

TIM LUSCOMBE

Writer/Director/Actor/Teacher

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[Reviews for Tim's directing work is below]

WRITER

SELECTED REVIEWS and critical reactions

A Map of the Region

I have read A Map of the Region as have several of my associates. It is a real triumph – meaty and relevant political ideas embedded in a fast-paced, complex story; the different time periods hold strong resonance and connotations and the characters are full-blooded. It's a big and ambitious project and I can really imagine it working but for me. It's a real undertaking but well worth the proper investment and commitment.

(Nina Steiger, Soho Theatre, February 2010)

I found it gripping, unpredictable and intriguing and is obviously something that has been pursued with a real passion and conviction. The structure seemed sound, the language is terrific, the characters are well rounded, but most of all I admire its theatricality. It could be a very direct, very absorbing and demanding piece for its audience.

(Max Roberts, Live Theatre Newcastle, November 09)

A Map of the Region, which I swallowed at a sitting and was really held by - is a really powerful piece - great plot and atmosphere and characters. I love the

first Misha scene in the flat - excruciating! You can see how well it would work...

(Nona Shepherd, November 09)

Pig

It's incredibly inventive, formally and thematically, and holds its gaze with unusual tenacity and confidence. I think it's a fierce, brave piece. The complex morality and dependencies in the relationships between Pig, Knife and Larry, in particular, are very interesting, as is the refusal to specify the motivations of the characters. There are some vivid and well-observed moments in the play, and its study of the pursuit of identity in a world of complicated exchange between reality and fantasy is demanding and original.

(Dominic Cooke, Royal Court Theatre)

It is extremely skilful and intense – and ventures into territory no one else, that I know anyway, is even thinking about in the theatre. On all those accounts, it's admirable. And it builds powerfully. A tough read but a riveting one.

Obsession, of course, is what theatre is all about – and what did the managements make of *Women Beware Women* when that first turned up?

(David Lan, Young Vic Theatre)

I like the way this new play is conceived – the three parallel storylines and three actors playing ten characters – which gives the play a real sense of scope and range. I also really like the idea of the 'bug chasing'. I found it very moving. There's no doubt of the play's merits.

(Roxana Silbert, Paines Plough)

It's incredibly accomplished; slick, witty, sophisticated and waspishly astute in its observations and depictions of its characters and their tribulations.

I really like the way you write, and though this play presents aspects of life that are frequently venal, unpleasant, disturbing and downright tragic, you create a theatrical form and flow that eases the passage through the narrative.

(Nina Steiger, Soho Theatre)

The more I read it the more substantial it becomes. I know nothing about drugs, and that didn't seem to be a barrier between me and the characters. I know about love and marriage, that was my way in. What got me was them all revolving around the true Romantic idea of love unto death. Which is an idea that never goes away as far as I'm concerned. The dialogue crackles where it should and also sags where it should, which I like. Larry, Harry and Barry are great, and great counterpoints to the "boys". They all seem like really good parts, really playable. It would need really clever and committed actors - really playful ones, too, because it's not dour but it could easily become so in the wrong hands. It needs huge relish in the playing. I hope someone will see how classy it is.

(Neil Bartlett)

It's terrifically deft and very courageous with form. The pace is cracking and the dialogue sharp.

(Josie Rourke, Bush Theatre)

I think this play is extraordinary. While it reads like a purging - like an artist dealing with ideas - it is not musing or exploring. It has perspective. It's like a Burning. The chaos is the soul of it - and could only have been written by someone who knows their medium and form intimately and instinctively. I think it's incredibly exciting. It's very sophisticated. And I think you're really good at making the action immediate. It's accomplished and complex and intelligent and courageous. I think it is magnificent. It is a vertiginous example of what you are capable of. It has real elegance and economy. There are so many really clever and then un-hammered touches – so sophisticated. I think it would be amazing to direct. And a gift for the actor. I think it is an incredible piece of literature.

(Federay Holmes)

It's really exciting. It doesn't patronize and instead challenges the audience, or in my case the reader, to do some thinking and feeling for themselves.

(Ben Lambert)

I loved the sub-Pirandellian vortex and found the blending of life/art/fantasy/reality fascinating. The depiction of the hopelessness of the writing process hits one just where it should. The disintegration of Joe/Stevie's relationship and Harry's character line are written so strongly. Very poignant stuff. It is almost impossible to believe that such a world exists. What was very clear to me is that the piece is written with a very confident, daring voice and it reaches for an uber-dark, almost uncomfortable-to-watch territory.

