

Practitioner Pack

1: Holly Race Roughan – Artistic Director of Headlong

Holly Race Roughan is a British theatre director known for her innovative, politically charged, and socially conscious productions. She often works with themes related to class, power, and human connection, blending naturalistic performance with more abstract and sometimes surreal elements. Here's a breakdown of her directing style with examples:

1. Politically Engaged Theatre

Roughan's work often delves into social and political issues, engaging with contemporary debates and exploring power structures. She has an eye for projects that resonate with the current socio-political climate, frequently choosing material that reflects or critiques society.

- Example: *People, Places and Things* (National Theatre, UK Tour, 2022)

In this play about addiction and recovery, Roughan's direction emphasized the struggle with identity and the societal pressures that fuel addiction. She used fragmented narratives and disorienting stage effects to reflect the protagonist's fractured sense of self, showing her focus on social realism while incorporating abstract theatrical techniques.

2. Collaborative and Ensemble Work

Holly Race Roughan's productions often showcase strong ensemble work. She fosters a collaborative atmosphere in rehearsals, allowing actors to explore and contribute to the development of their characters. This results in organic performances and a shared sense of storytelling.

- Example: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Shakespeare's Globe, 2019)

Roughan's version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was playful, physically dynamic, and driven by the collective energy of the ensemble cast. She encouraged a high level of physicality and interaction, making the performance more inclusive and immediate for the audience.

3. Blurring the Line Between Performer and Audience

Roughan often directs productions that break the fourth wall or involve some degree of audience interaction. She believes in creating an active viewing experience, making the audience part of the conversation.

- Example: *The Merchant of Venice* (Shakespeare's Globe, 2021)

Her direction in this play drew attention to contemporary issues of racism and prejudice by implicating the audience, highlighting the play's relevance to modern debates about anti-Semitism and xenophobia. The production pushed the boundaries of traditional audience-passive experiences, making them confront the moral implications of their presence and silence.

4. Mixing Realism with Surrealism

While grounded in realism, Roughan's productions often incorporate surreal or non-linear elements to enhance emotional or psychological depth. She uses abstract set designs and innovative lighting or soundscapes to create layered, immersive worlds.

- Example: *The Glass Menagerie* (Manchester Royal Exchange, 2020)

In this production, Roughan used dream-like staging and minimalist design to evoke the fragility of the characters' world. By stripping back the traditional elements of Tennessee Williams' play, she heightened the emotional intensity and sense of yearning in the story.

5. Empathy-Driven Character Focus

Roughan's directorial approach often prioritizes deep, empathetic character studies. She delves into the psychological complexity of her characters, ensuring that their vulnerabilities and contradictions are front and center.

- Example: *The House of Shades* (Almeida Theatre, 2022)

This play, written by Beth Steel, spans multiple decades and generations of a working-class family. Roughan's direction brought out the raw emotional weight of the story, allowing the characters' flaws and resilience to shine, reflecting her ability to draw out nuanced, emotionally charged performances from her actors.

6. Fluidity and Modern Adaptations of Classics

Holly Race Roughan is adept at reinterpreting classic texts for contemporary audiences. She often makes bold stylistic choices in terms of setting, gender, and casting to reflect modern sensibilities while retaining the essence of the original material.

- Example: *Othello* (Shakespeare's Globe, 2021)

Her production of *Othello* offered a fresh take on the Shakespearean tragedy, with a particular focus on race and gender dynamics. The casting and direction sought to critique the systemic issues still present in contemporary society, offering a new perspective on Iago's manipulation and Othello's downfall.

7. Visual Symbolism and Staging

Roughan uses staging as an integral tool for storytelling, with minimalistic or symbolic set pieces that enhance the thematic core of the production. Her productions often have striking visuals that symbolize deeper emotional or thematic content, rather than relying on elaborate sets.

- Example: *Hamlet* (Young Vic, 2022)

In *Hamlet*, Roughan's staging choices highlighted Hamlet's psychological turmoil, with the use of cold, stark lighting and a sparse, claustrophobic set reflecting the character's internal struggles. The emphasis on mood and tone rather than a detailed set allowed the actors' performances to take center stage.

Overall, Holly Race Roughan's work is marked by her commitment to making socially relevant, thought-provoking theatre. She skillfully merges realism with abstract elements and places a strong emphasis on character and ensemble work.

