

Douglas Watkinson 1945-2024



Douglas Watkinson, known to most people as Doug lived in Dinton for many years, he died on Wednesday 10th April 2024. He was born on 5th July 1945, and was the only child of a soldier who was killed on his way home for demob. in 1947. Doug was raised by his grandparents and his single mother in Totteridge, London. He was educated at Haberdashers' Aske's School, courtesy of the Army.

In about 1966, he went to Drama School, leaning towards writing. He got together with Lesley and they eventually moved to London. Lesley returned to stage-managing and Doug started writing scripts and submitting them, supporting himself by writing the backs of record sleeves for Decca.

In 1970, his 'Play for Today' submission was accepted and as a result he became a Script Editor at the BBC. in 1972, Doug's mother died, and Doug and Lesley got married and moved to Ballinger which gave him good access to the BBC in Shepherd's Bush.

In 1978, their daughter, Fenny, was born and Doug went freelance. He had a successful career as a television playwright and script writer; in 2017, he decided to change to novels, the Hawk novels, and one family drama, "The Occasional Jonas Kemble". He also wrote scripts for Midsomer Murders.

Doug and Lesley have four children, Fenny, Callum, Duncan and Ailsa.

The Celebration of the Life of Douglas Watkinson took place at 11am on 30th April at St. Peter's and St. Paul's Church in Dinton

The Wall

by

Douglas Watkinson



New
End
Theatre

26 April to 5 June 2011

THE CAST

David	Eric Carte
Ralph	Duncan-Clyde Watkinson

PRODUCTION TEAM

Producer	Lesley Dunbar
Director	Olivia Rowe
Castling Director	Marilyn Davis
Scenic Designer	Katie Blumenblatt
Lighting Designer	Aaron J Dootson
Sound Designer	Ben Lawrence
Costume Designer	Hayley Neil
Production Manager	Tracey Fess
Press and Marketing	Alexa Christopher-Daniels
Operator	KT Munroe Farlie
Scenic Painters	Gagan Bilku
	Tal Marwaha

A letter from the writer Douglas Watkinson

As a rule it's impossible to say where and when the idea for a piece of writing suggested itself, but *The Wall* began life in a very particular place at a quite specific moment.

Five years ago I was in Israel researching a film project about the British Mandate in Palestine and towards the end of my stay I visited my father's grave in the Commonwealth War Cemetery in Ramleh. I never knew my father - he was killed by The Stern Gang when I was eighteen months old - so the most I expected to feel as I stood in front of his headstone was a dutiful sadness for him and the other young victims of two world wars. Anything more than a passing regret at not having made his acquaintance would have seemed contrived, and in its contrivance somehow disrespectful.

Imagine my surprise when, on finding his grave, my well ordered and very British restraint deserted me and I broke down in floods of tears. To this day I'm not sure why it happened, nor can I properly describe the grief which overcame me, so I tend to pass it off by saying that these things must run far, far deeper than we care to admit.

As I stood in my father's presence, and gradually regained my composure, I tried to close the distance between us. Just suppose, I asked myself, he were to walk in through that gate right now, the age he was when he was blown to pieces, and found me twice his age and in a different kind of pieces, what would he say to me? What would I say to him?

That's what *The Wall* is about, then, and the barrier wall between Israel and Palestine provides an inevitable, an unavoidable metaphor for the substance of the conversation between father and son. Whether the real wall is as easy to bring down as both men believe, however, is another matter...

A letter from the director Olivia Rowe

The Wall is a personal story of the writer's journey both physical, to Israel and his father's grave, and emotional, to heal the rift caused by never knowing the man whose grave he was to visit. The relationship between children and absent fathers is one that I am fascinated by in all its variation and multitude of emotions. The rehearsal process was as much about the relationship each of us have with our fathers, and how this most powerful of archetypes affects us all, as it was about the contentious political background against which the story is set. One of the aspects of the play, which most drew me to the project, was the uncompromising objection to Israel's foreign policy from the theoretically neutral position of neither an Israeli nor a Palestinian. The events of the last century and the stances of foreign countries have polarised opinions about the ongoing conflict, which has huge repercussions for us all. To have a chance to direct a play, which hopefully will engender debate as to how much one can object to the foreign policy of a country without descending into racist prejudice, whilst not being overtly focused on politics was a challenge. Tree stumps were used to represent both the livelihoods communities and the men cut down in the conflict: rows of graves and orchard stumps are curiously reminiscent of each other. In the end I hope that the story of David and his father Ralph will tell the most honest truth of all: parents and children are both human, for good and for bad, and death is part of life, but conflict is both unnecessary and unhelpful, no matter what the situation.

