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Far FROM THE
MADDING CROWD

By Thomas Hardy

Adapted by Jessica Swale



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The Watermill Theatre
Thursday 16 April to Saturday 23 May 2015

Thomas Hardy's

Far From The Madding Crowd
adapted and directed by Jessica Swale
Performed with the following cast:

Gina Beck

Bathsheba Everdene

Alice Blundell

Liddy

Simon Bubb

Gabriel Oak

Matthew Douglas

Boldwood

Ian Harris

Jan

Emma Jerrold

Mary Ann

Lisa Kerr

Fanny / Cainy

Sam Swainsbury

Sergeant Troy

Ed Thorpe

Joseph

Designer	Philip Engleheart
Original Music and Arrangements by	Catherine Jayes
Lighting Designer	James Whiteside
Sound Designer	Neil Starke
Fight Director	Paul Benzing
Dialect Coach	Catherine Weate
Production Manager	Lawrence T Doyle
Company Stage Manager	Sara Shardlow
Assistant Production Manager	Nelly Chauvet
Theatre Technician	Josh Robinson
Deputy Stage Managers	Ceire Hoey, Alice Barber
Assistant Stage Managers	Ruth Hills, Izzy Taylor
Wardrobe Supervisor	Amanda Dooley
Wardrobe Assistant	Eloise Short
Set Construction	Belgrade Production Services
Production Photographer	Michael Wharley
National Press and Publicity	Clair Horwood

For Mum, with whom I have muddied many boots,
 ambling along country paths and wrestling with the
 quandaries of the heart.

The Lambs of Grasmere

The upland flocks grew starved and thinned:
Their shepherds scarce could feed the lambs
 Whose milkless mothers butted them,
 Or who were orphaned of their dams.
 The lambs athirst for mother's milk
Filled all the place with piteous sounds:
Their mothers' bones made white for miles
 The pastureless wet pasture grounds.
 Day after day, night after night,
From lamb to lamb the shepherds went,
 With teapots for the bleating mouths,
 Instead of nature's nourishment.
 The little shivering gaping things
Soon knew the step that brought them aid,
 And fondled the protecting hand,
 And rubbed it with a woolly head.

Then, as the days waxed on to weeks,
 It was a pretty sight to see
These lambs with frisky heads and tails
 Skipping and leaping on the lea,
 Bleating in tender trustful tones,
 Resting on rocky crag or mound,
 And following the beloved feet
That once had sought for them and found.

These very shepherds of their flocks,
These loving lambs so meek to please,
 Are worthy of recording words
 And honour in their due degrees:
 So I might live a hundred years,
And roam from strand to foreign strand,
 Yet not forget this flooded spring
And scarce-saved lambs of Westmoreland.

Christina Rossetti

Of all the paths you take in life, make sure a few of them are dirt.

John Muir

“The poetry of motion is a phrase much in use, and to enjoy the epic form of that gratification it is necessary to stand on a hill at a small hour of the night, and, having first expanded with a sense of difference from the mass of civilized mankind, who are dreamwapt and disregardful of all such proceedings at this time, long and quietly watch your stately progress through the stars. After such a nocturnal reconnoitre it is hard to get back to earth, and to believe that the consciousness of such majestic speeding is derived from a tiny human frame.”

Thomas Hardy, Far from the Madding Crowd

Far From The Madding Crowd

by Thomas Hardy

adapted by Jessica Swale

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This text went to press during the rehearsal period and may differ slightly from what is presented on stage.

CAST

(And suggested doubling plot for a cast of 9; 5 men, 4 women)

1 – **BATHSHEBA**

2 – **GABRIEL**

3 – **SERGEANT TROY** (and Matthew Moon / Sir & Farmer 2 (1:2))

4 – **BOLDWOOD** (and Laban Tall / Other Man (1:2) / Old Man (1:5))

5 – **LIDDY** (and Serving Girl (1:14) / Lady 2 (1:16))

6 – **FANNY** (and Cainy Ball)

7 – **MARY-ANN** (and Mrs Hurst (1:1) / Mrs Tall (1:9) / Mrs Twill
(1:14) / Lady 1 (1:16) / Fiddler (2:12)/

8 – **JOSEPH POORGRASS** (and Labourer (1:2) / Inn Keeper (1:7) /
Trader 1(1:11) / Tailor (1:15) / Vicar (1:16) /

9 – **JAN COGGAN** (and Farmer 1 (1:2) / / Trader 2 (1:11) and Gent
(1:11)/ Birkin (1:13) / Lady 3 (1:16) / Porter (2:22) /

ACT ONE

Prologue: An Angel

We begin in a dreamscape. Smoke. Dancing light. Ethereal music. As the light moves we see a face a vision, an angel. And in her lap, a man rests his head peacefully. Then, with a great splash the vision is shattered. Sudden noise, panic, reality as, inside the shepherd's hut, BATHSHEBA throws water in GABRIEL's face – he chokes – he has inhaled too much smoke.