2: Josie Rourke – Freelance Theatre Director

Josie Rourke is a British theatre director known for her skill in balancing classical and contemporary works, bringing fresh insights to well-established texts while making them accessible to modern audiences. Her directorial style blends a deep respect for the text with a flair for innovative staging and emotional depth. She has a talent for drawing out complex performances from her actors and exploring gender, power dynamics, and social issues in her productions. Below is a breakdown of her style with examples from her key productions:

1. Respect for Classical Texts with a Contemporary Sensibility

Rourke is known for her ability to breathe new life into classical plays while staying true to the original text. She doesn't drastically modernize language or structure, but her contemporary staging and subtle thematic shifts make these works resonate with today's audiences. Her approach to classics is thoughtful, maintaining their integrity while reimagining them in inventive ways.

- Example: *Coriolanus* (Donmar Warehouse, 2013)

In this acclaimed production of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, starring Tom Hiddleston, Rourke kept the original language intact but set the play in a minimalist, modernist environment. The stripped-back set and use of modern costumes and props created a sense of immediacy, making the political and personal conflicts in the play feel highly relevant. Rourke emphasized the brutal nature of power and war, making the play's themes accessible to a contemporary audience while honoring Shakespeare's text.

- Example: *Saint Joan* (Donmar Warehouse, 2016)

Rourke's production of George Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan* recontextualized the play's exploration of politics and religion in the context of modern corporate and media power structures. Gemma Arterton played Joan in a modern world of boardrooms and televised debates, bringing a fresh take on the themes of leadership, faith, and gender. Rourke's decision to place Joan in a contemporary setting made the play's questions about personal conviction and institutional power feel timely and relevant.

2. Emphasis on Gender and Power Dynamics

Many of Rourke's productions explore issues of gender and power, often focusing on the struggles of women in male-dominated environments. Her direction frequently highlights the gender politics inherent in both classical and modern texts, giving a voice to characters who might otherwise be marginalized or overlooked.

- Example: *The Vote* (Donmar Warehouse, 2015)

In this innovative live-broadcast play set in a polling station on election night, Rourke explored the mechanics of democracy and the role of women in political life. The production aired live on UK television during the final hour of polling in the 2015 General Election, blurring the lines between theatre and real-world political events. The play's focus on the political process, combined with Rourke's sensitive direction, highlighted the importance of every individual voice in a democracy, with particular emphasis on women's participation in public life.

- Example: *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (Donmar Warehouse, 2015)

In her production of Christopher Hampton's adaptation of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, Rourke delved into the power struggles between men and women in the 18th century French aristocracy. The play's themes of manipulation, seduction, and revenge were sharpened by Rourke's attention to the sexual politics at play, and she drew out the nuances of the characters' complex relationships,

particularly emphasizing the way in which women were both empowered and constrained by the social mores of the time.

3. Strong, Nuanced Performances

Rourke is known for eliciting powerful, nuanced performances from her actors, particularly in her work with high-profile stars. She creates an environment where actors can fully explore the emotional depths of their characters, often leading to highly praised performances that bring new dimensions to familiar roles.

- Example: *Coriolanus* (Donmar Warehouse, 2013)

Tom Hiddleston's portrayal of Coriolanus was a tour-de-force, blending physicality with vulnerability, a combination that Rourke encouraged in her direction. The production was praised for its emotional intensity, with Hiddleston's performance capturing both the heroic and flawed aspects of the character. Rourke's guidance helped him deliver a complex and layered portrayal, transforming Coriolanus from a rigid military leader into a tragic, human figure.

- Example: *The Recruiting Officer* (Donmar Warehouse, 2012)

In her production of George Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer*, Rourke worked with a talented ensemble cast, including Mackenzie Crook and Mark Gatiss, drawing out the comedic and emotional elements of the characters. Rourke's direction emphasized the human and emotional stakes beneath the farcical surface of the play, allowing the actors to fully inhabit their roles while also making the period comedy feel relevant and fresh.

4. Innovative Use of Space and Audience Engagement

Rourke often finds inventive ways to use the physical space of the theatre, creating a more immersive experience for her audiences. Whether through minimalist sets or audience interaction, she engages viewers in the action of the play and makes them an integral part of the storytelling.