(Michael Gieleta)

The Schuman Plan

(The Hampstead Theatre, 2006)

Nothing that Luscombe has produced before quite prepares us for his latest play, *The Schuman Plan*, which is premiered now in Anthony Clark's absorbing production. Though it's often sharply funny, there's nothing frivolous about this piece. Spanning 70 years, from the Thirties to the present day, the play is an intelligent and intricate attempt to explore the contradictions and shifts in our response to the European Ideal. The thread that holds it together is the career of an invented character, Bill Bretherton (Robert Hands), the son of a Suffolk fisherman who becomes a protégé of Captain Edward Heath (an excellent Simon Robson) while serving under him during the war. In one of the best scenes, which shows Heath fielding a phone call from the Norwegian prime minister while dressing to conduct a concert, it becomes clear that Bill's employer is prepared secretly to surrender the rights of English fishermen rather than falter at the final hurdle of taking

the country into Europe. The play oscillates between episodes that chart Bill's disenchantment (there's a very funny sequence on a Sicilian farm in which he's forced at gunpoint to accede to gross CAP corruption) and moving scenes among the fishermen, destitute because of EU directives, in Suffolk in 1992. It's the final irony that Bill, the local boy and visionary, returns home as the jobsworth MAFF official detailed to supervise the destruction of the boats.

(Paul Taylor, the Independent, 09.02.06)

[The Schuman Plan] offers a detailed, intricate look at shifting attitudes to the European dream. It is invigorating to hear a public stage being used to debate a crucial issue. Fascinating stuff. You can't accuse Luscombe of failing to grapple with big issues.

(Michael Billington, The Guardian, 07.02.06)

Ambition is obviously Tim Luscombe's middle name. It is exhilarating to see Hampstead on such aspirational form. The Schuman Plan raises the crucial question: is it possible to create a non-didactic political play if the politics do not directly involve life or death.

(Rachel Halliburton, Time Out, 15.02.06)

A courageous piece.

(Sam Marlowe, The Times, 08.02.06)

Ambitious, clever, interesting, even fun.

(Alastair Macaulay, The Financial Times, 09.02.06)

One of the most ambitious new plays I've seen in years.

(John Peter, Sunday Times, 12.02.06)

Northanger Abbey

An adaptation

(Theatre Royal York 2004, Salisbury Playhouse 2008 + tour, Theatre by the Lake Keswick 2010)

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a theatre in want of audiences will eventually find another Jane Austen novel to exploit. Full credit, therefore, to adaptor and director Tim Luscombe for avoiding the more obvious titles and staging a slighter, earlier work that transfers more felicitously to the stage. Northanger Abbey is more broadly satirical and less finely nuanced than Austen's acknowledged masterpieces, yet these are the qualities that translate best for dramatic treatment. Luscombe's giddy, headlong production takes its tone from the heroine's impatience. Awkward debutante Catherine Morland always has her nose in a book - the more ravishingly horrid the better - but only "as long as they are all action and no tedious reflection".

Conveniently for the dramatist, the book neatly divides into two halves - the first describes Catherine's social round in Bath where she meets the charming

Tilneys; the second involves her stay as their house guest at Northanger Abbey...it's at Northanger, where Catherine's bookish imagination takes a morbid turn, that the real action and hilarity lies. Susan Bovell as guarrulous chaperone Mrs Allen, is a picture of disappointment when she declares that her tailor has not called: "I did so wish him to have a look at my old muff and tippet."

(The Guardian)

Tim Luscombe's adaptation of Northanger Abbey on now at Salisbury Playhouse is an absolute delight: witty, fast moving and stylish. The masterstroke of Tim Luscombe is actually interweaving the Gothic tale of Udolpho into the storyline with actors taking on their fictional characters. So Catherine, on first seeing Henry, sees the dashing Valancourt. Of course, love must follow.

(Salisbury Journal)

The dramatization of parts of The Mysteries of Udolpho to show the heroine's thoughts and fears is a brilliant device that brings the story to vibrant and compelling life. The dazzling timing and clever cutting not only brings Austen's characters leaping off the page, but endears them to a modern audience. Don't miss it!

