

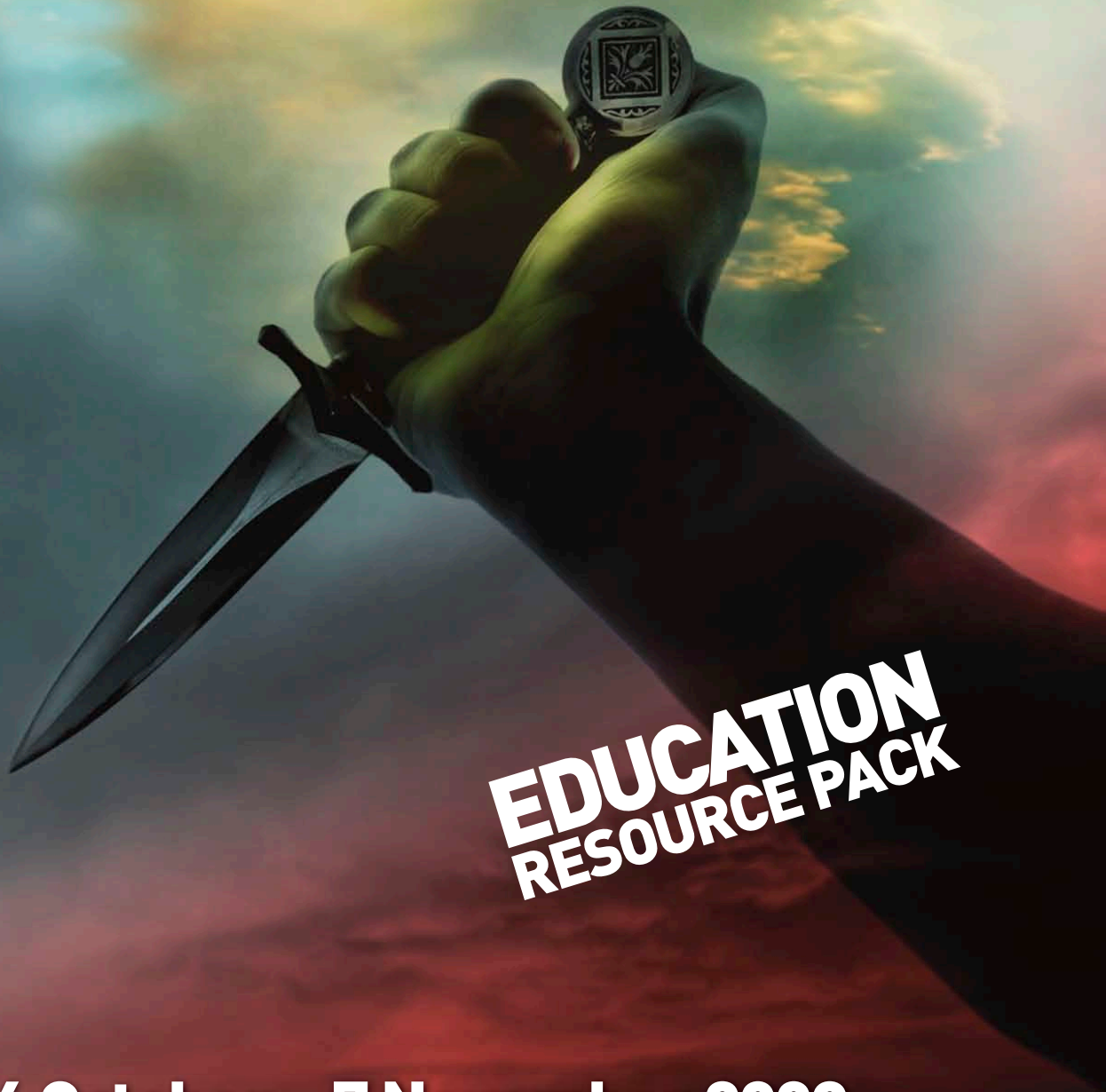
LYCEUM

EDUCATION

Royal Lyceum Theatre Edinburgh

CONFESSIONS *of a* **JUSTIFIED SINNER**

*By James Hogg
Adapted by Mark Thomson*



**EDUCATION
RESOURCE PACK**

16 October – 7 November 2009

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR: *James Hogg*

- **Born 1770**
- **Died 1835**
- **Hogg was born near Ettrick in the Scottish Borders and became known as the Ettrick Shepherd. He was largely self-taught and highly influenced by folk tradition and religion.**

Edinburgh had a great influence on Hogg's life. It was when he moved to Edinburgh that he seriously embarked on his literary career, and the literary circle of Edinburgh made a definite impression on him. Figures from the literary circuit, especially Sir Walter Scott, were both friends and inspiration to him, and continued to be after he moved back to the Borders.