WRITER...DOUGLAS WATKINSON



Douglas has written hundreds of television scripts as part of long and successful career. His work has been seen in over 230 countries and has ranged from THE ONEDIN LINE and Z CARS back in the eighties right through to POIROT, FOREVER GREEN and MIDSOMER MURDERS for which he was one of the original writers. He has adapted a number of books and has also written for radio. His stage plays include CAESAR AND ME, LET'S DO IT MY WAY, THE DRAGON'S TALE and now THE WALL. Under the pen name of Marcus Barr he is the author of a new series of crime novels featuring a recently retired detective called Nathan Hawk. The first one is entitled HAGGARD HAWK, the second, due out later this year, is called EASY PREY. A third book is scheduled for the end of the year.

DIRECTOR...OLIVIA ROWE



Olivia is an Oxford graduate, former solicitor and now an established theatre director. She has directed A RUDE AWAKENING by Barry Peters, Gopi Warrier's GOD SPORTS, the latest reading of Hyam Maccoby's THE DISPUTATION, and A BIG DAY FOR THE GOLDBERGS by Brian Daniels (also at Carriageworks, Leeds, Radlett Centre, Herts, Harrow Arts Centre and Edinburgh Festival 2010). She is the founder of Lirlope Productions and co-developed SINBAD at Camden's Roundhouse. Olivia joined the New End Theatre as Associate Artistic Director in 2010.

The Cast

DAVID...ERIC CARTE



Eric trained at the Drama Centre in London. Television includes: BOUQUET OF BARBED WIRE; ANOTHER BOUQUET; SPACE 1999; THE NEW AVENGERS; POIROT; THE DAY BRITAIN STOPPED; NEW TRICKS; DOCTORS; MY FAMILY; A VERY BRITISH SEX SCANDAL; SUPERGRASS; THE LAVENDER LIST; THE OMID DJALILI SHOW. Most recently Eric has filmed John Nettles last episode of MIDSOMER MURDERS. He appeared in the successful West End runs of: MRS WARREN'S PROFESSION at the Comedy Theatre; FALLEN ANGELS (with Felicity Kendal and Frances de la Tour) and THE CONSTANT WIFE (with Jenny Seagrove). Other West End Theatre includes: HAMLET (with Ian McKellen); CORIOLANUS (with Nicol Williamson) for the RSC; BUTLEY (with John Nettles);

UNDERGROUND (with Raymond Burr); TWO INTO ONE (with John Thaw and Daniel Massey); BRIEF ENCOUNTER and THE GENTLE HOOK at Theatre Royal, Windsor. Extensive Regional Theatre and International Tours include TOWARDS ZERO; M.BUTTERFLY; SEE HOW THEY RUN; DEATHTRAP; ONLY WHEN I LAUGH; THE PLEASURE OF HIS COMPANY; TEN TIMES TABLE; MOVE OVER MRS MARKHAM; DEAD FUNNY; DANGEROUS OBSESSION; THE MERCHANT OF VENICE; ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA; I AM A CAMERA; DANGEROUS CORNER; THE LION IN WINTER (opposite Joan Fontaine in Vienna); RUN FOR YOUR WIFE and FUNNY MONEY (for Ray Cooney's Comedy at Sea Company); PRIVATE LIVES; EASY VIRTUE (King's Head) and at the Mill at Sonning; LOVE'S A LUXURY, MURDER BY MISADVENTURE, POOL'S PARADISE and FUNNY MONEY.

