



BARBER SHOP CHRONICLES

INUA ELLAMS

A Fuel, National Theatre and West Yorkshire Playhouse co-production

Newsroom, local hot spot, confessional and football club. For generations African men have gathered in barber shops sometimes they have haircuts, sometimes they listen, more often than not they talk shop, family, race, music and sport. Barber shops are confession boxes, political platforms, preacher-pulpits and football pitches... places to go for unofficial advice, and to keep in touch with the world.

Now you can take a fly-on-the-wall look at the goings on, in Inua Ellams' latest production direct from a sell-out season at London's National Theatre.

Take a fast-paced journey from London across Africa and be transported inside six barber shops over the course of a single day. Meet the crew and share in their stories. Whether it's London, Jo'burg, Harare, Kampala, Lagos or Accra, the banter is barbed and the truth is right in front of the mirror.

The play invites the audience into a uniquely masculine environment where the banter may be barbed, but the truth always telling. Heart-warming and hilarious, *Barber Shop Chronicles* explores the stuff of life with sharp insight, upbeat music and laugh-out-loud humour. The barbers of these tales are sages, role models and father figures, they are the glue that keeps men together.

You'll be entertained. You'll be enlightened. And you'll feel like you've made some new friends.

Background information on Barber Shop Chronicles

A few years ago, Inua Ellams learnt of a charity that was trying to train barbers in very basic counselling, which made Ellams realise how deep and intimate a conversation between barber and client can be. Originally Ellams wanted to be voyeuristic and create poems. Just to record the conversations and try and

write poems about the interactions between these men. This transformed into conversations, to scenes, to settings, to drama, to politics, to anthropology, to history, to the contemporary – to everything. Ellams wanted to capture the fragility of black men in their own setting.

Ellams travelled to London, South Africa, Uganda, Nigeria and Ghana. He met individuals, transcribed and recorded, mixed things together, created characters, scrapped characters and then created a play that is 40% verbatim, 60% invented.

Ellams hopes that audiences will realise how vast, complex and nuanced the African continent is. The different types of black men that exist, and that the stereotypes created for them, for the actors perfumed on television, all of them lack in grace and specificity and are tired and dated.

When in fact there is a plethora of identities that aren't represented in the UK and Ellams wanted to show the kaleidoscopic nature of black masculinity on the African continent and in the UK.

Inua Ellams, Writer

Born in Nigeria, Inua Ellams is a cross-art-form practitioner, a poet, playwright, performer, graphic artist, designer and founder of the Midnight Run – a nocturnal urban excursion. He is a complete works poet alumni and a designer at White Space Creative Agency. Inua Ellams' previous plays produced by Fuel at the National include *The 14th Tale* (Fringe First award) and *Black T-Shirt Collection*. Other plays include *The Riddler* (Theatre503); *Knight Watch* (Fuel at Greenwich + Docklands Festival); *Mostly Like Blue* (Islington Community Theatre); *Cape* (Unicorn); *The Long Song Goodbye* (Fuel & LIFT at Battersea Arts Centre); *Fastcuts and Snapshots* (Fuel at Oran Mor); *Marsh Orchids & Concrete* (China Plate); *Reset Everything* (Soho Theatre) and *An Evening with an Immigrant* (Fuel at Soho Theatre); and *Turned* (Trafalgar Studios). His poetry is published by Flipped Eye, Akashic, Nine Arches, and several plays by Oberon Books. His new book *#Afterhours* is published by Nine Arches Press.

Bijan Sheibani, Director

Bijan Sheibani is a theatre and opera director. Credits include *Our Class*, *The Kitchen*, *Emil and the Detectives*, *A Taste of Honey* and *Romeo and Juliet* at the National Theatre, *Giving* at Hampstead; *The House of Bernarda Alba* at the Almeida; *Moonlight* at the Donmar Warehouse; *Eurydice* and *The Brothers Size* for the Young Vic and ATC; *Ghosts* for the Arcola and ATC; *Gone Too Far!* for the Royal Court, Hackney Empire, Albany and ATC; *The Typist* for Riverside Studios and Sky Arts; *Other Hands* and *Flush* at the Soho; *One for the Road* and *Party Time* at Battersea Arts Centre; and *Have I None* at Southwark Playhouse. He won an Olivier Award for *Gone Too Far!*, and was nominated for Olivier Awards for *Our Class* and *The Brothers Size*. He was artistic director of ATC from 2007 to 2010 and an Associate Director of the National Theatre from 2010 to 2015.

