WAITING FOR ANYA

Based on the book by
Michael Morpurgo

Adapted for the stage by
Simon Reade

SAMUEL FRENCH

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WAITING FOR ANYA was commissioned by the Barn Theatre, Cirencester where it was first performed March 27th 2023. The cast was as follows:

JO LALANDE . . . . . Jack Heydon
PIERRE LALANDE . . . . . Perri Snowdon
HENRI LALANDE . . . . . Christopher Bianchi
LISE LALANDE . . . . . Andrea Johannes
SOLOMON . . . . . Yiftach Mizrahi
MADAME HORCADA . . . . . Alison Reid
WEISSMAN/LASALLE . . . . . Tom Hendryk
WILHELM . . . . . Christopher Staines

Other parts played by members of the company.

Director – Mark Leipacher
Designer – Ceci Calf
Lighting Designer – Murong Li
Music & Sound – Asaf Zohar
Wardrobe – Denise Cleal
Casting Director – Harry Blumenau
Production Manager – Harry Armytage
Stage Managers – Zoe Morgan, Ellie Carney, Grace Noble, Grace Duckerin
Producers – Laura Earwaker, Beth Geoge
Artistic Director – Iwan Lewis

CHARACTERS

The Village of Lescun

JO LALANDE – (teenage)
GRANDPA, HENRI LALANDE – (60s) (pronounced O*(n)*-*ree*)
MAMA, LISE LALANDE – (30s) (pronounced *Leez*)
PAPA, PIERRE LALANDE – (30s)
FATHER LASALLE – the village priest and church organist

The Mountains

SOLOMON HOROVITZ – (30s)
WIDOW HORCADA, ALICE – (60s) (pronounced A-*leece*)
LÉAH – (the same age as Jo) (pronounced *Lay-ah*)
ANYA – (the same age as Jo) (pronounced *An-yah*)

The Germans

LIEUTENANT WEISSMANN – (pronounced *Vice-mann*)
CORPORAL, WILHELM – (50s) (pronounced *Vill-helm*)
SOLDIER

The play can be performed by at least as many performers as there are characters – or a virtue can be made a of a tight-knit, multi-role-playing ensemble of around eight. NB Jo is on stage pretty much throughout.

VILLAGERS, SOLDIERS, CHILDREN, ANIMALS etc. can be played by everyone.

NB Scene numbers are for rehearsal convenience and unnecessary scene breaks should not hold up the flow of the action.

SETTING

Set in the foothills of the Pyrenees in Nazi occupied France during the Second World War.

THANKS

With thanks to: Michael Morpurgo, Iwan Lewis, Marc Berlin & Julia Wyatt at Berlin Associates, Mark Leipacher, George Turvey.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The story is set in a small mountain village called Lescun, that I visited by chance some forty years ago. We stayed in the only small hotel in the village square. A girl came to see us as we had dinner that evening, carrying a copy of *Cheval de Guerre – War Horse* – and asked if I could sign it. It was her uncle who kept the hotel and told her an English couple had come to stay, called Morpurgo.

I signed her book. Then she invited us to lunch in her parents' farmhouse just up the road into the mountains. So we went, had paté and bread and wine and talked. Her father, who was a sheep farmer, who made wonderful sheep's cheese from the milk, told us he'd grown up in the village during the Occupation when German soldiers came to garrison the village. They came to patrol the nearby frontier into neutral Spain, because many people, especially Jewish people, hundreds of children too, were escaping over the mountains.

He told me how it was to be occupied, how some of the Germans was really kind to them, others not. He told me of an old lady in the countryside who had hidden away Jewish children in her barns thus saving them from being sent off to the concentration camps where so many were murdered.

We walked up into the mountains afterwards and happened across a shepherd milking his sheep. He had pigs and cows and horses up there. We sat and talked and tasted his cheese; they call it *Brebis*. He told us of the bears that still lived up there and how the dog kept them away from his animals.

Then we walked up to the top of the Pic d'Anie, following the route into Spain that the refugees must have taken during the Occupation. I stood with one foot in France and another in Spain, and thought how lucky I had been in my life, my country, never to be occupied, never to be terrorised.

I came down the mountain determined to write a story about this beautiful place, the people who had lived here, the Occupation.

Luckily I had an uncle, Francis Cammaerts, who had been in the French Resistance during the Occupation, had lived and fought against the Nazi occupiers. He was very helpful to me in my research. And thank goodness, when the book came out he seemed to approve.