RALPH...DUNCAN-CLYDE WATKINSON



Duncan-Clyde grew up near Oxford and trained at The Central School of Speech and Drama in Swiss Cottage, London. Television appearances include MIDSOMER MURDERS, WIRED, GOLDPLATED, NEW STREET LAW, THE BILL, THE ACCUSED and FOYLE'S WAR. Film credits include THREE TO TANGO, INTERFERENCE, THE GRIND and the 2010 London set crime thriller BASELINE. As well as the music video for LIFE IN TECHNICOLLOUR, for the group Coldplay. Duncan-Clyde appeared on stage at the Kings Head in GUNZ AND NOSES, and is also the audio book voice of the ODDTAILS children's books. THE WALL marks his first appearance at the New End Theatre.

PRODUCTION STAFF

SCENIC DESIGNER ...KATIE BLUMENBLATT



Katie graduated in 2010 from The Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts with a Post-Graduate Diploma in Theatre Design. Prior to this she studied English at the University of Nottingham. Credits as Designer whilst training include: THIS WIDE NIGHT (Bernie Grant Arts Theatre), SLEEPING AROUND (New Players Theatre). Design Assistant: A...MY NAME IS ALICE (New Players Theatre), THE WILD PARTY (The Bridewell Theatre – for LSMT), WEST SIDE STORY (The Albany). Since graduating Katie has designed the Goldsmiths MA musical showcase and worked as a specialist Props Buyer for several productions including THE BREATH OF LIFE (Sheffield Lyceum) directed by Peter Gill. Katie has also gained experience as a Scenic Artist, working with prolific artists Liz and Chris Clark and at the Royal National Theatre. THE WALL

marks Katie's professional London debut as a Set Designer.

LIGHTING DESIGNER... AARON J DOOTSON



Aaron graduated from Wimbledon College of Art in 2009 where he studied Lighting Design and Practice qualifying with a distinction. Aaron is a freelancing lighting designer specialising in theatre and based mainly in London. Theatre credits include: AFTER THE ACCIDENT - REM Projects, 74 GEORGIA AVENUE - New End Theatre, DEATH OF A NIGHTINGALE - New End Theatre, TIPPING POINT – Bristol Hamilton House/ New Wimbledon Studio, BLUEBIRD – Cockpit Theatre, THIS IS HOW IT GOES – Kings Head Theatre, SIREN – Etcetera Theatre, LEO YOU NUTTER – Wimbledon College of Art, TAPE – North Outlet Theatre Company. Dance credits include: MITOSIS CLONING – Peacock Theatre, RADICAL – Sadlers Wells Theatre, EXTRACT – Sadlers Wells Theatre, SMASH – Sadlers Wells Theatre, and

STRANGERS – Stratford Circus. All for Impact Dance. As an assistant lighting designer: NEVER FORGET (UK Tour 2009 - LD James Whiteside). Current relights: PRIVATE PEACEFUL (UK Tour 2011 – LD Wayne Dowdeswell). His website is aaronjdootson.co.uk

SOUND DESIGNER ... BEN LAWRENCE



Ben holds a degree in Music Technology and is currently a freelance sound designer and composer for theatre, film and studio-based projects. Projects of late include MAN OF MODE, Bridewell Theatre (Sound Designer) - starts May 2011, A PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY and ARTHUR OF CAMELOT, Place Theatre, Bedford (Composer), six Edinburgh Fringe 2010 shows (Composer) with several more in production for this year - including a contemporary dance production of THE TEMPEST - and a number of short films, band demos and voice reels (Sound Engineer). Ben also does a lot of technical theatre as a sound and lighting technician. He has worked on THE RED SHOES, Battersea Arts Centre (Sound & Light Crew), GRAVITY, Greenwich Festival opening show (Crew / Follow Spot), PERSONALS Bridewell Theatre (Sound), WAY OF THE WORLD, Bridewell Theatre (Sound), and for the past three years at C venues, Edinburgh Fringe as Theatre and Technical Manager. He continues to operate live events as a sound technician and work with artists as a studio engineer as well as writing and producing his own music. For more info visit www.benlawrenceaudio.com or email benlawrenceaudio@gmail.com