- Example: *The Vote* (Donmar Warehouse, 2015)

This production was a groundbreaking experiment in theatre and television, as it was broadcast live from the Donmar Warehouse on the night of the UK General Election. Rourke transformed the theatre into a polling station and staged the play in real-time, creating a unique theatrical experience that mirrored the real-world events happening simultaneously. This innovative use of space and time heightened the audience's engagement with the play and its themes.

- Example: *Measure for Measure* (Donmar Warehouse, 2018)

In her production of *Measure for Measure*, starring Hayley Atwell and Jack Lowden, Rourke used innovative staging to explore the play's themes of justice, morality, and power. She alternated the roles of Isabella and Angelo midway through the production, allowing the actors to swap perspectives on the abuse of power. This unconventional choice engaged the audience in a fresh way, making them reconsider the power dynamics and moral dilemmas at the heart of the play.

5. Bold and Accessible Adaptations

While Rourke often directs classical works, she's known for making them accessible to modern audiences without losing their complexity. Her productions are intellectually engaging yet easy to follow, often drawing out contemporary parallels without forcing them.

- Example: *City of Angels* (Donmar Warehouse, 2014)

This revival of the 1990s musical *City of Angels* showcased Rourke's ability to balance style and substance. The production's clever use of dual narratives—blending a writer's real life with the

fictional world of a noir detective story—was supported by Rourke’s sleek, fast-paced direction. She kept the show’s intricate structure clear and engaging, while also highlighting the self-reflective nature of the story. The production received widespread acclaim for its stylishness and sharp wit, both hallmarks of Rourke’s work.

- Example: *Much Ado About Nothing* (Wyndham’s Theatre, 2011)

Rourke set this production of *Much Ado About Nothing* in 1980s Gibraltar, placing the Shakespearean comedy in a contemporary military context. This updated setting added a fresh twist to the familiar story of Beatrice and Benedick, allowing the audience to see the characters’ sharp wit and romantic entanglements through a modern lens. The production, starring David Tennant and Catherine Tate, was praised for its energy and modern relevance, a testament to Rourke’s skill in making Shakespeare feel fresh and accessible.

6. Interest in Political and Social Themes

Rourke has a keen interest in exploring political and social issues in her work, often focusing on how personal stories intersect with broader societal structures. Whether through subtle thematic exploration or more direct engagement, her productions often comment on the nature of power, democracy, and justice.

- Example: *The Vote* (Donmar Warehouse, 2015)

This play directly engaged with the political process, set in a polling station during the final hour of a general election. Rourke’s direction highlighted the democratic system’s flaws and strengths, with a particular focus on how individual actions and votes contribute to the larger political picture. The live broadcast format also gave the play an urgent, real-time relevance, making it a direct commentary on contemporary politics.

- Example: *Measure for Measure* (Donmar Warehouse, 2018)

In this modernized version of Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure*, Rourke explored themes of sexual coercion, justice, and power abuse. By having the lead actors swap roles midway through the performance, Rourke provided a unique commentary on gender and authority, drawing attention to the ways power dynamics shift depending on context. This production was widely seen as a timely reflection on the #MeToo movement and questions of accountability in positions of power.

Conclusion

Josie Rourke’s directing style is a unique blend of classical reverence and contemporary insight. She has a gift for making classic works accessible and relevant to modern audiences while maintaining their original integrity. Her productions are marked by innovative use of space, nuanced performances, and a sharp focus on gender dynamics and power structures. Whether working on Shakespeare, musicals, or contemporary plays, Rourke consistently delivers thought-provoking and emotionally resonant theatre.

3: Robert Icke – Freelance Director and Writer

Robert Icke is a visionary British theatre director known for his cerebral, thought-provoking, and highly innovative approach to both classic and contemporary plays. His style is defined by radical reinterpretations of texts, philosophical depth, a seamless blend of traditional storytelling with modern technology, and a focus on psychological realism. Here's a breakdown of his directing style with examples from his productions:

1. Radical Reinterpretations of Classical Texts

Icke is renowned for reimagining classical texts, often reshaping them for modern audiences while retaining their essential themes. His adaptations tend to strip away the historical or mythological distance, making the material feel urgent and contemporary.