Since then they made a film of the book, and now Simon Reade, who has adapted so many of my books for stage and screen, has written this wonderful play which captures so well the atmosphere of the book and of the village of Lescun. Go there one day. Walk up to the Pic d'Anie, taste the cheese, and stand with one foot in France and another in Spain, and thank our lucky stars!

Michael Morpurgo, March 2023

ADAPTOR'S NOTE

Michael Morpurgo's stories see the world through the eyes of a child – the erratic, immoral, incomprehensible adult world. The adults can learn from the children; they can rediscover their childlike curiosity and open-heartedness and re-gain a fresh perspective, unsullied by the childishness of compromised adulthood. But Morpurgo's child protagonists are also naïve, where the child doesn't necessarily see the whole picture. This is a story where no one is quite what they appear to be.

The play calls for the folk music of the Occitan region sung in unison, or harmonised, *a cappella*. If the actors can strum a guitar, a mandolin or play the harmonium, then so much the better. The great anthem of the region – "Se Canto" – will weave its way through, alongside the French Revolution's National Anthem, "La Marseillaise". There will also be Jewish songs sung in Yiddish or Hebrew. And the mighty keyboard works of J.S. Bach will be played on the church organ. Humanity is redeemed through the universality of its music.

The story has plenty of strong lead characters and also a spirited community who stubbornly resist their invading aggressor, all of whom can be created by the ensemble. The production will be *Gesamtkunstwerk* – literally Total Art Work, total theatre – with the whole company utilising the practical tools of design, lighting, dance, music and deploying them all to full effect simultaneously. Sheep and trees can be played and represented by the ensemble, eagles can soar in our imagination, children can be pin-pricks of light, startled eyes shining out in the darkness. The bear could be an actor in a bearskin (maybe *Lion King*-style.) They can all be imagined and created by physically dextrous and audacious performers in a bold acoustic soundscape.

The script should be treated as a blueprint for theatrical inventiveness inspired by the director's vision, stimulated by the performers' collective imagination. As Morpurgo says: "The elements of the story, the place and the people are folded into the dough of it. Leave it to rise, bake – and it will be wonderful."

Simon Reade, March 2023

"Se Canto" is the de facto anthem of the Occitan region of southern France that traverses the Pyrenees from the Mediterranean in the west to the Atlantic in the east, and also south across the Pyrenees into Basque Spain. The song is not quite as old as the hills but it does date back eight hundred years to the 14th century. It has been passed down generation to generation by all the inhabitants of that region. Its sentiment is simple but its meaning is profound, and never more so than in a time of occupation by a foreign aggressor.

	1st verse
E SOUTO MA FENESTRA	OUTSIDE MY WINDOW
I A UN AUCELOUN,	THERE IS A LITTLE BIRD,
TOUTO LA NUECH CANTO,	SINGING ALL NIGHT,
CANTO SA CANSOUN.	SINGING ITS SONG –
	Chorus
SE CANTO, QUE CANTO,	**IF IT SINGS, LET IT SING,**
CANTO PAS PER IÉU,	**IT'S NOT SINGING FOR ME,**
CANTO PER MA MIO	**IT SINGS FOR MY LOVE**
QU'ES ALUEN DE IÉU.	**WHO'S FAR AWAY FROM ME.**
	2nd verse
A LA FOUÒNT DE NIME	AT THE FOUNTAIN OF NÎMES
I A UN AMANDIÉ	THERE IS AN ALMOND TREE
QUE FA DE FLOUR BLANCO	WHOSE FLOWERS BLOSSOM WHITE
COUME DE PAPIÉ.	AS PAPER.
	Chorus
SE CANTO, QUE CANTO,	**IF IT SINGS, LET IT SING,**
CANTO PAS PER IÉU,	**IT'S NOT SINGING FOR ME,**
CANTO PER MA MIO	**IT SINGS FOR MY LOVE**
QU'ES ALUEN DE IÉU.	**WHO'S FAR AWAY FROM ME.**
	3rd verse
AQUELEI MOUNTAGNO,	THOSE MOUNTAINS
QUE TANT AUTO SOUN,	THAT ARE SO HIGH
M'EMPACHON DE VÈIRE	KEEP ME FROM SEEING
MEIS AMOUR OUNTE SOUN.	WHERE MY LOVE IS GONE.
	Chorus
SE CANTO, QUE CANTO,	**IF IT SINGS, LET IT SING,**
CANTO PAS PER IÉU,	**IT'S NOT SINGING FOR ME,**