COSTUME DESIGNER ... HAYLEY NEIL



Hayley Neil is a Yorkshire based costume designer and maker working in theatre, dance and film. She trained in Performance Costume at the Edinburgh College of Art, graduating in 2005. Design commissions include: costumes for the Northern School of Contemporary Dance (VERVE), various productions for Pointed Arrow Theatre, publicity stills for Jonsi (lead singer of Sigur Ros), Celebrate Leeds (THE LEEDS PAGEANT), Media Design Ltd, and Screen Yorkshire. Costume making and assisting projects include: various productions at the West Yorkshire Playhouse, two feature films for Warp Films, Black and White Rainbow Theatre (MADNESS IN VALENCIA), Speaking Film Productions (THE KING'S SPEECH), and Channel 4 (THIS IS ENGLAND '88). Hayley's work ranges from touring productions to site-specific works, including puppetry and props and encompassing many genres from fantastical whimsy to historical accuracy.

NEW END THEATRE STAFF

Chief Executive and Artistic Director	Brian Daniels
Theatre Manager and Associate Artistic Director	Olivia Rowe
Press & Marketing Manager	Alexa Christopher-Daniels
Development Manager	Kate Silverman
PA to the Chief Executive	Bev Ibbetson
Finance Director	Ania Kanik
Casting Director	Marilyn Davis
Production Manager	KT Munroe Farlie
Production Assistant	Vera Erenbourg
Press & Marketing Assistant	Caroline Wood
Press & Marketing Volunteers	Dr Estelle Phillips Joyce Terry
Interns	Tracey Fess Will Sleight
Academy & Front of House Manager	Miles Barden
Front of House	Joshua Dickinson Hannah Mercer Kenneth O'Toole Cara Ward

Trustees

Simon Coulter – Conrad Freedman – Iain Roden – Godfrey Smith

Patrons

John Alderton – Dame Eileen Atkins – Candida Cave – Dame Judi Dench – David Liddiment – Paula Wilcox

Coming Soon

Three Faces of Evil: A Genesis of Karma

A world premier by Gopi Warrier

This powerful new play explores the intriguing relationship between the Indian philosophy of Karma and the causes and practice of evil throughout world history. Gopi Warrier's intriguing idea exemplifies the plight of the Jewish people and the Karmic suffering of Jesus himself, the revolving faces of the Nazi Gestapo, the story of an Indian Catholic nun and abusive priest, and a racist British thug.

17 May to 5 June 2011; Tues to Sat at 7pm, Sat & Sun at 3pm. Tickets £14 (£12 Concessions)

An Actress Prepares

Starring Irina Diva with Graham Elwell as The Dresser

On the 85th anniversary of Marilyn's birthday, this daring production offers a rare glimpse of the person behind the icon. Discover what it really took for Marilyn Monroe to become a star in this surprising and revealing adaptation of her last ever interview.

14 June to 10 July 2011; Tues to Sat at 9:15pm, Sat & Sun at 5pm. Tickets £15 (£12.50 Concessions)

A Big Day for the Goldbergs

Written by Brian Daniels

For sisters Michelle and Lucille the future beams bright: nice houses, Jewish boys and babies in the Leeds they've always known. But Michelle wants something different and she's prepared to fight for it against a neurotic mother, judgmental grandma and the age-old assumptions of a provincial community. And where, in all this, is daddy?

7 June to 31 July 2011; Tues to Sat at 7pm, Sat & Sun at 3pm. Tickets £14 (£12 Concessions)

THE WALL

★★★★

Review by *Peter Brown*
7 May 2011

A new play by Douglas Watkinson, based on his own experiences, takes us on an emotional journey to a British military cemetery in Ramleh, Israel. There, frustration, anger and the need to find answers bubble together forcing a mild-mannered, British vet to examine his attitude to the socio-political conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

David (played by Eric Carte) is visiting the cemetery where his father, Ralph (Duncan-Clyde Watkinson) was buried after being blown up by a terrorist bomb in 1947. Though he's now in middle age, David senses a vacuum in his life – the space where his father might have played an influential part had he not died in the service of the British Army at the age of 25. We first meet David wandering around the cemetery, trying to make sense of the map which details the locations of graves. When David finds his father's grave, he understandably breaks down. At that moment, his father appears and starts telling the audience that the cemetery is getting more visitors and that most of them, like David, find their emotions getting the better of them. But that's not all that's on Ralph's mind. He wants his son to write a letter to the Israeli authorities to try to remove the wall (more formally known as the West Bank Barrier) which the Israelis built to keep out Palestinian suicide bombers. Ralph wants to keep the caretaker – Mahmood – looking after the cemetery, and the barrier means he has to go miles out of his way to get to his place of work at the cemetery and, along the way, has to suffer delays and insults from Israeli army personnel.