(Blackmore Vale Magazine)

***To read some of Tim's plays please go to his home page
www.timluscombe.com and click on playtexts***

DIRECTOR

SELECTED REVIEWS

[REVIEWS APPEAR CHRONOLOGICALLY. MORE RECENT WORK CAN BE FOUND TOWARDS THE END OF THIS DOCUMENT]

Artist Descending A Staircase – Tom Stoppard, WORLD PREMIERE, Duke of Yorks Theatre London and Helen Hayes Theatre New York 1989 – 90

Tim Luscombe's faultless production
(Independent)

Mr Luscombe is becoming the West End Wunderkind
(Daily Mail)

When She Danced – Martin Sherman, Kings Head London and Playwrights Horizons Theatre New York 1988 – 90

The perfection of Tim Luscombe's direction, which strikes me as the nicest gift a playwright's gotten in New York for years...
(Village Voice)

Luscombe is a major talent with a wonderful feel for atmosphere
(N.Y. Post)

Tim Luscombe, a young British director, who made his Broadway debut earlier this season, handles the shift in action from tragedy to melodrama to farce with ease
(TV Review, N.Y.)

Warrior – Shirley Gee, WORLD PREMIERE, Chichester 1989

Tim Luscombe's brilliant production...
(Observer)

Jeffrey – Paul Rudnick, EUROPEAN PREMIERE, London 1995

Tim Luscombe's European Premiere is even better than the New York original
(Newsnight)

Salvation – Joe Pintauro, EUROPEAN PREMIERE, London 1995

It's this potent sense of ensemble performance in Tim Luscombe's impeccably detailed production that makes an irresistible hymn to human compassion work splendidly
(Evening Standard)

Tim Luscombe's direction deserves the highest praise
(Financial Times)

The Browning Version and Harlequinade – Terrence Rattigan, West End 1988

Tim Luscombe's immaculate production
(Telegraph)

Masterly
(Times)

Easy Virtue – Noel Coward, Garrick Theatre, West End 1988

The director, Tim Luscombe, has achieved miracles
(Sunday Telegraph)

A perfectly cast production
(City Limits)

Meticulous production by Tim Luscombe – that rare creature, a young director of impressive accomplishment and flair
(Telegraph)

Under the skilful direction of our new theatrical wunderkind Tim Luscombe...
(Sunday Telegraph)

Astonishing
(Country Life)

The Power And The Glory – Graham Green and Dennis Cannon, Chichester 1990

Tim Luscombe's revival is a rich and remarkable triumph
(Int Herald Tribune)

Superbly staged
(Observer)

Tim Luscombe's superb production
(Daily Telegraph)

Private Lives – Noel Coward, Starring Joan Collins, Aldwych Theatre, West End 1990

Stylishly directed by the remarkable Tim Luscombe (Daily Mail)

Mr Luscombe's production, starring Joan Collins, brings out the emotional volatility under the repartee (Guardian)

The Merchant of Venice – Shakespeare, West End and World Tour 1990 – 1

Masterful production
(Times)

Mesmerising production
(Guardian)

Point Valaine – Noel Coward, Chichester 1992

Tim Luscombe's direction has an expert control
(Sunday Times)

Tim Luscombe's production is a theatrical bolt from the blue...with its romantic atmospheres...always controlled
(Guardian)

Relative Values – Noel Coward, Chichester and West End 1993

The direction is perfect
(Today)

Tim Luscombe directs with the style and attention to detail we have come to expect from him
(Telegraph)

Tim Luscombe's production is impeccably stylish
(Sunday Times)

The era is precisely evoked in Tim Luscombe's sparkingly played production
(Daily Mail)

What The Butler Saw – Joe Orton, Northampton 2001

Joe Orton's crazy farce is revived by Tim Luscombe, who is great at this kind of thing
(Guardian)

The Rivals – Sheridan, Salisbury 2001

This production neither plays it too safe nor seeks the extremes of the avant-garde; the kind one hopes for from a theatre such as the Salisbury

Playhouse...It shows why Britain needs provincial theatres producing their own plays, offering a middle way between the high art of London's creative powerhouses and the vanilla mediocrity of most commercial productions. As so many provincial theatres are becoming merely waystops for low-calorie rehashes of West End blockbusters, it is good to know there are some beacons out there for us non-metropolitans.

(The Independent 15/09/01)

A Perfect Ganesh – Terrence McNally, Palace Theatre, Watford, 2002

The crowd sat wrapt as Tim Luscombe's vigorous production unfolded... Director Luscombe steers the action so precisely that it never descends into melodrama, and each woman's pain is explored with delicacy and great depth of emotion.

(Phil Chapman, What's On)

Tim Luscombe's delightful production...