- Example: *Oresteia* (Almeida Theatre, 2015)

Icke's adaptation of Aeschylus's *Oresteia* was a bold reworking of the ancient Greek trilogy, condensing it into a three-hour production. He brought a psychological depth to the characters, making it not only a tragedy of fate but also a meditation on the morality of justice and revenge. The play was set in a contemporary world, which made the ancient themes of family, trauma, and justice resonate powerfully today.

- Example: *Hamlet* (Almeida Theatre, 2017)

Starring Andrew Scott, Icke's *Hamlet* was a modernized, intimate portrayal of Shakespeare's famous tragedy. The production focused on surveillance, using live video feeds to reflect the themes of paranoia and political intrigue. By emphasizing Hamlet's inner turmoil, Icke explored existential questions and psychological depth, making it a personal and philosophical drama rather than a courtly revenge tragedy.

2. Philosophical and Existential Depth

Icke's work often deals with deep philosophical themes, such as morality, identity, free will, and the human condition. His productions tend to probe existential questions, giving audiences much to contemplate long after the performance ends.

- Example: *The Doctor* (Almeida Theatre, 2019)

Icke adapted Arthur Schnitzler's *Professor Bernhardt* into *The Doctor*, transforming it into a modern play that dealt with issues of identity, race, ethics, and medical authority. Through the lens of a medical ethics crisis, Icke raised complex questions about societal divisions, moral righteousness, and how identity politics intersect with professional integrity. The production was praised for its intellectual rigor and emotional intensity.

- Example: *Uncle Vanya* (Almeida Theatre, 2016)

Icke's *Uncle Vanya* explored the existential despair and yearning central to Chekhov's characters. The stripped-back production placed emphasis on time, unfulfilled lives, and human inertia, making the philosophical underpinnings of the text more pronounced. The naturalistic performances and minimal staging allowed the emotional and existential themes to dominate.

3. Psychological Realism

Icke's productions are often rooted in psychological realism, focusing on the internal worlds of the characters and their motivations. He creates emotionally charged environments where characters' inner conflicts are as important as the external plot.

- Example: *Mary Stuart* (Almeida Theatre, 2016)

In Icke's adaptation of Friedrich Schiller's *Mary Stuart*, he presented a political thriller deeply infused with psychological complexity. The play depicted the intense rivalry between Mary, Queen of Scots, and Queen Elizabeth I, with Icke's direction focusing on their moral and emotional struggles. The innovative decision to have the actors playing Mary and Elizabeth swap roles depending on a coin toss at the start of the performance added to the exploration of identity, power, and fate.

- Example: *Hamlet* (Almeida Theatre, 2017)

In *Hamlet*, Icke's attention to psychological detail was paramount. He encouraged Andrew Scott to give a deeply introspective, emotionally raw performance. By focusing on Hamlet's mental state, Icke turned the play into a psychological thriller, emphasizing the tension between Hamlet's public and private personas, and his descent into existential questioning.

4. Modernization and Multimedia Use

Icke frequently incorporates modern elements such as multimedia, live video, and updated settings, using these to comment on contemporary issues like surveillance, identity politics, and the media's influence. His integration of technology serves both as a visual tool and a thematic device.

- Example: *1984* (Headlong/Almeida Theatre, 2013)

Icke co-adapted George Orwell's *1984* with Duncan Macmillan, using multimedia and live video to immerse the audience in a world of constant surveillance and manipulation. The production blurred the lines between reality and fiction, reflecting the novel's themes of totalitarian control and subjective truth. The use of screens, surveillance cameras, and disorienting lighting heightened the audience's sense of paranoia, creating an immersive experience.

- Example: *Hamlet* (Almeida Theatre, 2017)

Icke's use of video projections and live feeds in *Hamlet* allowed the production to reflect modern-day concerns about surveillance and political transparency. The integration of technology created a sense of claustrophobia, mirroring Hamlet's feeling of being constantly watched and controlled by unseen forces.

5. Stripping Back the Set to Focus on Actors

Icke often employs minimalistic staging, allowing the performances to take center stage. His sets are often pared down to essential elements, with design choices that highlight the psychological and emotional states of the characters.

- Example: *The Wild Duck* (Almeida Theatre, 2018)

In this adaptation of Ibsen's *The Wild Duck*, Icke used a bare stage with minimal props and a direct-address style, emphasizing the raw emotional content of the play over its more melodramatic aspects. By breaking the fourth wall and having actors comment on the play's action, Icke made the audience aware of the theatrical process, further drawing attention to the characters' internal conflicts.

