Dodge comes clean and reveals that he has been servant to both Charlotte and Frank.

## **Northern Broadsides**

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### **History**

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Northern Broadsides is one of the country's leading exponents of classic drama – drama where it is the language that conjures the world of the play and enables the audience's imagination to take flight. One of the trademarks of a Northern Broadsides' production, therefore, is the use of minimal sets that create a pure theatrical space where the evocative language of classic drama can come to the fore.

Northern Broadsides trademark performance style is earthy, robust and energetic. The company is known for its vigorous and unpretentious approach to classic drama. Their work is of high quality and enduring appeal, performed with refreshing simplicity and a large dose of theatrical inventiveness.

In every Broadsides production, a cast of actors perform in the 'northern voice' - they speak in their natural voices rather than 'received pronunciation'. The impact on the audience is phenomenal as the directness of the northern voice makes the audience hear the words afresh.

Artistic Director, Barrie Rutter, is renowned for his clarity of interpretation and precision as a director, bringing a freshness and vitality to classic drama that is unparalleled, resulting in highly accessible productions.

Audiences have constantly delighted in the exuberance and honest commitment of the actors which is infectious, generating an extraordinary and

unparalleled rapport between the audience and the performers.

The company's aesthetic, as Rutter explained, was "*Northern voices, doing classical work in non-velvet spaces*". Wherever they performed, this radical new aesthetic excited the critics.

The first production, *Richard III*, took the company to a variety of unusual venues including the Marina Boatshed in Hull, West Yorkshire Transport Museum in Bradford and Middleham Castle, North Yorkshire. Since that first production, Northern Broadsides has continued to tour to unusual spaces across the world, for example - the Rose Garden in Chandigarh, India, a Roman amphitheatre in Austria (where they performed with live bears and lions on stage!), and the Tower of London!

The company's success has brought invitations from theatres and spaces nationwide. Northern Broadsides will perform anywhere from proscenium and in-the-round to castles, churches, cattle markets, train sheds, post-industrial mills and riding stables across the UK.

The company's home base remains in Halifax. Their performance and rehearsal space is a subterranean viaduct beneath the former Crossley's carpet mill. Renamed Dean Clough, this large old Victorian mill is now a thriving arts and enterprise centre owned by Sir Ernest Hall.

When Rutter first encountered the dark arches and rough hewn floors under Dean Clough, the space sparked his imagination. Where everyone saw a dank, dirty basement fit only for car-parking, Rutter saw a theatre. Christened The Viaduct, it has thrilled audiences and critics alike with its post-industrial character and unique atmosphere.



## Style

“Northern Broadsides - a regional company with an international reputation.”

Northern Broadsides' repertoire consists mainly of Shakespeare and classical texts. These plays possess a timeless resonance and their universal explorations of the human condition have currency in any day and age, appealing directly to the soul, the emotions and the imagination.

They have toured the UK and the world with their highly distinctive performance style, including Brazil, the USA, Greece, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Poland, Germany, Austria, India and Denmark. *Barrie Rutter's distinctive approach to theatre is fuelled by his passion for language and his unceasing celebration of the richness and muscularity of the Northern voice.*

Northern Broadsides is a company of Northern actors who perform in their natural voices and have an indisputable command of the language and poetry of classic drama. The result is performance that has a directness and immediacy which is liberating and invigorating, breaking the southern stranglehold on classical performance and making the audience hear the words afresh.

## Most recent Touring History

2006

WARS OF THE ROSES by William Shakespeare

2005

SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL by Richard Brinsley Sheridan, UK Autumn Tour

COMEDY OF ERRORS by William Shakespeare and SWEET WILLIAM, a new commission by Alan Plater. UK Spring Tour.

2004

THE BELLS a new version of Leopold Lewis's play by Deborah McAndrew, UK Autumn tour

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE by William Shakespeare UK Spring tour

2003

ANTIGONE (World Premiere) by Blake Morrison UK Autumn tour

HENRY V by Shakespeare/ A WOMAN KILLED WITH KINDNESS by Thomas Heywood UK Spring tour

2002

MACBETH by William Shakespeare UK Spring Tour

2001

OEDIPUS (world premiere) & THE CRACKED POT by Blake Morrison UK Autumn Tour

THE MERRY WIVES & KING JOHN by William Shakespeare UK and Ireland Spring Tour

2000

ALCESTIS by Ted Hughes World Premiere UK Autumn Tour (Sept – Nov)

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING by William Shakespeare UK Tour and Germany