Rae Smith, Designer

Rae Smith's designs include *wonder.land*, *The Light Princess* and *War Horse* (Tony and Olivier Awards) at the National Theatre; *The Goat* at Theatre Royal Haymarket; *This House* at the Garrick and National Theatre; *The Tempest* at Birmingham Royal Ballet; *Pelleas and Mellisande* for Scottish Opera; and *Stella* at Brighton Festival, Hoxton Hall and Holland Festival. Opera includes *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Pagliacci* at the Met New York; *Benvenuto Cellini* at ENO; and *The Ring Cycle* which won the Grand Prix for outstanding achievement in

Opera, at Opera Du Rhin. Dance includes *Prince of the Pagodas* at Birmingham Royal Ballet; and *The Rite of Spring* and *Petrushka* for Fabulous Beast. Designs for forthcoming productions include *Girl from the North Country* at the Old Vic; *Saint George and the Dragon* at the National Theatre; and *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* at West Yorkshire Playhouse. Other work includes live drawing for *War Horse* in Concert with the Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra at the Royal Albert Hall. raesmith.co.uk

Jack Knowles, Lighting Designer

Jack Knowles trained at the Central School of Speech and Drama. His work in theatre includes *Cleansed* at the National Theatre; *Caroline, or Change* at Chichester; *Twelfth Night, A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Wit* at the Royal Exchange; *4.48 Psychosis, Travelling on One Leg* and *Happy Days* at Deutsches Schauspielhaus, Hamburg; *Junkyard* and *Pygmalion* for Headlong; *Winter Solstice* for ATC and the Orange Tree; *Much Ado About Nothing* at Colchester Mercury; *They Drink it in the Congo, Boy, Carmen Disruption* and *Game* at the Almeida; *Dan and Phil: The Amazing Tour is Not on Fire* on world tour; *Watership Down* at Watermill, Newbury; *The Forbidden Zone* at Salzburg Festival, Schaubühne Berlin and the Barbican; *Kenny Morgan* at the Arcola; *The Massive Tragedy of Madame Bovary!* for Liverpool Everyman, *Peepolykus* and on UK tour; *The Haunting of Hill House* at Liverpool Playhouse; *Phaedra* at Enniskillen International Beckett Festival; *The Skriker* at MIF and the Royal Exchange; *2071* at the Royal Court; *Hopelessly Devoted* for Paines Plough; *The Kilburn Passion* and *The Riots* at the Tricycle; *Sorrow Beyond Dreams* at the Burgtheater, Vienna; *Blink* at the Traverse, the Soho and on international tour; *Lungs* and *Yellow Wallpaper* at Schaubühne Berlin; *There Has Possibly Been An Incident* at the Royal Exchange and on UK tour; *Moth* at HighTide and the Bush; *The Changeling* at the Young Vic (with James Farncombe); *Grounded* for Deafinitely Theatre; *Tommy* at the Prince Edward; *Night Train* at Halle Kalk, Schauspiel Köln; *If That's All There Is* on international tour; *Red Sea Fish* at 59E59, New York; *In a Pickle* for the RSC and Oily Cart; *Ring-A-Ding-Ding* for Oily Cart, at the Unicorn, London, and New Victory, New York; and *Land of Lights, Light Show, There Was an Old Woman, The Bounce* and *Mr & Mrs Moon* for Oily Cart. jackknowles.co.uk

Aline David, Movement Director

Aline David's previous work for the National Theatre includes *Romeo and Juliet, A Taste of Honey, Emil and the Detectives, Romeo and Juliet, Damned by Despair, Antigone, The Kitchen, Greenland* and *Our Class*. Other work includes *Nothing* for Glyndebourne Opera and Den Jyske Opera; *The Mighty Waltzer, 1984* and *Macbeth* at the Royal Exchange; *The Iphigenia Quartet* and *How To Be An Other Woman* at the Gate; *The Tempest* for the National Youth Theatre; *Dutchman, Parallel Macbeth, Eurydice* (with ACT), *Elektra* and *The Brothers Size* at the Young Vic; *First Love is the Revolution* at the Soho; *Romeo and Juliet, A Taste of Honey* and *Alice* at Sheffield Crucible; *The Merchant of Venice* at the RSC; *Of Mice and Men* at Birmingham Rep; *Daphne* for La Monnaie; *Antony and Cleopatra, Much Ado About Nothing* and *Troilus and Cressida* at Shakespeare's Globe; *Proof* at the Menier Chocolate Factory; *The Owl and the Pussycat* for the Royal Opera House Olympic Project; *Waiting for Godot* at West Yorkshire Playhouse; *The House of Bernarda Alba* at the Almeida; *Dead Heavy Fantastic* at Liverpool Everyman; *Wanderlust* at the Royal Court; *A Christmas Carol* at Sherman, Cardiff; *Tarantula in Petrol Blue* at Aldeburgh, Snape Maltings Concert Hall; and *Gone Too Far!* for the Royal Court and Actors Touring Company.