- Example: *Oresteia* (Almeida Theatre, 2015)

The minimalist set design in *Oresteia* forced attention onto the characters' emotional journeys. By reducing visual distractions, Icke created a stark environment in which the psychological and moral dimensions of the story came to the forefront. The emphasis was on the actors' delivery and the emotional weight of the text, rather than elaborate scenery.

6. Long, Meditative Pacing

Icke's productions often use slow, meditative pacing, giving audiences time to absorb the emotional and intellectual depth of the material. He is unafraid to use pauses, silence, and extended moments of introspection, which contribute to the overall psychological tension.

- Example: Hamlet (Almeida Theatre, 2017)

Icke's production of Hamlet was notable for its slow pacing, allowing the audience to fully engage with Hamlet's introspection and inner turmoil. This created an atmosphere of suspense and unease, intensifying the emotional stakes of the play.

- Example: Oresteia (Almeida Theatre, 2015)

In Oresteia, Icke used long pauses and drawn-out moments to heighten the tension, particularly in scenes dealing with the moral implications of the characters' actions. The slow pacing allowed the audience to feel the weight of the decisions made by the characters and emphasized the play's themes of justice and retribution.

Conclusion

Robert Icke's directorial style is marked by his ability to bring fresh, intellectually rich, and emotionally intense interpretations to classical and contemporary works. His use of psychological realism, multimedia, and modernized settings creates productions that feel both timeless and deeply relevant to contemporary issues. Through minimalist staging, innovative reworking of texts, and a focus on philosophical questions, Icke challenges audiences to think critically and feel deeply, making him one of the most exciting directors in contemporary theatre.

4. Jamie Lloyd – Artistic Director of Jamie Lloyd Theatre Company

Jamie Lloyd is a British theatre director known for his dynamic, bold, and often minimalist approach to both classical and contemporary works. His productions are characterized by their intensity, sharpness, and a focus on raw performances. He frequently strips back traditional theatrical elements to spotlight the actors and text, creating a visceral, often unsettling experience. Below is a breakdown of his style with examples from his productions:

1. Minimalist and Stripped-Back Staging

Lloyd is renowned for his minimalist approach to set design, often using stark, bare, or industrial sets. By removing excess visual detail, he directs the audience's focus onto the actors and the text, heightening emotional intensity. This minimalism amplifies the raw energy of the performance and emphasizes the psychological weight of the play.

- Example: *Betrayal* (Harold Pinter Theatre, 2019)

In Lloyd's production of Harold Pinter's *Betrayal*, starring Tom Hiddleston, the set was reduced to a rotating turntable with sparse props, which allowed the actors' performances to dominate. The simplicity of the staging intensified the emotional complexity and shifting power dynamics of the love triangle at the play's core. The rotating stage mirrored the characters' unraveling emotions and memories, underscoring the cyclical nature of betrayal.

- Example: *Macbeth* (Trafalgar Studios, 2013)

Lloyd's *Macbeth*, starring James McAvoy, took place in a post-apocalyptic world, with a grim, industrial set that resembled a slaughterhouse. The stripped-down, brutal setting reflected the violence and madness of the play. The minimalist design allowed for the intense physicality of the performances to shine, while creating an oppressive atmosphere that mirrored Macbeth's psychological descent.

2. Actor-Centric Direction and Emotional Intensity

Lloyd is known for drawing out intense, emotionally charged performances from his actors. He often collaborates with high-profile actors, guiding them to deliver raw, vulnerable, and deeply human portrayals of their characters. His productions are actor-driven, with a focus on psychological depth and nuanced emotion.

- Example: *Cyrano de Bergerac* (Playhouse Theatre, 2019)

Lloyd's production of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, starring James McAvoy, was stripped of its traditional period costume and grandiosity. Instead, the actors performed in modern clothing and used microphones to amplify the poetic language, creating an intense, intimate atmosphere. McAvoy's raw, impassioned portrayal of Cyrano captured the emotional heart of the story, and the modern staging allowed the text and performances to speak directly to a contemporary audience.