Edinburgh also functioned in stark contrast to the rural life of the Borders – and it was in the city that Hogg recognised both the chance for professional growth and also the threat of social competition. Edinburgh features in *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* as the ground for the conflict between Robert and George, the site where their respective lifestyles and beliefs clash.

Bibliography:

The Mountain Bard (1807)

The Queen's Wake (1813)

The Brownie of Bodsbeck (1818)

The Surpassing Adventures of Allan Gordon (1818)

The Three Perils of Man (1822)

The Three Perils of Woman (1823)

The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner (1824)

The Brownie of the Black Haggs (1828)

The Domestic Manner and Private Life of Sir Walter Scott (1834)

Tales and Sketches of the Ettrick Shepherd (1837)

SYNOPSIS

Act One

Scotland in the 1800s. Rabina, a young Calvinist woman is married to a protestant Scottish Laird. Their tumultuous marriage soon ends, leaving a son, George, to be raised by the Laird and his mistress Mrs Logan, and another son, Robert, to be raised by the pious Rabina and the Reverend Robert Wringhim.

Robert is brought up in a household holding strict Calvinist views. We learn that both the Reverend and Rabina believe themselves and Robert to have been 'chosen' by God to be saved, making their sinful actions on Earth inconsequential.

Robert soon meets Gil-Martin, a mysterious figure who is able to adopt a physical likeness to anyone he encounters. Gil-Martin claims to be a fellow believer in the Calvinist doctrine and they strike up a close friendship. Gil-Martin encourages Robert not to idly accept his position as one of the 'saved', but to work actively as the 'Sword of the Lord', and destroy the enemies of the Calvinist Church. Robert reluctantly adheres to Gil-Martin's instructions, and subsequently embarks on a mission of violence against non-believers and non-followers of Calvinism.

The scene moves to Edinburgh, where the Reverend has been summoned to assist in political affairs, accompanied by Robert and Gil-Martin. In Edinburgh the young men encounter Robert's brother George. Gil-Martin encourages Robert to continue his work in destroying the enemies of Calvinism, instructing him that it is his duty to God to kill his brother and father, arguing bonds of the flesh are not as strong as bonds of spirituality. During a tennis match between George and his friend Drummond, Robert interrupts the play to antagonise his brother. A fist-fight ensues during which George realises Robert is his brother, and after initial anger, attempts to strike up a sense of civility between them. Robert publicly decries his brother for his sins, resulting in his arrest for disturbing the peace.

On his release, the Reverend has managed to turn public opinion against George rather than Robert, leaving George a social outcast. One day while George is lamenting his predicament, Mrs Logan sends him on a walk up Arthur's Seat to clear his head, where he is once again followed by Robert. A mysterious woman urges Robert to reconsider his intentions, but to no avail. The attempted attack fails once again. That night George, his father and Drummond are out celebrating the apparent disappearance of Robert while Robert and Gil-Martin lurk mysteriously in the background. George and Drummond argue, and it appears Drummond has killed George in a fit of rage; the Laird defends Drummond but is soon found dead himself. The scene ends with Mrs Logan's promise that she will find the culprit of the murders.

SYNOPSIS

Act Two

Robert has inherited both the title and the riches of his father, the Laird of Dalcastle. He is accused by a woman called Mrs Keeler of having seduced her daughter and of drunkenly harassing her for months, something he has no recollection of. A lawyer, that Robert has no recollection of contacting or dealing with, settles the dispute in his favour, leaving the woman in his debt.

The scene changes to Mrs Logan visiting Bel Calvert after being summoned to her jail cell. Mrs Logan's initial hostility changes when she realises Bel Calvert was the witness to George's murder. Bel reveals she was brought to Edinburgh and forced to work as a prostitute in a brothel frequented by George in order to provide for her daughter. She recounts the night of the murder, and her encounter with George's party. She tells how Gil-Martin, in the guise of Drummond, initiated the fight, allowed George to gain the upper hand, and how Robert, believing his friend's feigned helplessness, rushed in and stabbed his brother. Bel explains she did not go to court as no one would believe her that the man with Robert, who to all appearances was Drummond, was in fact a different man altogether.

