



In Conversation – an interview with the creative team

Brian Jordan – Writer
Pia Ashberry – Writer
Scott Graham – Director
Laura McEwen - Designer

What first interested you about the Ker-Ching! project?

Brian: The money – I hadn't eaten for three weeks before I got the job!! Money fascinates me – always has done. If you think about it – some people are really rich and have loads whilst some are poor and have nothing- just because the rich ones have more bits of paper with pictures of the Queen on than the poor ones!

Scott: For me, it was the challenge. I thought I knew nothing about money yet it obviously affects every part of my life. I was interested in exploring this effect rather than instructing anyone about the workings of money.

Laura: And of course the opportunity to work with a new company, new writers a new director and in a new part of England!

Why did you want to come back for a re-tour?

Scott: I really enjoyed working with Sixth Sense! It was also opportunity to do something different, I mean working directly with young people which has been really enjoyable – of course I wanted to come back!!

Laura: I'm a glutton for punishment!! No, seriously, I've really enjoyed the work and we learnt so much from the first tour that it's great to put that knowledge to use!

Brian: The more people who can experience the show the more rewarding the work is to do – simple really!

What research did you have to do for the production?

Brian: Read lots; books, papers, financial help guides. I went on a series of workshops with young people based around money and watched a very good Channel 4 series – The Ascent of Money.

Pia: And we went on a course at Bath University about our relationship with money taken by a renowned money expert – mind you, even he didn't see the credit crunch coming!! We talked to anybody and everybody. Interviews for research were great for this project – everybody has a view on money and most people's views are different.

Laura: I did a lot of image based research, investigating the world of the play – rich v poor. I always try and look through a large collection of art/design/sculpture books as these often provide pearls of inspiration, even if images are not directly linked to the themes of the production. They inform my thinking about shape, space and colour.

Brian and Pia- it must be difficult to write an exciting play about money – how did you go about tackling this difficult subject?

Brian: Money can be a horribly dry subject. We've both written funny sketches about money before and you had to really work to get the jokes in. In the end we decided that we had to write a play first and incorporate money second. An audience wants to relate to a piece of theatre as just that – a piece of theatre. We went for a slice of life story that appealed to us and that we found compelling. Money, or lack of it, is our plot starting point but emotions, relationships and narrative are what grab an audience.

Pia: And within our story we incorporated a number of issues and ideas that would work as starting points for discussions or lessons around money.

What would you personally like the audience to gain from watching the show?

Brian: As a writer your main hope is that the audience “enjoy” the show. “Enjoy” in inverted commas – as, on this occasion, what I mean by that is they become totally engrossed within its world and live the dilemmas of the main character. I would prefer that it's only when reflecting on the show they realise it contained so much about money.

Pia: The questioning around attitudes to money is secondary but I would also like that to happen. Sadly, money dominates our lives even if we don't want it to. I hope that an audience will question their relationship with money and come to some satisfying conclusions.

Scott: I want the audience to have a good time, get involved in the lives unfolding in front of them and enjoy a good piece of theatre. I want the energy and commitment of the performers to blow them away. This is the main thing. If this happens then any information about the way money works will sneak into their brains and the audience will hopefully leave enthused and unpatronised!

Laura: For me it's experiencing a new theatre style, fast and physical. I want the set to be inventive and full of surprises.

Scott, how would you describe your approach as a director?

Scott: I think it depends on the project. As someone who always works with movement I am actually always looking for moments of stillness and silence in a text. I think the heart of the piece often lies there. Not that there is much obvious stillness in *Ker-Ching!* I think it's certainly a breathless experience for audience and cast!

Scott, how do you go about rehearsing a show as physical as this one?

Scott: I have to remember that both directing and creating choreography takes time and we don't have much! As I want the performers to be physically dynamic I need to give as much time as possible to their development. It is fair to say there will be a lot of press ups in the morning again! The cast are going to have to work very hard with each other to be able to throw each other around in the way I want them to! I start by building up their physical confidence and trust in each other and then start to shift focus onto the text.

What do you personally need to consider when creating a show for schools?

Brian: Do you know I forget that the show is for schools! I just want to write the best play I can. Mostly, we're performing in school halls so I do like to think about how to change the space. What can we use to make the audience forget that this is where they eat lunch or do P.E?

Scott: I love the fact that we have had lots of meetings about this project and none of us have talked about the particular demands of making theatre for schools. We are all just into making the best theatre experience we can for our audience. I think that is so important and makes this an exciting project to be part of.

Laura: Well, in complete opposition I have had to give it a lot of thought! As Designer I need to think practically – what is the size of the van we are touring in, budget, position of audience in relation to the set, amount of time it takes to fit up, easy transportation of everything, weight of the set, durability of all set, props and costumes. Thinking quite simply in design terms – there is nowhere to hide large pieces of scenery/ fly scenery in and out! The relationship between the audience and the action is very important and the set has so much to do with that.

So Laura, Where did you get inspiration for the set from?

Laura: As I said, my design process involved looking at a lot of research images which connected with the themes of the play. I also immersed myself in lots of design and sculpture books and saw a couple of exhibitions during my design period. A day exploring the themes of the play at a Swindon School also inspired some of the ideas. I have to say my response to the play was quite instinctive; there was a certain quality and atmosphere I wanted to achieve in the set. It felt important to create a claustrophobic world for Sean to exist in. This is achieved through the shapes of the space and the colours of the set. Thinking about the relationship between the different characters in the play and where they appear from also played a large part in my ideas.

How long does it take to create a set like this?

Laura: My design process has been across several months, although not intensively. As I developed the ideas I met with Scott to talk through how they would work for the play and with his ideas. The build of the set took 2 weeks and then during the 3 week rehearsal period I put together the props and costumes for the production. Now we are on a re-tour I have spent a couple of days resurrecting the set and fixing things! The sofa needed a lot of attention

as I am sure you can imagine!! It's been great to get it all out and remember what happened!!

Well, thank you all for your time and I hope this tour is as successful as the last!!!

Scott: So do I, enjoy the show and thanks for watching!!