Gareth Fry, Sound Designer

Gareth Fry trained in theatre design at Central School of Speech and Drama. Recent work includes *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* at the Palace Theatre; *The Encounter* for Complicite; *City of Glass* at Manchester HOME and Lyric Hammersmith. Other work to feature at West Yorkshire Playhouse includes *The Glass Menagerie* for Headlong; *John* for DV8 Physical Theatre; *Othello* for Frantic Assembly; *The Noise and Zero Degrees* and *Drifting* for Unlimited Theatre; and *Waves* for the National Theatre. Gareth is a three-time Olivier Award winner for Best Sound Design, most recently for *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, also winning for *Black Watch* and *Waves*, and most recently a Tony Award, a Drama Desk Award and an Evening Standard award for *The Encounter*.

Michael Henry, Musical Director

Michael Henry is a composer, vocalist, musical director and clarinettist. He trained at London's Centre for Young Musicians and at the Royal College of Music, where he studied clarinet and composition. Work as music director includes *They Drink it in the Congo* and *Mr Burns* at the Almeida; *May Contain Food* for Protein Dance; *Boi Boi is Dead* at West Yorkshire Playhouse; *The Realness* for The Big House; *The Amen Corner*, *Emperor and Galilean*, *FELA!* and *Death and the King's Horseman* at the National Theatre; and *FEAST* at the Young Vic. He has provided live backing vocals for George Michael, Chaka Khan, Will Young and Pet Shop Boys, studio vocals for Diana Ross, Robbie Williams, Billy Bragg, Chrissie Hynde and Michael Ball, classical performances for ROH, ENO and Glyndebourne. Michael Henry was also a featured soloist in Scott Walker's *Drifting & Tilting* at the Barbican in 2008. Recent compositions include the theatre plays *Mr Burns* and *Boi Boi is Dead*; the opera *Circus Tricks*, with libretto by Adey Grummet; *Rocket Symphony* for 500 voices and fireworks for Linz: European Capital of Culture 2009; and *Stand for 16* voices at the BBC Proms 2006. His clarinet quartet *Birdwatching* is performed regularly in the US and Japan. Other recent engagements include vocal animateur and conductor for the BBC's *Horrible Histories* Prom in 2011 and vocal director, arranger and performer on the soundtrack for science fiction series RCVR ('Receiver'). Michael Henry is also vocalist, composer and arranger in the acappella groups Flying Pickets and The Shout.

Stella Odunlami, Staff Director

Stella Odunlami is a theatre-maker and researcher. She most recently presented the sound installation and performance piece *London Wall: 1980 something* at the V&A. She performed in *Exhibit B* at the Midwinter Festival Tallinn, the Galway International Arts Festival and the Asian Arts Theatre Festival, Gwangju. Work as a director includes *Made Visible* at The Yard; *Dies Irae* at Hoxton Hall; *Hidden* for 33% Festival at Ovalhouse; *Preserves* at Hen and Chickens; and *Black Cab Music* at the Lyric Hammersmith. She was previously resident assistant director at the Gate, where she worked on *Joseph K*, *Fatherland* and *Electra*. Other work as assistant director includes *The Revenger's Tragedy* at Hoxton Hall; *Crocodile* at Riverside Studios; and *Bad Blood Blues* and *Come Dancing* at Theatre Royal Stratford East. Stella Odunlami was artist and co-curator for the multi-disciplinary exhibition *Re-introducing Oshun* at the Shonibare Studios and Lyric Hammersmith. She is currently completing a NECAH PhD at the University of Hull, on Performative Memorials.

Fuel, co-producer

Fuel aims to catalyse positive change in the world by producing new live performance. Founded in 2004, Fuel works to develop, create and share a programme of artistic work created by outstanding artists with and for people across the UK and beyond.