The scene returns to Robert, now in his bed being tended by a servant, Samuel, whom he does not recognise. Asking for his old servant he learns that the man has been dead for six months, and that the man he does not recognise has been working for him ever since. He learns that his companion Gil-Martin has left for Glasgow with the Reverend, that his mother has been missing for some time, and that he is due in court with numerous accusations against him. He does not seem perplexed by his loss of six months, nor by the disappearance of his companion or mother.

When Robert goes out walking, Gil-Martin suddenly reappears, resembling George, and reveals to Robert that it was Robert himself who killed both his mother and Mrs Keeler's daughter. Again Robert has no recollection, and argues he has shunned female company and so could not have murdered the two women.

When the lights go up again, Robert is once more with his servant, who reveals to him that people compare his beliefs to those of Satan, causing Robert great distress. Samuel recounts the story of Auchtermuchty to cheer him, telling him of the religious fervour that was aroused by a mysterious preacher, who turned out to be a hoofed prophet of evil, further upsetting Robert who makes his excuses and goes out for a walk.

SYNOPSIS

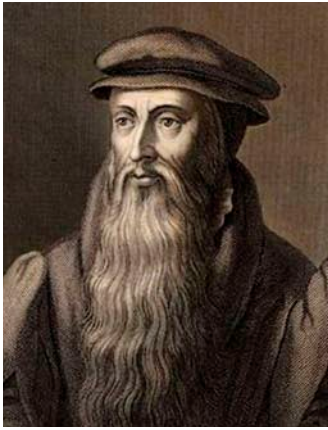
Act Two continued...

Robert is once again joined by Gil-Martin, still resembling George. Bel Calvert and Mrs Logan see them from afar, and disbelievingly pronounce Gil-Martin to be George. They agree to return to make sure of what they saw. Robert, clearly affected by Samuel's story offers to ease Gil-Martin's limbs with water; a guise to ensure Gil-Martin's body is that of a human. The two discuss Mrs Logan as fitting for their next target, and as soon as Robert seems convinced, Gil-Martin sends him in the direction of the women. The women overpower him, accuse him of the murder and leave him bound on the ground. He unties himself and sits with Gil-Martin, until Samuel enters, warning him his mother's body has been found and he should flee. Robert flees, followed by a guard and a mob searching for him. He seeks refuge from numerous sources, all unsuccessfully. Robert seems to finally understand he is beaten, and takes his only comfort in the knowledge that his companion and he are so amalgamated that he will not be alone in his downfall. He accepts he has gone too far to repent and the inevitability of his demise.

Activity: Chart Gil-Martin's journey and disguises. Who does he disguise himself as and why?

Question: Who is ultimately to blame for Robert's demise? Consider the characters of Gil-Martin, Reverend Wringhim and Robert himself. What role, if any, does Fate play in Robert's downfall?

A BRIEF BACKGROUND *to Calvinism*



Calvinism is the name commonly given to the beliefs of the Reformed Protestant Church. The name comes from John Calvin, an early leader of the reformed Church. One of the central beliefs of Calvinism is that of predestination.

“God preordained... a part of the human race, without any merit of their own, to eternal salvation, and another part, in just punishment of their sin, to eternal damnation.”

John Calvin

Calvinists believe that all humanity is born into the world already affected by sin, and so human beings are incapable of wholly understanding God’s ways and are inclined to act sinfully and in their own interests. People are therefore incapable of choosing to follow God and be saved; it must be a choice that is made for them by God.

Limited Atonement and Predestination

Calvinism taught that Jesus’ sacrifice has already atoned for some people’s sins, and so as he was punished for those sins, the people who committed them cannot be punished again. This meant that the select group of people whose sins Jesus died for must be saved, and so are guaranteed salvation.

Predestination is the belief that all humanity, regardless of their actions during their lives, already has their fate decided by God, and that regardless of piousness or religious commitment over the course of a lifetime, they are incapable of affecting this decision made by God.

Calvinism in Scotland

Calvinism played a significant role in the development of Christianity in Scotland. The Scottish Reformation in 1560 – the formal break between Scotland and the Vatican – was initiated by John Knox, a Calvinist, and rendered Protestantism, specifically Presbyterianism, the country’s dominant religion. Presbyterianism is the term given to a number of Churches adhering to the teachings of Calvinism.

Calvinism and *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*

When James Hogg wrote *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, the Scottish Church was going through many changes. The influx of Irish Catholics to Scotland gave Catholic minorities a larger base with which to challenge the Presbyterian majority. Thus during the 1800s, there was a great deal of dispute over the differing branches of Christianity. Hogg’s novel shows the negative side of belief in predestination – the result of a lack of responsibility for one’s own actions.