GABRIEL (*Choking*) What – where am I? What's the matter?

BATHSHEBA Nothing now, since you are not dead. It's a wonder you were not suffocated.

GABRIEL The slides – I left them closed?

BATHSHEBA You must have fallen asleep with the wick still burning. A foolish thing to do.

GABRIEL Who are you? You saved my life.

BATHSHEBA Oh, never mind that. Sit up – and take some water.

GABRIEL I thought you were an angel. How did you come to find me?

BATHSHEBA My Aunt has a house in the valley. I was coming back from milking when a dog ran at me, laying hold of my skirt, wouldn't rest until he brought me here. And there you were, smoked like a kipper, as good as dead.

GABRIEL How can I thank you? You saved my life, Miss, and I don't even know your name.

BATHSHEBA And why should you? There is no reason to tell it, for I'm sure I won't see you again.

GABRIEL Don't say so. I'd like to know it.

BATHSHEBA Would you indeed? I suppose you might enquire with my Aunt, if you can find out where she lives.

GABRIEL My name is Gabriel Oak.

BATHSHEBA And mine isn't. You seem fond of yours in speaking it so decisively, Gabriel Oak.

GABRIEL Tis the only one I shall ever have, so I must make the most of it.

BATHSHEBA Mine is an odd name. It's quite disagreeable.

GABRIEL You needn't worry, I'm sure it won't be long afore you get a new one.

BATHSHEBA Is that right? You are full of opinions of me, Gabriel Oak.

GABRIEL Do excuse my words, for I can't match you in mapping out my mind upon my tongue. But I am grateful to you. Come, give me your hand.

BATHSHEBA Very well.

He holds it for a second, and then she pulls it away.

GABRIEL Oh – I'm sorry.

BATHSHEBA What for?

GABRIEL For letting your hand go so quick.

BATHSHEBA Would you like it again? Here.

GABRIEL How soft it is, not chapped or rough or anything.

BATHSHEBA There – that’s long enough. I suppose you’re thinking you would like to kiss it too.

GABRIEL I wasn’t thinking any such thing. But I will –

BATHSHEBA No you won’t. How could I let you kiss my hand when you don’t know my name.

GABRIEL What is it? Oh tell me – you are my saviour.

BATHSHEBA If you really want to know my name – you shall have to find it out.

BATHSHEBA *leaves. Then, a moment in which*

BATHSHEBA *goes about her routine – perhaps carrying milk buckets – and GABRIEL spies on her. He finds out who she is.*

1. A Proposal

A farm house. The chatter of a knot of sparrows in the eves. BATHSHEBA and her Aunt, MRS. HURST, are working in the house. GABRIEL approaches the front door with a lamb under his arm. BATHSHEBA looks out of the window.

BATHSHEBA Someone's coming.

MRS. HURST Who's coming? Ooh – a man!

BATHSHEBA He must be calling for me.

MRS. HURST is rather put out.

MRS. HURST Why so? What makes you think he ain't calling for me?

A knock on the door. BATHSHEBA hides.

BATHSHEBA Go on.

MRS. HURST Can I help you, Sir?

GABRIEL Is Miss Everdene at home?

BATHSHEBA gives her Aunt a triumphant look.

BATHSHEBA *(Whispering)* Who is it?

MRS. HURST Who is it?

GABRIEL Gabriel Oak, ma'am. I brought her a lamb. It's mother wouldn't take it, see, and I thought she might like one to rear. Women often do – I'm told.

MRS. HURST Do they now? Wait there – I'll see if she's here.

She walks around in a circle and gives BATHSHEBA a look.

She's not here.

GABRIEL Shall I wait?

MRS. HURST Come in. (BATHSHEBA *indicates no*) Don't come in. She... might be some time.

GABRIEL To tell the truth, the lamb isn't really the business I came on. I wanted to ask her if she'd like to be married.

BATHSHEBA *can't help but utter a squeak.*

You got mice, Mrs. Hurst?

MRS. HURST Oh yes, a terrible plague of em. Marriage, you say?

GABRIEL Yes. See, I'd be very glad to marry her, but do you know if she's got any other young men?

MRS. HURST Now let me think.

BATHSHEBA *tries to gesture to her but* MRS. HURST *chooses to ignore her.*

Oh, ever so many. What with her being so handsome – and scholarly. She was to be a governess once, only then they didn't want her. Too wild.

BATHSHEBA *tries to stop her.*

Oh Lord, she's a dozen suitors. At once!

GABRIEL Well then. My only chance was in being the first comer, so I suppose that's that. I won't trouble you longer. Good day.

MRS. HURST And to you, Sir.

GABRIEL *goes.* BATHSHEBA *emerges.*

BATHSHEBA What d'you say that for?

MRS. HURST Don't blame me, I don't speak arm flapping.