(Carol Woddis, Evening Standard)

The European premiere in Leeds provoked a barrage of hostile reviews for its mawkish sentimentality and the irritating mask-wearing Ganesha. Prospects for a London production seemed unlikely. But director Tim Luscombe has discovered deep layers of refreshing irony under the marzipan.

(John Thaxter, The Stage)

Northanger Abbey, Theatre Royal York 2004, Salisbury Playhouse + tour 2008, Theatre by the lake Keswick 2010

Full credit to adaptor and director Tim Luscombe. His giddy, headlong production takes its tone from the heroine's impatience.

(The Guardian)

Catherine's 'fancy has trespassed', declares Henry Tilney. And indeed it has, with far too much Udolpho. But what a delight Tim Luscombe's slick production is...

(Salisbury Journal)

Tim Luscombe, who directs his own adaptation of Jane Austen's novel Northanger Abbey, at Salisbury Playhouse, has risen to the challenge of staging the play with only eight actors. It is all immensely entertaining.

(West Wiltshire Gazette)

The élan with which director Tim Luscombe and his lively company galvanise this play...

(British Theatre Guide)

The Rat Trap – Coward, Finborough Theatre London, 2006

Time Out Critics' Choice
**** Four Stars, Time Out

For sheer energy, engrossing performances and entertainment value the production knocks spots off almost every other straight play in London at the moment

(John Thaxter, British Theatre Guide)

It's certainly worth catching Tim Luscombe's excellent production. Staged in the round, the actors barely inches from some of the audience, it proves an intense experience

(Alastair Smith, The Stage)

Tim Luscombe's intense production makes ideal use of the Finborough's tiny round space

(Caroline McGinn, Time Out)

The rich entertainment provided by Tim Luscombe's production...

(Michael Billington, The Guardian)

Played in the round on the tightest of spaces, Luscombe and his cast vividly re-create an unjustly forgotten drama... Tim Luscombe's revival makes for a most rewarding evening

(Jeremy Kingston, The Times)

Tim Luscombe's fluid direction, which carefully balances stylish comedy of manners with truthful emotional psychology, [makes for a] a fascinating revival...very interesting and well worth seeing.

(C J Sheridan, Rogues and Vagabonds)

Intimate Exchanges by Ayckbourn, Stephen Joseph Theatre Scarborough and 59E59 Theatre, New York 2008

(Co-directed with Alan Ayckbourn. Tim directed 6 of the 8 plays within the Intimate Exchanges series. Alan Ayckbourn directed the other 2)

Such a formidable stage production is seldom attempted and not to be missed. Tim Luscombe and Mr Ayckbourn, who co-directed, have made unforgettable theatre

(The Sun, New York)

A spiffy production by Mr Ayckbourn and Mr Luscombe

(Charles Isherwood, New York Times)

You laugh yourself silly
(Terry Teachout, The Wall Street Journal)

Smart and hilarious
(Joe Dziemianowicz, Daily News)

The laughing simply refuses to die down
(Matthew Windman, AM New York)

Directors Tim Luscombe and Alan Ayckbourn guide the production with a sure-handed sense of the play's quicksilver shifts in tone...The directors allow the bittersweet writing to sparkle with humour even as it stings with melancholy
(Andy Propst, Backstage)

Mr Ayckbourn and Mr Luscombe have done a wonderful job in transforming the small stage into one simple but perfect setting to suit the many locations
(Curtain Up)

****4 star review in the Guardian

A Chorus of Disapproval by Ayckbourn, The Mill at Sonning 2007

In the capable hands of Director Tim Luscombe, Alan Ayckbourn's prose is gloriously brought to life
(Expresso Newsdesk)

Sit back and enjoy!
(Wokingham Times)

Spirited revival
(Christopher Gray, Oxford Times)

This production makes a powerful case for the value of theatre – an absorbing evening of entertainment. A fine piece of work. Excellent direction by Tim Luscombe, who makes full use of the theatre
(Sheila Tracey, The Stage)

From a letter by the Lord of the Rings producer Kevin Wallace, April 2002

Tim has an insight and wit that he brings to his work that disarms the cynic through very specific direction that has a strong sense of period, whilst being rooted in truth of character, situation and intention. His direction is light. He has a great sense of comedy. He is classy, witty, a very accomplished playwright and a charismatic leader.

He is one of the most organised directors I have ever worked with. His return to the industry is good for us all, and yet he is still a young man. The difference now is that he is a young man who has already been "around the block" and comes fresh from his "time out" but profoundly experienced - as his resume testifies.