- Example: *The Maids* (Trafalgar Studios, 2016)

Lloyd's production of Jean Genet's *The Maids*, starring Uzo Aduba, Zawe Ashton, and Laura Carmichael, was another example of his actor-driven style. The play focused on power dynamics and identity, with the actors' performances being central to conveying the emotional intensity and psychological complexity of the characters. The bare, stylized set put the focus entirely on the performers' relationships and inner turmoil.

3. Innovative Use of Text and Language

Lloyd often finds innovative ways to modernize or rework the language of classic texts, making them feel immediate and accessible without losing their core essence. He frequently collaborates with playwrights and adapters to give contemporary relevance to older works while preserving their fundamental themes.

- Example: *The Seagull* (Harold Pinter Theatre, 2022)

In this modern adaptation of Chekhov's *The Seagull*, adapted by Anya Reiss, Lloyd used a minimalist set with modern costumes and an updated text to highlight the timelessness of the play's exploration of unrequited love, ambition, and existential despair. The modern language made Chekhov's characters and their emotional struggles feel fresh and relatable to a 21st-century audience.

- Example: *Pinter at the Pinter* (Harold Pinter Theatre, 2018-2019)

Lloyd curated and directed this season of Harold Pinter's one-act plays in a bold, stripped-back style. His directorial choices emphasized the rhythm and tension of Pinter's language, using silence, pauses, and sharp delivery to heighten the underlying menace and absurdity in the plays. The season demonstrated Lloyd's skill at drawing out the nuances of Pinter's text and making them resonate with modern audiences.

4. Bold, Visceral Physicality

Lloyd's productions are often highly physical, with intense, sometimes violent, movement that reflects the emotional or psychological state of the characters. He uses physicality as a way of exploring themes like power, control, and vulnerability, making the body a central part of the storytelling.

- Example: *Macbeth* (Trafalgar Studios, 2013)

In Lloyd's *Macbeth*, the physicality of the performances mirrored the brutal, chaotic nature of the world in which the characters lived. James McAvoy's *Macbeth* was intensely physical, and the violent fight scenes were choreographed to emphasize the primal, animalistic descent into madness. The visceral action on stage reinforced the play's themes of ambition, power, and destruction.

- Example: *Richard III* (Almeida Theatre, 2016)

Starring Ralph Fiennes, Lloyd's *Richard III* was marked by its intense, often violent physicality. The production explored Richard's ruthless rise to power through a combination of psychological manipulation and brute force, with Fiennes delivering a chilling, physically dominating performance. Lloyd's direction emphasized the relationship between Richard's physical deformity and his moral corruption, using movement to underscore his twisted nature.

5. Engagement with Modern Politics and Social Commentary

Lloyd often finds contemporary relevance in the works he directs, whether it's through the themes of the play or his directorial choices. His productions frequently engage with social and political issues, making them feel urgent and connected to the modern world.

- Example: *Evita* (Regent's Park Open Air Theatre, 2019)

Lloyd's revival of *Evita* had a stripped-down, rock-infused aesthetic, transforming the musical into a sharp commentary on celebrity, populism, and power. The minimalist, modernist set and costumes helped frame Eva Perón's rise to power in a way that drew parallels to contemporary political figures and movements. Lloyd's focus on the performative nature of power and the cult of personality made the production feel especially relevant in today's political climate.

- Example: *The Homecoming* (Trafalgar Studios, 2015)

In this production of Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming*, Lloyd explored the themes of power, family dynamics, and patriarchy with a contemporary lens. The brutal, often unsettling staging highlighted the toxic masculinity at the heart of the play, offering a pointed critique of gender roles and family structures that felt highly relevant in today's social discourse.

6. Engaging Audience with Immersive and Direct Experiences

Lloyd often aims to immerse his audience in the world of the play, breaking down the barriers between performer and spectator. His productions tend to have a raw immediacy, which draws the audience into the emotional and psychological intensity of the work.

- Example: *Cyrano de Bergerac* (Playhouse Theatre, 2019)

Lloyd's *Cyrano* was notable for its direct, stripped-back staging, with actors frequently addressing the audience directly, performing with microphones, and eschewing elaborate period costumes. This intimate and raw approach made the audience feel directly involved in the characters' emotional journeys, heightening the connection between the performers and the viewers.