CANTO PER MA MIO	**IT SINGS FOR MY LOVE**
QU'ES ALUEN DE IÉU.	**WHO'S FAR AWAY FROM ME.**
	4th verse
BASSAS-VOUS MOUNTAGNO,	LIE DOWN, O MOUNTAINS!
PLANO AUSSAS-VOUS,	AND RISE UP, O PLAINS!
PER QUE POUOSQUI VÈIRE	SO I MAY SEE
MEIS AMOUR OUNTE SOUN.	WHERE MY LOVE IS GONE.
	Chorus
SE CANTO, QUE CANTO,	**IF IT SINGS, LET IT SING,**
CANTO PAS PER IÉU,	**IT'S NOT SINGING FOR ME,**
CANTO PER MA MIO	**IT SINGS FOR MY LOVE**
QU'ES ALUEN DE IÉU.	**WHO'S FAR AWAY FROM ME.**
	5th verse
AQUELEI MOUNTAGNO,	THOSE MOUNTAINS
TANT S'ABAISSARAN	WILL LIE DOWN SO LOW
QUE MEIS AMOURETO	THAT MY LOST LOVE
APAREISSERAN.	WILL APPEAR CLOSER.
	Chorus
SE CANTO, QUE CANTO,	**IF IT SINGS, LET IT SING,**
CANTO PAS PER IÉU,	**IT'S NOT SINGING FOR ME,**
CANTO PER MA MIO	**IT SINGS FOR MY LOVE**
QU'ES ALUEN DE IÉU.	**WHO'S FAR AWAY FROM ME.**

For Iwan

PART ONE

Scene One

(Summer. The snow-capped peak of the pyramidal Pic D'Anie looms.)

(Cicadas. Thousands of bleating sheep.)

(The whole village of Lescun drive their flocks up to the flower-rich, verdant pastures. As they do so, they sing the "Se Canto".)

(This is the Transhumance, the great nomadic transfer of livestock from the winter lowlands to the summer highlands that takes place in rural mountainous regions the world over and has done since time immemorial.)

(The "Se Canto" is hummed under:)

*(***YOUNG JO** *looks up to his* **PAPA** *and smiles in excitement and admiration.* **PAPA** *looks down at his son and gives fatherly, shepherdy advice:)*

PAPA. Your first taste of the Transhumance, Jo Lalande! Each time we do this, we rejuvenate our flock of sheep, revitalise our pastures, we revive our souls! One day, my son, *you* will be driving the sheep, like your father, like my father did before me.

JO. Grandpa did this once upon a time? Grandpa looks too old to drive sheep up mountains!

GRANDPA. I wasn't always old! When I was younger it was me who stayed out for the summer months, while your Papa here would be tucked up home in bed. It's only natural that we pass on the baton to our brood. It's the way of the world. And nothing will stop it.

PAPA. Nothing except war.

GRANDPA. War? There won't be another war, Pierre. We had our fill of war last time and the Germans were soundly defeated.

JO. Will there be a war, Papa?

PAPA. Not if we refuse to fight one. But the thing about grown-ups, Jo, is that sometimes they are as daft as children.

JO. I'm not daft!

PAPA. No, you're not. Which is why I'm going to teach you the ways of being a shepherd.

JO. I know all about that, Papa. I've learned it all from you.

PAPA. Remember when you're up here in the mountains with your flock, Jo, with nothing but the beating sun and the babbling brook for days on end, you need to keep yourself busy. Milking the sheep, cheese-making, for sure. It's too easy to lie-back and enjoy God's country. But beware of predators. Beware of invaders.

JO. I'm not scared of anything, Papa.

PAPA. You might not be, brave lad, but your flock needs you to stay alert. Whittle a stick, Jo. Pick berries. Look high for the eagles if you must, but DO SOMETHING! If you do nothing on a hillside in the morning sun, with the sleepy tinkle of sheep bells all about you, well, you're bound to drop off to sleep.

JO. I can tell myself the stories you've told me.

PAPA. You can!

JO. Like the story of that one-eyed giant who trapped those men in the cave with their flock – and they could only escape by hanging on, upside-down, underneath those sheep, so the giant couldn't see them.

PAPA. You've remembered the story of the Cyclops and Odysseus!

JO. I like your stories.

PAPA. It's not my story, it's Monsieur Homer's. But I like to tell it.

JO. I like it too.

PAPA. Telling stories to yourself, Jo, making up new ones, it's a good way to keep your mind busy out here on the mountainside.

JO. I'll remember that, Papa.