BATHSHEBA Oh!

MRS. HURST Well get after him, if you've something to say.

BATHSHEBA (*Checking herself in a glass*) How do I look?

MRS. HURST Go on – quick, for he's almost over the hill.

BATHSHEBA *runs out.*

And once you're over the hill, there's no-one'll have you, I'm telling you.

The scene transforms to outside the cottage. **BATHSHEBA**
runs after GABRIEL.

BATHSHEBA Hey! Farmer Oak!

GABRIEL I just called to see you.

BATHSHEBA (*Out of breath*) Yes, I was listening... uh,
leeking – pulling leeks – in the yard –

GABRIEL Well, I'm sorry to've made you run so fast.

BATHSHEBA So you found out my name. And where I live.
It's not true.

GABRIEL What isn't?

BATHSHEBA The dozens of suitors.

GABRIEL Oh. So – how many d'ya have?

BATHSHEBA None. Not one. In fact I've never had one in
my life!

GABRIEL Well I am glad to hear that! I have a snug little
farm. And though I'm only an every day sort of man,
I am not badly off. I've been lent some money to buy
two hundred ewes and when I take'em to market I'll
make a fair profit. And when we're married I'll work
twice as hard as I do now.

BATHSHEBA Why, I never said I'd marry you.

GABRIEL Well that is a tale! To chase after a man like this
and then say you don't want him!

BATHSHEBA I didn't chase after you.

GABRIEL You did!

BATHSHEBA No – I just didn't want you supposing I was some man's property. I'd hardly time to think whether I wanted to marry you or not –

GABRIEL Then think on it now, Bathsheba, for I love you far more than common. I'd buy you a piano in a year or two – and practice the flute right well, to play with you in the evenings.

BATHSHEBA I'd like that.

GABRIEL And we could have a ten pound gig to go in to market, and a cucumber frame –

BATHSHEBA Really?

GABRIEL And at home, by the fire, whenever I look up, there you shall be, and whenever you look up – there I shall be.

BATHSHEBA *takes this in in horror.*

BATHSHEBA Oh no. That wouldn't do at all. I cannot possibly marry you.

GABRIEL Why?!

BATHSHEBA Because I don't love you!

GABRIEL You could learn to –

BATHSHEBA Well I've been trying all the time we've been talking – for I would like a wedding – but a husband –

GABRIEL Yes?

BATHSHEBA Well, as you say – whenever I look up, there you'd be! I shouldn't like that at all. I want somebody to tame me, and you couldn't, I'm sure of it. And besides, you're just starting out and, in common prudence, you should marry a woman with money

who could stock your farm and settle your debts for you.

GABRIEL Well, I had been thinking that.

BATHSHEBA Well then why did you come and disturb me?

GABRIEL Because I cannot bring myself to do what would be –

BATHSHEBA Right?

GABRIEL No. Prudent.

BATHSHEBA Well, then. You can't expect me to marry a man who's not prudent.

GABRIEL That is not what I meant.

BATHSHEBA Oh don't press me. I don't love you and that it that.

GABRIEL You don't... and you cannot?

BATHSHEBA No.

GABRIEL You are sure?

BATHSHEBA Yes. I am.

GABRIEL Very well. Then I'll ask you no more.

***GABRIEL** heads off. **BATHSHEBA** watches him go, then turns and heads back to her Aunt's. **MRS. HURST**, with a letter in her hand, meets her.*

BATHSHEBA Well, I shall not marry him and I told him so. Of all the far born ideas! What?

MRS. HURST 'Tis your Uncle – in Weatherbury. You must go now; you may already be too late.

***BATHSHEBA** is stricken. The women hurry off.*

1b. The Tragedy

Dark. The sounds of dogs and sheep. Something is wrong. GABRIEL watches his sheep run over the cliff. He yells into the night in horror.

2. The Hiring Fair

LABOURERS *are looking for work – shepherds, carters, wagoners. Several of them are chatting. Others are playing instruments and busking.*

WAGONER Wagoner, wagoner – man for hire.

SHEPHERD Shepherds, Sir? You in need of a shepherd?

MAN I might be.

FARMER 1 Be as 'twill, she is a handsome filly but running a farm?! And she a woman!

FARMER 2 These dandy cattle be as vain as Lucifer in their insides.

FARMER 1 Tis said that every night at going to bed she looks in the glass to put on her nightcap proper.

FARMER 2 Aye, but how does she pay?

FARMER 1 We'll know in the morning. Who knows a woman's ways?

They move on. GABRIEL moves past and approaches a well-to-do man.

GABRIEL Sir, are you in need of a bailiff?

SIR No Sir, only a Wagoner.

WAGONER *(Overhearing)* A Wagoner? I'll do it, m'Lord.

The pair of them move off together.

GABRIEL *(To another man)* Sir, do you need a bailiff?

OTHER MAN Where do you hail from?

Hungry for More?

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