Fuel Director Kate McGrath and Inua Ellams met in 2008, after Kate saw the beginnings of what became Inua's first play, *The 14th Tale*. Fuel helped Inua develop this debut and produced it, premiering it at the Edinburgh Festival, winning a Fringe First, touring it in the UK and internationally and presenting it at the National Theatre. Since that first meeting, Fuel has worked closely with Inua, producing *Untitled*, *Knight Watch*, *The Long Song Goodbye*, *Black T-shirt Collection*, *The Spalding Suite*, *An Evening with an Immigrant* and *Barber Shop Chronicles* since its inception.

Other Fuel projects include *Fiction* (Rosenberg & Neath), *Phenomenal People* (various artists), *Under Glass* (Clod Ensemble), *Kursk* (Sound&Fury), *Love Letters Straight From Your Heart* (Uninvited Guests), *Electric Hotel* (Requardt & Rosenberg), *Metamorphosis* (Vesturport/Lyric Hammersmith), and *Jackson's Way* (Will Adamsdale).

Fuel is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation.

National Theatre, co-producer

The National Theatre makes world-class theatre that is entertaining, challenging and inspiring. And we make it for everyone.

We stage up to 30 productions at our South Bank home each year, ranging from reimagined classics – such as Greek tragedy and Shakespeare – to modern masterpieces and new work by contemporary writers and theatre-makers. The work we make strives to be as open, as diverse, as collaborative and as national as possible. Much of that new work is researched and developed at the New Work Department: we are committed to nurturing innovative work from new writers, directors, creative artists and performers. Equally, we are committed to education, with a wideranging Learning programme for all ages in our Clore Learning Centre and in schools and communities across the UK.

The National's work is also seen on tour throughout the UK and internationally, and in collaborations and co-productions with regional theatres. Popular shows transfer to the West End and occasionally to Broadway. Through National Theatre Live, we broadcast live performances to cinemas around the world.

National Theatre: On Demand. In Schools makes acclaimed, curriculum-linked productions free to stream on demand in every primary and secondary school in the country. Online, the NT offers a rich variety of innovative digital content on every aspect of theatre.

We do all we can to keep ticket prices affordable and to reach a wide audience, and use our public funding to maintain artistic risk-taking, accessibility and diversity.

West Yorkshire Playhouse, co-producer

Welcome to the home of incredible stories. There has been a Playhouse in Leeds for almost 50 years; from 1968 to 1990 as Leeds Playhouse and then with the opening of a brand new theatre on its current Quarry Hill site it became West Yorkshire Playhouse.

West Yorkshire Playhouse is a leading UK producing theatre; a cultural hub, a place where people gather to tell and share stories and to engage in world class theatre. We make work which is pioneering and relevant, seeking out the best companies and artists to create inspirational theatre in the heart of Yorkshire. From large scale spectacle, to intimate performance we develop and make work for our stages, for found spaces,

for touring, for schools and community centres. Our 2015/16 production of Chitty Chitty Bang Bang played to over 500,000 people across the country – our production of Beryl played to 100 in a village hall in Wickenby, Lincolnshire. We create work to entertain and inspire.

As dedicated collaborators, we work regularly with other theatres from across the UK, independent producers, and some of the most distinctive, original voices in theatre today. We develop work with established practitioners and find, nurture and support new voices that ought to be heard. We cultivate new talent by providing creative space for new writers, emerging directors, companies and individual theatre makers to refine their practice.

Alongside our work for the stage we are dedicated to providing creative engagement opportunities that excite and stimulate. We build, run and sustain projects which reach out to everyone from refugee communities, to young people and students, to older communities and people with learning disabilities. At the Playhouse there is always a way to get involved.

Website: www.fueltheatre.com

Facebook: Facebook/fueltheatre

Twitter: @fueltheatre @InuaEllams

Spotify: <https://t.co/OnGOZSrThK>

Vimeo: vimeo.com/fueltheatre

Hashtags: #BarberShopChronicles

Background information sourced from an interview with Inua Ellams here: <http://national-theatre.tumblr.com/post/159532606171/in-conversation-with-inua-ellams>

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Perth International Arts Festival

Founded in 1953 by The University of Western Australia, the Perth International Arts Festival is the longest running international arts festival in Australia and Western Australia's premier cultural event. The Festival has developed a worldwide reputation for excellence in its international program, the presentation of new works and the highest quality artistic experiences for its audience. For 65 years the Festival has welcomed to Perth some of the world's greatest living artists and now connects with over 700,000 people each year.

Wendy Martin is the Artistic Director 2016 – 19.

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