PAPA. But you've got to keep your eyes busy, too, Jo, keep your eyes peeled. And whatever you do, Jo, never lie down. You can sit down, I suppose, but not *lie* down.

(As the "Se Canto" reaches a rousing climax of its final chorus, the urgent peel of church bells ring out in alarm, village to village, across the valley.)

(The **VILLAGERS** *stop, stock still. Even the sheep sense something is wrong and cease their bleating. Only the cicadas drone on incessantly, eerily.)*

GRANDPA. It's war.

(The skies instantly darken.)

Scene Two

(Sirens wail, trains hoot their whistles and blast steam, as **JO***, his* **MAMA** *and* **GRANDPA** *hug* **PAPA***, who is now in army uniform.)*

MAMA. Come home safe, my love.

GRANDPA. And bring us back a German helmet as a souvenir!

PAPA. *(To* **JO***:)* I'll see you soon, Jo. Look after everyone for me. And the sheep!

JO. I will Papa, don't you worry. I love you!

PAPA. I love you too, Jo.

GRANDPA. Bon voyage!

MAMA. Bon chance!

JO. Bon courage!

(A stirring ensemble rendition of "La Marseillaise".)

(They wave goodbye to **PAPA** *as the train pulls out.)*

Scene Three

(The bleat of sheep in the pastures of the Pyrenean foothills. The tinkle of their bells.)

*(***JO LALANDE** *is now a little older, not much wiser, and he tends his flock alone.)*

JO. *(Counting sheep.)* Seventy-seven, seventy-eight… eighty-one. Or have I counted that one already? I know there are a hundred because I was up at half-past five this morning milking every single one of them. One hundred sheep! That's a lot of milk to make a lot of cheese. Just like Papa taught me.

(He sits, and resumes his counting:) Eighty-five, eighty-six, eighty… um…

Ninety, ninety-two… seventy-three… *(He yawns.)* Not a bad life, being a shepherd, out here in the warmth of the sun.

(A lark sings beautifully, high above him.)

A skylark!

(The mew of an eagle.)

And there, an eagle! What a life! The mountains; living as high in the sky as the eagles. This is my world! And when Papa comes back from the war, when we've hammered the Germans, when all the men come back home…

(He yawns.)

If only I had a stick to whittle, like Papa said. Tell yourself a story, Jo!

(He yawns again.)

I'm too tired for stories.

(He nods off.)

(The sheep bleat nervously. **JO** *doesn't hear them because he's asleep.)*

(A dark cloud passes overhead. A rumble of thunder, a whoosh of wind, the thrum of sheep taking fright, bleating in panic.)

*(***JO** *sleeps on.)*

(A grumble – a rumble – a roar!)

*(***JO** *wakes suddenly – and stands nose-to-black-snout with a creamy-brown bear.* **JO** *is mesmerised.)*

(Then the sheep go beserk.)

A bear!

*(***JO** *careers down towards the village of Lescun, arms flailing to keep his balance, legs running away with themselves, stumbling, tumbling, shouting, shrieking:)*

Bear! Bear! Bear! There's a bear come down from the mountains! A bear!

(The **VILLAGERS** *come out to see the commotion.)*

GRANDPA. You sure, Jo? You're not crying wolf?

JO. Wolf? No, Grandpa. It's not a wolf. It's a bear! A bear!

(The growl of the bear mixes with the march of jack-boots as the **VILLAGERS** *grab their rifles and head up into the hills.)*

Scene Four

(The ritualised hunting party rapidly chase after the bear in a terrifying danse macabre.)

(The bear itself looms large. Baying dogs. Shrieking animals. Blood-lust humans.)

(And the ra-ta-ta-ta-tat of machineguns and hand-grenades and fighter planes and bombs and warfare.)

(The hunting of the bear shows the threatened community rising up against an invader.)

(The hunt reaches its climax – the bear is cornered – the rifles are raised – a volley of shots and a spine-tingling howl.)

(Then a terrible silence hangs over the village. Broken by a triumphal march through the village, trumpets blast, cymbals crash.)

(The **VILLAGERS** *process the bear through the streets.)*

VILLAGER. We got her! We got her!

VILLAGER. The first bear we've shot in Lescun since the last war!

VILLAGER. Death to the bear!

VILLAGER. Death to the Germans!

(The bloodied bearskin is unceremoniously dumped at **JO***'s feet. He is sickened by the bear's corpse and his part in bringing about her death.)*

(The clatter and clang gives way to a solemn funeral march, played on a church organ.)*

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