- Example: *Faustus* (Duke of York's Theatre, 2016)

Lloyd's *Doctor Faustus*, starring Kit Harington, used a blend of multimedia and immersive elements to bring Marlowe's classic into a contemporary setting. The production integrated live video, music, and modern-day references to create an immersive atmosphere that engaged the audience with the play's exploration of ambition, fame, and damnation.

Conclusion

Jamie Lloyd's directorial style is defined by his minimalist staging, emotional intensity, and his focus on raw, visceral performances. He frequently modernizes classic texts, making them feel immediate and relevant, while also exploring social and political themes. Lloyd's ability to create immersive, psychologically charged theatrical experiences has made him one of the most exciting and innovative directors working in contemporary theatre. His productions are often bold, thought-provoking, and unflinching in their examination of human nature and societal issues.

5: Simon Stone – Freelance Theatre Director

Simon Stone is an Australian-born theatre and film director known for his innovative adaptations of classic works, blending modern sensibilities with traditional texts. His directorial style is distinguished by radical reworkings of canonical plays, emotional realism, minimalist design, and an intense focus on character psychology. Stone's productions often feel fresh, contemporary, and deeply connected to the lives of modern audiences, despite their classical roots. Here's a breakdown of his directorial style with examples from his key productions:

1. Radical Reinterpretations of Classic Texts

One of the hallmarks of Simon Stone's work is his bold reimagining of classical plays. Rather than presenting faithful period reproductions, Stone often adapts the text, modernizing the language, setting, and themes to make them resonate with contemporary audiences. He strips down the traditional elements to their core, often rewriting or heavily cutting the original dialogue, but retains the essential emotional and thematic heart of the work.

- Example: *Yerma* (Young Vic, 2016)

In this adaptation of Federico García Lorca's *Yerma*, Stone moved the setting to modern-day London and completely reworked the text to reflect the anxieties of a contemporary woman struggling with infertility. The original's poetic, rural Spanish language was replaced with modern, colloquial English, while the core themes of desire, societal pressure, and motherhood remained intact. Billie Piper's raw, emotional performance as *Yerma*, combined with Stone's reworking of the script, brought a devastating emotional immediacy to Lorca's classic tragedy.

- Example: *Medea* (Internationaal Theater Amsterdam, 2014)

Stone's adaptation of *Medea* reimagined the ancient Greek tragedy as a contemporary domestic drama. Rather than focusing on mythological grandeur, the play delved into the psychological breakdown of a woman after her husband's betrayal. The dialogue was updated to reflect modern sensibilities, with a focus on realism and emotional immediacy, stripping away the more classical elements of the original. Stone's version maintained the play's essential tragedy, but the modern setting made *Medea*'s plight feel all the more relevant.

2. Minimalist Staging

Stone often uses minimal, pared-back staging, allowing the focus to rest almost entirely on the actors and their emotional journeys. His sets are often stark, with clean lines, simple props, and muted colors, which serve to heighten the intensity of the performances and focus on the psychological drama unfolding on stage.

- Example: *Yerma* (Young Vic, 2016)

The production took place in a glass-walled box, through which the audience watched the action unfold. The minimalist, almost sterile set heightened the feeling of entrapment and isolation that *Yerma* experiences. The transparent walls allowed for voyeuristic observation, intensifying the emotional intimacy and making the audience feel complicit in the protagonist's unraveling. The simplicity of the design focused attention on Billie Piper's raw, visceral performance, with the set acting as a metaphor for her character's psychological confinement.

- Example: *The Cherry Orchard* (Internationaal Theater Amsterdam, 2019)

Stone's version of Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* featured a minimalist set, emphasizing the emptiness of the family estate as it fell into decline. The simple, elegant design mirrored the themes of loss, nostalgia, and the passage of time, while allowing the actors to focus on the emotional and

existential weight of their characters. The lack of period-specific details made the play feel timeless, even as the production subtly hinted at its contemporary relevance.

3. Psychological Realism and Intense Character Focus

Stone is known for coaxing deeply emotional, psychologically complex performances from his actors. His productions often delve into the internal worlds of the characters, exploring their motivations, desires, and emotional breakdowns. This focus on psychological realism gives his work a raw, unfiltered energy.

- Example: *Medea* (Internationaal Theater Amsterdam, 2014)

In this production, Stone worked with actress Marieke Heebink to present a deeply psychological portrayal of Medea. Rather than the mythic figure of legend, this Medea was a modern woman in psychological crisis. The intensity of the performance highlighted the raw, human emotions behind the tragic events, making Medea's actions both horrifying and understandable. Stone's ability to bring out the emotional depth in the characters is a hallmark of his work.