The situation we are presented with is unusual. It's a kind of role-reversal, because the father, Ralph, is younger and less experienced than his own son. However, thanks to well-written dialogue, and highly convincing performances from both actors, there's never a sense of the concept becoming ridiculous. I don't think we're meant to take the situation realistically. The proposition is more like David considering what his father might have thought and what action he might have expected of him.

Duncan-Clyde Watkinson's interpretation of a corporal in the British Army of the 1940s, might be considered somewhat stereotypical, but nonetheless incorporates authenticity and I found it highly believable, reminding me of an ex-army sergeant I once worked with. Eric Carte's David is just as convincing, particularly in his moving breakdown when he finds his father's grave, and when rage overcomes him when he has spent the night with Mahmood's Palestinian family. Both actors are excellently supported by Olivia Rowe's careful pacing, and sensitive direction.

This is a kind of 'goldilocks' script with well-structured scenes, that are neither too long, nor too short. And the overall length of the play is sufficient to get the points across without the construct becoming wearing. Douglas Watkinson's play does contain some powerful and controversial statements about the Israelis and their tactics in dealing with the Palestinians, which will not find universal favour. But these are issues which need to be aired and debated. There's not nearly enough politically-focused, thought-provoking drama on the London stage. So it's refreshingly rewarding to see something which poses questions about a protracted conflict which many of us ordinary people in the West find confusing as well as unacceptable, and where the actions of the Israelis – symbolised here by 'the wall' – seem to inflame, rather than dampen the volatility of the conflict. Like David in the play, we can't solve the problems, but what 'The Wall' does is to at least raise and release our frustrations and anger. Well-worth seeing.

Theatre
The Wall
New End, NW3
☆☆☆☆

You expect to find the dead in a cemetery; it's rather more startling if, instead of quietly decaying under the ground, they're walking about, larger than life and distinctly opinionated. That's the situation in which David Weatherstone, an ageing Englishman, finds himself, when he visits his father's grave in Ramleh, Israel. In Douglas Watkinson's touching, if undercooked, two-hander, David confronts his dad's ghost with surprising equanimity. Soon they are tussling among the headstones in a debate that encompasses both the political and the intensely personal.

Watkinson draws on his own family history for the bones of his story. Ralph, David's father, was a soldier in the final years of British Mandate Palestine, and was killed by the Zionist Stern Gang in the 1947 bombing of the military Cairo-to-Haifa train. Now Ramleh cemetery is ~~tended by an elderly Palestinian,~~ forced by the Israeli partition wall to travel miles, through checkpoints, to perform his duties each day. Ralph and his deceased comrades-in-arms are outraged by this and want David to petition Binyamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, for the wall's demolition. But first there's some father-son bonding to be done, and serious questions to be asked about the heroic status that Ralph's surviving relatives have always afforded him.

The supernatural device allows for neat juxtaposition: the young, passionate, politically naive father confronting his world-weary son. And Watkinson captures both men's sense of paternal loss: Ralph's father was a cold, remote bully, while David grew up in the shadow of a man whom he never knew and as a result feels that he has never fulfilled his own potential, as an individual or as a parent to his own boys. He is, as he pungently expresses it, "waiting to grow up and waiting to die, all at the same time".

Unfortunately, not all the writing is as effective; on the whole the play is meandering and verbose, especially when it descends to crude political dialectic. While Olivia Rowe's static direction struggles to enliven matters, Eric Carte as David and Duncan-Clyde Watkinson as Ralph manage a warm, fractious rapport that's rather beguiling. But it's not enough to make up for the lack of action and impetus.
Sam Marlowe
Box office: 0870 0332733, to June 5