THE MILLENNIUM STORY: Two Plays from Tony Harrison's *The Mysteries* UK Tour (Jan)

1999

KING LEAR by William Shakespeare UK Autumn Tour

TWELFTH NIGHT by William Shakespeare UK Spring Tour

1998

TRACKERS OF OXYRHYNCHUS by Tony Harrison West Yorkshire Playhouse

SAMSON AGONISTES by John Milton The Viaduct, Halifax

RICHARD III by William Shakespeare UK Spring Tour and Czech Republic

1997

THE PASSION by Tony Harrison the Viaduct, Halifax (Easter)

ROMEO AND JULIET and ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA by William Shakespeare UK Tour, Europe and USA (Feb – Nov)

1996

THE BLOOD OF DRACULA by Chris Bond Oldham and Halifax (Dec)

ROMEO AND JULIET and ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA by William Shakespeare UK Autumn Tour

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM by William Shakespeare UK Tour, The Globe, Germany, Shakespeare's Globe, London and Brazil (June – Sept)

THE CRACKED POT - A Northern Broadsides/West Yorkshire Playhouse co-production of a Yorkshire comedy by Blake Morrison from Kleist's *Der Zerbrochene Krug*. UK Spring Tour

## Setting

The play occurs in 1850 Skipton Yorkshire, 'the Venice of the North' as Arthur Dodge states in the play. The canals, waterways and gondoliers of Venice have been exchanged for the industry, coal and limestone of the Leeds Liverpool Canal. The canal was the longest one in Britain (127miles) and was the main form of transport in the north before the arrival of the railways. The Skipton section of the canal was the first to open in 1773 between Bingley and Bradford. The canal took a total of 46 years to build. It transported limestone, wool, coal, and other raw materials and goods between towns and communities. One reference in the play talks about the **five-rise lock** at Bingley. The five-rise lock is one of the most spectacular features of the canal, completed in 1774 and with a drop of over 18 meters. The play also transpires a hundred years after Goldoni's original setting, which adds the issues of the industrial revolution and the changing attitudes to class, gender, servility and money to the comedy. **The Industrial Revolution** started towards the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century. It had a drastic effect both on rural and urban communities due to arrival of industrial machinery and booms in various industries, mainly the textile industry in the north. The increase of industry and the factories meant that there was more trade passing between cities and a need for the transportation and exchange of raw materials, which led to canals, roads and railway. The growing population, the amplified variety of jobs and the changing attitudes to the value of money had further implications for the class structure within both urban and rural societies. The growth of cities and other industries also heralded changing attitudes to concerns of servants and gender. 'The Servant Problem' and the beginning of Women's Rights were to become a greater concern towards the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

## Design

Designer Leslie Travers has designed the set with the elements of industry clearly in mind.



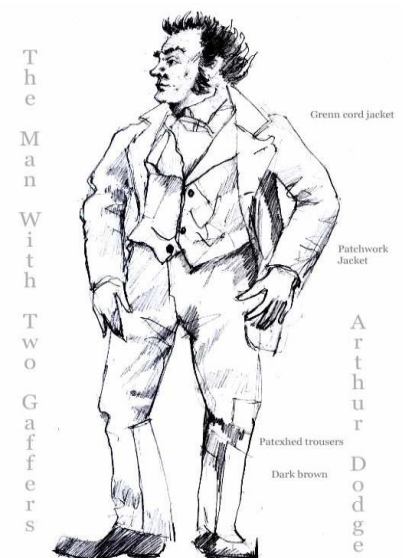
**Leslie Travers model box for the set of *The Man With Two Gaffers***

### Set

The set design incorporates ideas of industry and the inn on the canal side. Two mounds of raw materials of coal and limestone appear on the set creating levels on stage for characters to move across. The moveable inn doors convey both outside and inside the inn. They have also been used to create humour through the choreography of the dinner scene. The specially designed black and white carpets indicate a landscape of industry.

### Costume

The costumes to some extent mirror the set with the emphasis on monochrome and industry.



## Adaptation

Blake Morrison has adapted Goldoni's classic *A Servant of Two Masters* from the many English translations of the text to create a play that highlights the comedy, language and Northern dialect. Blake Morrison a Northern poet, writer and playwright has utilised dialect and rhythm especially for Northern Broadsides and the actor/artistic director Barrie Rutter.