CAST & Company

<i>Robert</i>	Ryan Fletcher
<i>Gil-Martin</i>	Iain Robertson
<i>Laird/Reverend Blanchard/ Samuel Scrape/Shepherd</i>	Lewis Howden
<i>George/Young Man</i>	John Kielty
<i>Rev Wringhim/Guard/ Johnny Dodds</i>	Kern Falconer
<i>Young Preacher/Drummond/ Linkum/Guard/Policeman</i>	Kenny Blyth
<i>Mrs Logan/Witness/Prostitute/ Mrs Keeler/Policewoman</i>	Wendy Seager
<i>Rabina/Bel Calvert/ Woman In White/Mrs Dodds</i>	Rae Hendrie
<i>Director</i>	Mark Thomson
<i>Set and Costume Designer</i>	Neil Murray
<i>Lighting Designer</i>	Malcolm Rippeth
<i>Composer and Sound Designer</i>	Philip Pinsky
<i>Fight Arranger</i>	Raymond Short
<i>Voice Coach</i>	Ros Stern
<i>Deputy Stage Manager</i>	Dan Travis

CHARACTERS

Robert Wringhim

As the narrator, we are inclined to accept Robert's version of the story. Robert believes he is one of the 'chosen' whose soul has been saved by God. He is ashamed of his blood relatives, who he sees as sinners, and is impressionable and led easily by people he respects. As he believes he is one of the 'chosen' he does not accept the rules of society, and believes he is above earthly punishment.

Robert feels a sense of wrong, but no great fear of consequence. His hesitations are easily pushed aside by the reassurances of his companion Gil-Martin. Robert's impressionable nature often makes him appear to be a confused young man; indeed his feelings towards predestined fate initially seem rather negative and conflicted.

"I did not care for this. I did not care to walk the earth with all my actions meaningless against an end point of damnation. I did not fancy the life of an outcast on God's earth or his heaven."

Robert Wringhim

It is after he becomes sure of his own salvation and his conviction of being a part of the religious elite that his character loses this sense of humanity. His mental deterioration may be madness, or it may be the result of the mysterious Gil-Martin; however it is clear the acts he commits are not without consequence to him personally.

Gil-Martin

Gil-Martin is a mysterious character, he seems to be human but has supernatural abilities. He has no constant form, but continually adapts his physical likeness to characters around him. Indeed, other characters in the play find him indistinguishable from whoever he chooses to personify. There are suggestions that Gil-Martin is otherworldly: he mocks Robert for being affected by the woman warning him against attacking his brother, but his mocking of her as a 'vision' highlights the inconsistency of his own form and suggests he himself may be a vision.

Gil-Martin is an agent of corruption in the play; he is an inverted preacher, teaching an unholy interpretation of scripture, shown to have even more influence on Robert than the Church or Reverend Wringhim. His purpose is to allow Hogg to show that interpretation of scripture can be varied and utterly flawed, as Blanchard states, "*There's nae error which a man cannae weld intae a scripture in a bid to make it guid.*"

We are left wondering if Gil-Martin is real or imagined by Robert, or if Robert himself is lying about this figure. Nevertheless Gil-Martin functions as a personification of corruption and a manifestation of the flaws Hogg sees in Calvinist doctrine.

CHARACTERS

George Colwan

George is portrayed as a relatively decent young man, he is popular, sociable and even attempts to be friendly to his estranged brother. He is easier to relate to than Robert or Gil-Martin. The sense of him being likeable while being described as 'sinful' by the Wringhims and Gil-Martin raises the issue of what it is to be sinful. Hogg contrasts this likeable, sociable young man, albeit with vices, to a murderer who believes he is carrying out God's will and challenges the audience to side with the righteous Robert. This is Hogg's way of exposing the double-standards he perceives in the idea of predestination. George symbolises flawed humanity, whereas Robert signifies the lack of any humanity, flawed or otherwise.

Rabina

Rabina, despite her piousness, fails to impress either her son or the audience. She seems out of touch with society at large, and also unable to break into the fervently religious world of Reverend Wringhim and her son. Despite being a mother to both George and Robert she fails to fulfil the social expectations of a mother.

Mrs Logan

Mrs Logan, despite being referred to as a mistress and a whore and not in fact being a mother, is the strongest maternal figure in the play. She is shown to care deeply for George, who she treats as her own son. She is independent and strong-willed, determined to find the murderer of both George and the Laird of Dalcastle. She is the embodiment of the maternal instinct that is lacking in Rabina. Where the Wringhims state that blood relations are of less importance than spiritual relatives, Mrs Logan shows a bond with her non-blood family that is stronger than the spiritual fervour of the Wringhims. Mrs Logan however, as with all of Hogg's characters, has her own flaws and is, much like Robert and the Laird, shown as a human but still imperfect character.