- Example: *Thérèse Raquin* (Theatre Royal Bath, 2014)

Stone's adaptation of Émile Zola's *Thérèse Raquin* was another example of his focus on psychological realism. The production stripped away much of the melodrama traditionally associated with the story, instead presenting Thérèse's emotional struggles with a rawness and intimacy that made her descent into guilt and madness feel immediate and devastating.

4. Modern Language and Contemporary Relevance

In Stone's adaptations, characters often speak in colloquial, contemporary language, even if the play itself is hundreds of years old. By updating the language, Stone closes the gap between the audience and the text, making classical works feel immediate and accessible. He also often incorporates modern-day issues and anxieties into his productions, making them socially and politically relevant.

- Example: *The Wild Duck* (Almeida Theatre, 2018)

Stone's version of Ibsen's *The Wild Duck* relocated the action to a contemporary setting, updating the dialogue and exploring modern issues such as economic struggle, family breakdown, and generational conflict. His adaptation focused on the emotional and psychological aspects of the characters rather than the specifics of 19th-century Norwegian society, allowing the play's themes to resonate with a modern audience. By simplifying the language and focusing on emotional truth, Stone brought a fresh urgency to Ibsen's classic.

- Example: *The Cherry Orchard* (Internationaal Theater Amsterdam, 2019)

In this production, Stone reworked Chekhov's play to reflect current economic and social realities, especially the effects of global capitalism and the housing crisis. The language was modernized, and the production had a contemporary edge, but the existential themes of loss, change, and nostalgia remained at the heart of the work. By updating the context and dialogue, Stone made *The Cherry Orchard* speak directly to modern anxieties about displacement and the erosion of traditional values.

5. Use of Technology and Multimedia

Stone is known for his creative use of technology and multimedia in his productions, often incorporating video projections or live camera feeds to add a layer of contemporary texture to the storytelling. This use of technology can serve to intensify the psychological drama or highlight the themes of surveillance, memory, and the passage of time.

- Example: Yerma (Young Vic, 2016)

In Yerma, Stone used multimedia elements to enhance the storytelling. The use of music, lighting, and live-feed projections added to the sense of psychological and emotional claustrophobia. The sterile glass box in which the characters were confined was illuminated in ways that reflected Yerma's inner turmoil, and the use of technology helped make the production feel modern and emotionally immediate.

- Example: The Wild Duck (Almeida Theatre, 2018)

Stone used video projections in his adaptation of The Wild Duck to blur the lines between reality and memory. The multimedia elements were used to project images of the characters' pasts and their inner thoughts, creating a heightened emotional landscape that reflected their internal struggles. This layering of live action with multimedia made the production feel as though the audience was watching the characters' memories unravel in real time.

6. Focus on Family and Domestic Drama

Many of Stone's productions center on family dynamics, exploring the emotional and psychological tensions within domestic settings. He often dissects how personal relationships are shaped by societal expectations, economic pressures, and unspoken desires.

- Example: Medea (Internationaal Theater Amsterdam, 2014)

In this adaptation of Medea, Stone focused heavily on the family drama at the heart of the play. By reimagining Medea and Jason as a modern couple, Stone highlighted the destructive nature of betrayal and the intense psychological toll of family breakdown. The emphasis on family dynamics made the tragedy feel intimate and deeply personal, while also universal.

- Example: The Wild Duck (Almeida Theatre, 2018)

In The Wild Duck, Stone explored the corrosive effects of family secrets and the destructive nature of truth. The production centered on the relationships within a fractured family and how generations pass down their pain and unresolved issues. Stone's focus on emotional honesty and realism made the family drama at the play's core feel raw and devastating.

Conclusion

Simon Stone's directing style is defined by his radical reworkings of classical texts, minimalistic staging, psychological realism, and his ability to make even the most ancient of plays feel contemporary and urgent. His use of modern language and multimedia elements, combined with a focus on intense character exploration and family dynamics, has made him one of the most exciting and innovative directors in contemporary theatre. Stone's work often leaves audiences with a deep emotional impact, as his productions strip away theatrical artifice to reveal the raw, unvarnished human experience beneath.