Adaptation takes place on many levels: the translation from Italian to English, the adaptation from English to the Northern dialect and the adjustments made from the page to performance. These stages of adaptation allow the company to work to their strengths. The whole piece has to be adapted rather than edited stage-by-stage to maximise the performance potential. During the rehearsal process the company works to

### Adaptation

*'is like picking up frogspawn that you can't just pick up a single egg'.*  
Barrie Rutter

activate the text, finding the necessary nuances, characterisations, and creating the physical comedy.

## The language, Yorkshire vernacular

Blake Morrison uses a number of resources to adapt the language and rhythm of the play. His experience as a poet, writer and playwright and his upbringing near Skipton gives him an insight to the vernacular and rhythm. He then researches other resources and influences such as W.Carr's *The Dialect of Craven* (1828) and the Yorkshire ballads of Richard Blakeborough. He also pays homage to Goldoni's own use of vernacular in his Venetian plays. He also has an insight into how the company works with language having adapted three other works for Northern Broadsides.

The language and the rhythm is particularly effective in *The Man With Two Gaffers*. The use of rhyme at the

## Prologue Chorus lyrics

*Purple fells, plunging dales and fierce,  
fast becks,  
Craven in't owt like Middlesex  
But Skipton sits like Venice on t'canal  
and t'Aire:*

*You'll not go wrong if you stop there.*

by Blake Morrison

scenes end and the some of the insult words are particularly evocative in creating the comedy and world of the play. Morrison has also written songs for the piece, which are based on regional folk music arranged for the company by actor Simeon Truby.

Barrie Rutter, artistic director and actor, always focuses on the language and its beauty and musicality. The language is the key aspect of storytelling in Northern Broadsides. One of Rutter's directions through the rehearsal process is about enjoying speaking the language and sharing the language with audience. The clarity of the language even in Yorkshire dialect is an essential element of Northern Broadsides work.

## Characters

The adaptation has also developed the characters from commedia types to individuals. The characters are more complex in their desires but still demonstrate the qualities of their commedia dell arte counterparts. The alteration of characters also feeds into the themes of the play and the changing attitudes of the industrial revolution

**Samuel Towler**, played by Dicken Ashworth, is a farmer; a self made man, who is hoping to better himself and his wealth by marrying his daughter to rich mill owner Charles Ramsey. The character is based on the commedia dell arte Pantalone and shares his interest in money and his miserly attitudes to food and paying for it. However he is also an extension of the working farmer.

**Reverend Lumb**, played by Roy North is the parish vicar intent on marrying his son Stephen to Towler's daughter Clarice for a small dowry. Lumb is based on Il Doctore and still demonstrates traits of spouting Latin but instead of proficiency with the law or medicine, Lumb has an aptitude for the Bible and Latin. Morrison thought that a vicar would be more suitable to the Skipton setting and had previously dealt with lawyers in *The Cracked Pot*. The character also demonstrates a level of greed by asking for a dowry for Clarice.

**Arthur Dodge** played by Barrie Rutter is the man with two gaffers from Muker who sees his chance to earn more money for less work. He is modelled on Truffaldino. His desires centre around food, money and winning the hand of Esme.

**Bill Beckwith** played by Simeon Truby is the innkeeper and confidant to Chalotte Ramsey. Beckwith is based on Brighella.

**Clarice Towler** played by Victoria Fleming and **Stephen Lumb** by Matt Connor are the thwarted lovers. They are based on the typical conventions of the commedia dell arte lovers: more in love with love than each other.

**Esme Dean** played by Nicola Sanderson is the housekeeper to the Towlers and falls in love with Arthur Dodge. Esme is based on Columbina who is wiser in the ways of the world than her master counterparts.



**Charlotte Ramsey** played by Kate Ambler is the sister dressed as her brother. And **Frank Flowers** played by

Simon Holland Roberts are another example of the thwarted lovers. Morrison has added to the narrative of the friction between Frank and Charles by introducing the tension between the rail industry and the canal industry.

### Themes

The play covers a number of themes which adds to the comedy and its relevance to a modern audience

### Servility and Class

The impetus of the play the servant with two masters plays on the classic comedy of commedia dell arte that was made up of servants and masters. Morrison extends the comedy and adds the implications of the nineteenth century to add issues of the changing era. The shifting attitudes to position and service of the period demonstrate some of the key changes in history and society. Arthur Dodge's impertinence of serving two masters and his masters attitude to him illustrates one of the issues of the late nineteenth century The Servant Problem.