Blanchard

Blanchard appears as a voice of reason in the play. He neither represents the world of religious fanaticism of the Wringhims nor the Colwans' secular world of vice. He is a religious man who believes each person is accountable for his own actions, and is possibly most representative of the general religious views of non-Presbyterian Scots of the time. However, Hogg's fate for the character means that even Blanchard is not let off the hook, for despite his seemingly moral and honest character, he suffers as much as anyone else in the play.

THEMES & MOTIFS: *Doubles*

Mothers	Women	Brothers	Fathers	Religious figureheads	Preachers	Sinners
Rabina	Mrs Logan	Robert	Reverend Wringhim	Reverend Wringhim	Gil-Martin	Gil-Martin
Mrs Logan	Bel Calvert	George	Laird of Dalcastle	Blanchard	Reverend Wringhim	Robert

Double: two comparable counterparts. Doubles tend to be very similar characters who display more than one decidedly different quality or personality trait. For example, the 'mothers', Rabina and Mrs Logan show opposite maternal characteristics.

“Polar opposites need to be challenged. Characters are set up absolutely as opposites to help articulate the moral argument and the danger of extremism.”

Mark Thomson, director of *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*

Question: What other doubles can you find in the play?

Think about the different ways of portraying characters as polar opposites or doubles of one another on the stage.

THEMES & MOTIFS:

Religious Fanaticism & its Relevance Today

“The Sword of Justice is God’s, and if princes and rulers fail to use it, others may.”

John Knox

The idea of justifying one’s actions, however ruthless or violent, through religion is one that existed long before Hogg wrote *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, and one that is still apparent in the modern era. The language Hogg used, with Robert being referred to as a ‘Sword of Justice’ is similar to the language used in the doctrine of fanatics both locally and globally.

Justification of an action through belief in religion or in a higher purpose is evident in the rhetoric of many figures throughout history who have inflicted suffering on others or believed themselves above the laws of society – from serial killers to dictators.

“Hence today I believe that I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator: by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord.”

Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*

In modern society, religious terrorism has been defined as having three characteristics. All three feature heavily in the influence of Gil-Martin over Robert, showing the similarities between the religious fanaticism Hogg saw in Calvinism, and religious extremists today:

- **The perpetrators use religious scriptures to justify or explain their violent acts or to gain recruits.**
- **Clerical figures are involved in leadership roles.**
- **Apocalyptic images of destruction are seen by the perpetrators as a necessary outcome of their actions.**

Much of the violence effecting the United Kingdom in modern history has been attributed to religious fanaticism; from the clashes of Protestants and Catholics throughout British history (most recently in the sectarian violence in Northern Ireland and the West Coast of Scotland); the Holocaust; Sunni and Shia violence in the Middle East; to the September 11th attacks in the United States and July 7th attacks in London. Hogg recognised the danger of an individual assuming the right to inflict violence, pain or suffering in the name of religion, and his warning of the danger of fanaticism from the 1800s is as relevant today as it was then.

Task: Identify parts of the novel/play that feature the three characteristics of modern fanaticism identified in the above text.

PRODUCTION *Design*

Set designed by Neil Murray



The set design for *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* creates a dark and mysterious atmosphere. The basic stage is black and white with simple, ominous-looking black shapes used to create the playing spaces. On a practical level these shapes are used as tables, walls of houses, doorways, etc. However, they are also symbolic of dark, looming shadows and gravestones.



The plain colours used in the set design enable the lighting designer to use vivid colours to add to the symbolic nature of the set and enhance the atmosphere of the play. In the picture on the left, the designer shines a blue light on the model box to show what this might look like. The blue light adds a spooky atmosphere to the dark, gothic design.



In the picture on the left you can clearly see how the colour red changes the mood of the set. The colour red shining on the striking set creates a dangerous and exciting atmosphere.

Theatre Fact: **MODEL BOX**

A set designer meets with the director and after draft drawings and discussions about the design he or she creates a model of the final set. The model is very detailed and, once built, the set must look identical to the model. Plans and models are usually made at a scale of 1:25.

Task: Think about how you would design a set for *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. Would you choose to create a traditional set or a symbolic set? How would you use lights to change the atmosphere of the stage?

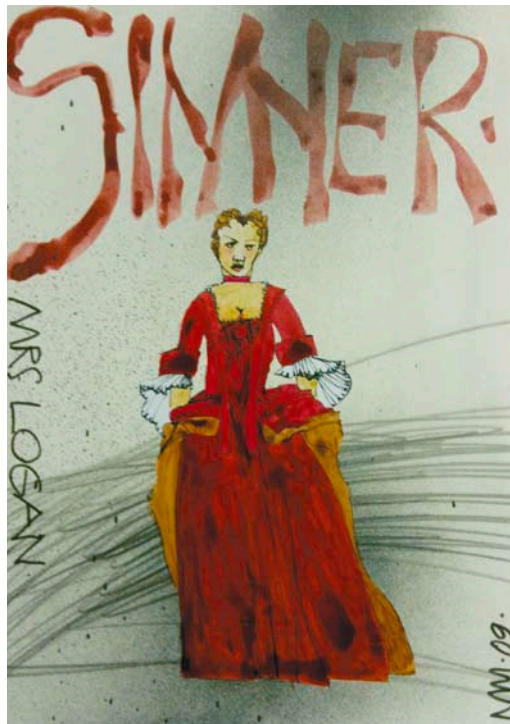
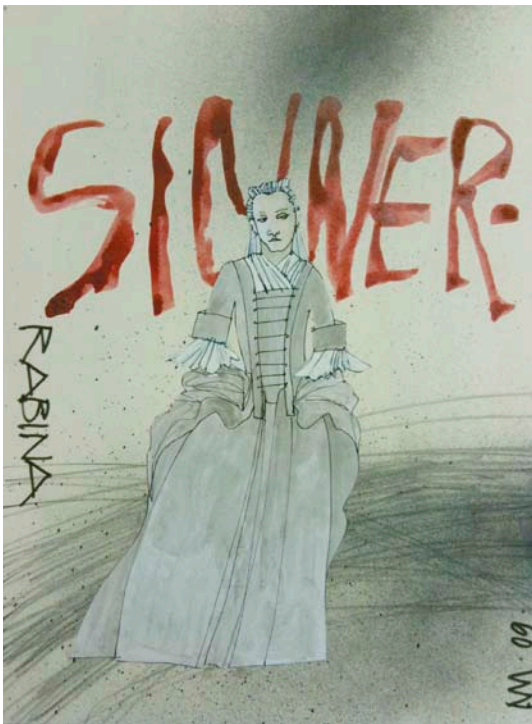
COSTUME *Design*

Costumes designed by Neil Murray

The costumes for *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* have been designed to reflect the time that the novel was set in and the personalities of each character.

Female Characters:

Rabina and Mrs Logan



The female costumes are very similar in style. However, differences between them help us understand more about the characters.

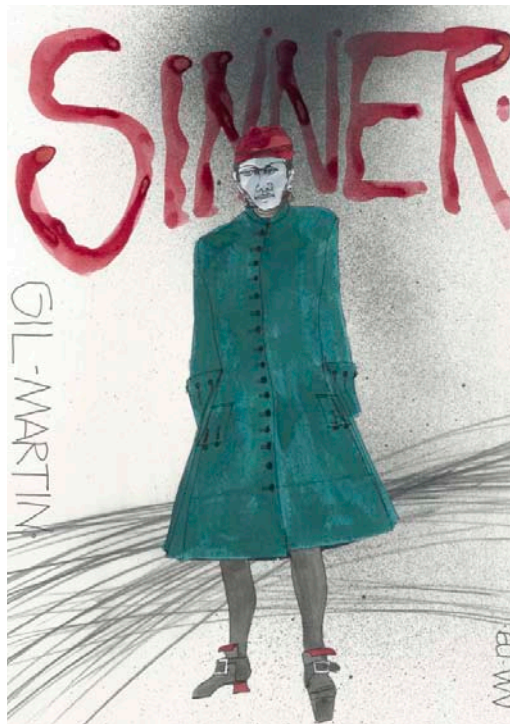
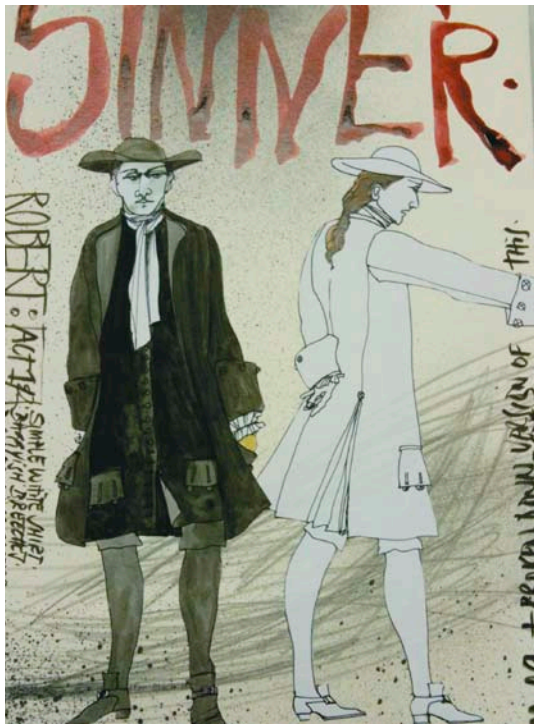
Rabina's costume is plain and a dull grey colour. Her skirt is long and her neckline is high. The colour and design of her costume symbolise her modest and conservative personality.