*"From about 1880s onwards the most obsessive topic of conversation among English women of the middle and lower middles classes was the Servant Problem. By this was meant, primarily, the growing shortage of good servants, but the phrase was a useful cover-all for restlessness, intractability and all-round cursedness of the race below stairs...Aware that they were regarded as a Problem, servants went out of their way to be one, rather like the delinquent young ones of our own times."*

### What the Butler Saw by E.S Turner

The Servant Problem was the changing situations and expectations of servants and their masters. Due to the increase of transport and trade opportunities meant that good servants had better opportunities to emigrate or to change business rather than a life at the hands of a cruel master. In other industries unions and workers rights were starting to emerge but not in the service

industry, which led to the shortage of good servants.

There are also parallels with modern society, where many people for various reasons multi task and work for many superiors.

***Do you think that the comedy would translate to a modern setting? What would the pros and cons be?***



The presence of the self made men Sam Towler and Charles Ramsey also demonstrate the issues of money versus class. It is an issue that Goldoni started looking at in his plays such as *Mirandolina* with characters such as the Marquis and the Count. Money and class were also issues emerging in the industrial revolution and with the growth of the British Empire. Today there are even more issues with class and money especially in modern consumerist society.

### **Gender and Disguise**

Goldoni was well known to be an admirer and advocate for actresses. It is not surprising that a number of his plays main characters were feisty young women who challenged the social conventions of the period. In *A Servant of Two Masters* and *The Man With Two Gaffers*, Goldoni and Morrison utilise two feisty female characters to highlight the different expectations of gender and to challenge the social conventions. Charlotte disguises herself as her brother so that she has the freedom “to beat men at their own game” and so she can find Frank, even if it does cause a lot of confusion. The use of the disguise is an attempt to have the freedom to make her own decisions. Esme, the Towlers’ housekeeper, approaches the gender issue by simply stating the facts of inequality of the attitudes and expectations of women.

The use of disguise is a classic theatre convention, which has passed from Greek theatre up to the present day.

One of the best-known playwrights to use the device is William Shakespeare. During Goldoni’s life there was added confusion and humour in some acting troupes and regions of Italy that forbade female actresses, so there were boys playing women playing men.

In *The Man With Two Gaffers* Blake Morrison’s, uses disguise to add another layer to the comedy by confusion of sexuality. This question of sexuality has been around for a number of years but it is only in the last fifty years that the issues have been uncensored and generally accepted.

## **Glossary of Yorkshirism**

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**Addlings** – earnings, wages  
**Axed** - asked  
**Bassack mi ears** – to batter, clatter, thrash soundly my ears  
**Baufy** – strong  
**Belder** – to bellow, roar  
**Bevvying** - drinking  
**Brazen flappysket** – brazen flirtatious girl  
**Buer** – whore, prostitute  
**Caufhead** -fool  
**Champing** – like chomping  
**Clothead** – stupid person  
**Cobby** – cheerful, lively  
**Cow-jockey** – undignified rider  
**Fettled** – fixed, repaired, done  
**Flummoxed** – bewildered, confused  
**Fussy lugs** – low fellow  
**Gaffer** – Boss, Master  
**Gradeley** – excellent (rather more common in Lancashire dialect)  
**Hawker** – a street trader  
**Hewing** –type of wood chopping  
**Jabbers** – to talk quickly or rapidly  
**Kittle in** - kitten  
**Knackered** – worn out, in a poor state  
**lanty** – person who is always late  
**Larking** – Playing games, not working  
**Mardy** - spoilt (child); easily upset, moody, sulking  
**Maunder** - grumble  
**Mell-feast** – harvest supper probably derived from meal in the sense of the flour itself, or the mell or mallet used to pound the corn)  
**Mewling** – crying, whimpering  
**Muck you** – dirt; or manure  
**Natty** – smart and dapper  
**Nivver** - never  
**Okkard** - awkward  
**Owt** - nothing  
**Parkin** – gingerbread made with oatmeal and treacle  
**Pawky** – shrewd, cunning ; precocious, particular, fussy  
**Purse-snitcher** - thief  
**Ragabash** – loose fellow  
**Reet** – alright  
**Roupy** - Hoarse  
**Sackless** - ineffectual, lacking in energy or effort, simple-minded  
**Skelping** - a beating, thrashing  
**Skint** – Broke, no money  
**Sumpy moor bog** – Swampy moor bog

**T'shippon** – the cowshed

**Tod** - alone

**Trail-tripes** - whore

**Tup** – male sheep; huge iron weight used by quarrymen to break up stone

**Wag** – to play truant

**Wigging** - battering

**Yoursen** – yourself

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