Mrs Logan's character is much more lively and fun-loving than Rabina. This is illustrated by her bright costume. Although her skirt is still long, which represents the fashion and style of the day, her neckline is low. This lower neckline represents freedom of character, but can also suggest promiscuity. This is accentuated by the colour red, which traditionally symbolises adventurousness, danger, love and lust.

COSTUME *Design*

Male Characters:

Robert and Gil-Martin



The male costumes also mirror each other in style. Both men wear long coats, with big sleeves and buckled shoes. The difference in colour again reflects the more conservative character of Robert compared to the bright, malevolent character of Gil-Martin. Perhaps the fact that Gil-Martin's coat is buttoned up suggests he has something to hide? However, it is worth remembering that throughout the play, Gil-Martin appears in the guise of other characters.

INTERVIEW WITH MARK THOMSON:

On his approach to adapting and directing Confessions of a Justified Sinner



Can you tell us why you wanted to adapt *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* and why you chose it for the Lyceum season?

I did my initial adaptation ten years ago. I just loved

the story to be honest. Hogg is a brilliant satirist, a person who was great at irony, these were the things I was interested in ten years ago. I also wanted to explore the darker aspects of the story, the tougher aspects of it. The reason I choose to do it again is that I think one of the great fears I have, and that a lot of people have, is that of religious extremism creating horror, death and divisions and schisms in society.

I decided to research a lot of the extremist cant of contemporary religious extremism whether it be Muslim extremism, Christian fundamentalism, extreme Zionism, because I thought I might play with the language, and what was amazing was that the language used by Hogg in the early 1800s is exactly the same as the language being used in the 21st century. 'Sword of Justice', all those sorts of terms are in Hogg's novel and they're in the language of religious extremism now, it's not changed. So the reason I wanted to put it on at the Lyceum is a chance for us to have a look – within our own cultural context – at something that's very eloquent about the dangers and the fear of holding onto God so extremely you actually end up holding onto the devil.

What challenges did you find in adapting such a thematically heavy novel for the stage?

The biggest challenge in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* is the two perspectives, the novel being divided between a kind of objective view – the editor's view – and the view of the justified sinner. Whereas a novel can set those side by side in its structure, it can be a clumsy structure theatrically. My biggest challenge was how to differentiate between the two perspectives and present something that wasn't wholly objective but still gives an audience the sense of both. The fundamental thing that the novel does is put a question mark over whether Gil-Martin is real, or whether Robert is mad, or just lying.

Hogg deliberately doesn't give his own opinion. Therefore, what I've tried to do in the adaptation is to not give the audience absolute security that Gil-Martin is the devil and he's real, or that Robert is just bonkers. I'm denying the audience an easy solution where they are able to just park their concerns and worries. In a way it doesn't matter if Robert is mad or if Gil-Martin is real, but both alternatives need to be there.

How do you think a modern audience will relate to Robert as a narrator?

I've tried to create an experience for an audience where they don't really know what's real, so in his encounters with Gil-Martin, I haven't set aside what someone else sees necessarily, I've just created incidences where peoples' views seems to be different from Robert's.

I think people will recognise the Scottishness, recognise traits in the likes of Robert and others that are very, very Scottish. It's important for me that the novel works powerfully in a global sense, it was the big reason for putting it on. What is happening in the world, the tensions of religious extremism that threaten society – this is why I'm putting it on. It's less to do with the particular extremisms of Calvinism, but that's what makes it scary because we see it in ourselves, and in people we know. We can't disengage ourselves from the acts of the protagonist.

As a director, what was your approach to the character of Gil-Martin?

I wanted Gil-Martin and Robert to be very similar physically, and for that to feed the ambiguity of his character. If the devil is a flatterer, the devil flatters you by presenting you to yourself as something attractive. That's the devil, because then you get seduced by the idea of yourself as something special. So I thought of getting the two actors, not identical, not twins, but roughly the same size, the same shape. I'm interested in Gil-Martin being an abstract brother, what the audience will actually see is that they could be twins, almost.

Could you tell us a little about the relationship between the characters, how they mirror each other and the effect this has on their standing as moral or immoral characters.

The really clear opposites like the Laird and the Reverend Wringhim, are the most obvious, as are the characters of Rabina

and Mrs Logan. What I like about Hogg is that even though you look at the Reverend Wringhim and Rabina and you think how frightening they are, I don't think Hogg lets the Laird and Mrs Logan completely off the hook either because of their *laissez-fair* attitudes, I think there's a cost to that as well. It's hard because Hogg's clearly got sympathies and he's clearly slightly more gentle with the Laird and Mrs Logan but I feel that he says they aren't perfect either, there are consequences to being the way the Laird and Mrs Logan are. I always think about the scene when Mrs Logan goes and meets Bel Calvert and she says "I'm not doing anything for you, you're a villain," then actually she is forced to face the fact that she has no generosity, she's got her own prejudices and judgements that are potentially destructive and unfair.

I think that, hopefully as the audience watches the play, they should think about Robert as "you poor b****r, you've been done by the devil, or yourself, or society. You've allowed yourself to think it was great fun to do this and actually it's not". When you commit a hideous act, there's an evil that's unleashed, and Robert can't get away from that, he can't disengage with it, he has to keep on going and perpetuate it, which of course is similar to the thinking behind everything from cults to murderers. "Once I'm on this road, how do I get off?" I don't believe anybody's 100% evil.

DRAMA ACTIVITY: *Gil-Martin & Robert*

Robert: There are degrees of sinning.

Gil-Martin: That disappoints me. Are you challenging the doctrine that we spoke of?

Robert: I don't think that I am.

Gil-Martin: Please forgive me, but is there not enough blood in Jesus to save thousands of entire worlds if it was for these that he died? The Saviour died for you. How can you say there is not enough merit in His great atonement to annihilate all your sins, even if they may seem atrocious and terrible to the ignorant world. Are you rejecting his gift?

Robert: You misunderstand me.

Gil-Martin: Then is what I say not true?

Robert: It is true.

Gil-Martin: "It is true". I'm relieved. You make me happy again. I thought you had strayed from the Holy Scriptures as you and I understand them. God has chosen you for his champion on earth, his captain against the heathen, the sinner, the greed and stupidity of mortal man. How gratified he must feel to have you here to carry His work and word like a trident in the holy war. He has chosen you. You for his sword. A soldier. But what work my friend. What great work lies ahead. I would like to help you, a humble servant. Can I? Can I do that for you?"

Working in Pairs:

In the original novel of *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, the story is recounted from the point of view of Robert. Consider the passage above in light of the following questions:

- **Is Robert a reliable source of information regarding the event he recounts?**
- **Is Robert a religious fanatic who imagines Gil-Martin?**
- **Is Robert's recount real and a haunting account of the activities of a doppelganger?**

Read the passage aloud as a dialogue between two people, then read the passage as though Gil-Martin was a figment of Robert's imagination, then read the passage as though Robert were lying and attempting to justify his actions.

How do the different ways of considering Robert's motivations affect the way you read or perform the passage?

FURTHER STUDY: *Questions*

Here are some questions to help students analyse the Lyceum's production of *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*

How does the set design contribute to the mood and tone of the performance?
How do you think a more conventional or naturalistic theatrical set (with less ambiguous scenery) would affect the overall performance?

Think about the effect of lighting on the performance. What kind of atmosphere does it create?

Consider the use of costume. How does it help give insight to the characters?
How does it help to contrast or show the relationship between characters?

How important do you think the actors' physical stature is in the depiction of their characters and the relationships between them?

These questions are to help with further study of the adaptation

Consider the other ways the story could have been staged. What choices do you think are the most vital in adapting a novel into a play? How would you have staged the play differently?

How much do you think the play relates specifically to Scotland or to Presbyterianism?
Which aspects of the play do you see as being Scottish, and which ones do you see as being universal?

Do you think Robert is mad, honest, or a liar? Why? What difficulties do you think there are in portraying these questions on a stage instead of in a novel?

How important do you think the power of suggestion is in the novel? Do you feel that all the questions raised have to be answered? Why do you think both the author James Hogg and the director Mark Thomson find the ambiguities so important?

Acknowledgements

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