



The Good Person of Szechwan audio described performance notes

Welcome to this introduction to *The Good Person of Szechwan*. It is a Lyric Hammersmith Theatre, ETT and Sheffield Theatres co-production, commissioned by ETT. It was written by **Bertolt Brecht**, translated by **Nina Segal** and directed by **Anthony Lau**.

The audio described performance will be on Tuesday 02 May at 7.30pm. There is a touch tour at 6pm prior to the performance. The performance lasts for approximately 2hrs with a 20 min interval and will be described by Ruth James and Willie Elliott.

"What is the cost of being good?"

In the hustle and bustle of a modern-day metropolis, Shen Te is doing all she can to get by. When three gods reward her hospitality with a life-changing sum of money, Shen Te opens a tobacco shop and claims the stability she's always dreamed of. But the struggle is not over yet. Forced to question the cost of her own survival, she resorts to scheming and deceit to flourish in this capitalist world.

This performance features strobe lighting, flashing lights, smoke, haze and contains loud noises, some of which are sudden. There is also strong language and references to suicide, pregnancy, physical violence and frequent references to smoking and cigarettes.

There is a single set, on two levels, that remains unchanged for the whole of the performance. We move from one location to another with select items of setting or furniture brought on by the cast.

On the lower, stage, level, three sides of the space are hung with three metre long, plastic light tubes, that dangle on long black wires from the ceiling. The tubes create a shredded curtain of light that changes from red, to blue, yellow, orange, and pink, and sometimes a

combination of these. Characters come and go, pushing the tubes aside, or hold them apart to allow larger pieces of scenery to pass through.

On the upper level, three metres above the stage floor, another curtain of light tubes runs left to right for eight metres, across the back of the space.

The whole of the floor is bright pink vinyl and hangs over the front edge of the stage like a tongue. This floor is edged with a strip of neon light that illuminates at different points throughout the performance, highlighting the U-shaped curve of the vinyl. Either side of the pink floor, in the near right and left corners, deep wells are filled with black plastic balls, like a kids' ball pool, that characters sometimes use as entrances and exits, and which also contain props, taken out as needed. On the left, an electric rice steamer sits among the balls, and an industrial electrical cable is brought out from the right.

Access to and from the upper level is afforded by two wide ramps on the left and right side of the space, with characters sliding down on their backs, or bums, or running down and up them. A four metre wide area between the ramps allows for other entrances, beneath the upper level.

As you enter the auditorium, the stage is open to you.

Later, when we visit a tobacconist shop, a fun fair machine is wheeled into the space. The machine is three metres high. The top half is a glass case, with a mechanical three pronged, claw-like grabber, hanging on a chain on the inside. Instead of toys, the machine contains a huge, metre high pile of cigarettes. One side of the glass case swings open, allowing enough room for a person to climb inside. Around the four sides of the base of the machine, painted adverts show Chinese women, with Chinese writing down one side or along the bottom. The images have been graffitied over with spectacles and moustaches scribbled onto the faces in black marker, with some real ones stuck on as well.

The second act begins with a large round table set in the middle of the space, like a two tier wedding cake. The table is two metres in diameter and the centre tier, which is a step higher, is a metre in diameter. The facings of both tiers are fringed with red tinsel that catches the light as it flutters in the centre.

Later, we visit a cigarette factory. A giant three metre long, hollow cigarette is wheeled in on a carriage, looking something like a large cannon. The base has adverts similar to the ones painted onto the fun fair machine. A giant mechanical grabber claw powers into the left side of the space, as factory workers wrap the top edges of the light poles with brown material, making them look like filter cigarettes.

Reflecting Bertolt Brecht's technique of 'Alienation' - reminding the audience that they are watching a play, and that it isn't real life - stage managers, dressed in black, walk freely across the stage and hand props to actors and help to set scenes. A number and title for each scene is projected above the upper level and, during musical numbers, the lyrics are also projected.

There is a mixed cast of 12 actors of varying ages, most of whom are of East and South East Asian heritage. Several of them play many parts, swiftly changing from one to another and back again. The costumes are exaggerated – representational rather than realistic, reflecting the nature of the show and design.

The first person we meet is **Wang**, the water-seller. He's in his early twenties, and first appears dragging on a giant blue plastic paddling pool, wearing a red and black wetsuit, with his feet bare. Wang has short black hair and a friendly, if worried, expression. Once dressed, he wears baggy, well-worn, black waterproof waders held up with wide braces over a blue workman's shirt, but with shiny, neat, black shoes.

Wang is helped by a member of the stage crew – a tall, slender blonde girl, wearing all black, who passes him useful props. She appears at various moments throughout the show, with everything that's needed.

The next people to arrive are three Gods. All three wear long white togas, like Buddhist monks, and wheel on black suitcases. As their time on earth progresses, their togas and footwear grow progressively grubbier and worn, and their faces and bare arms bear the blush of sunburn. The **First God** has wavy black hair that reaches to his shoulders, a full grey beard, and wears brown leather sandals. He also has the largest suitcase and carries a map. The **Second God** has the medium sized suitcase, his dark hair is receding into a halo around the back of his head, and he wears red and black trainers. He carries a large black book, entitled '10 RULES OF BEING GOOD', and, over his chest, he wears a bumbag covered with black sequins.

The **Third God** has short brown hair, black framed glasses, sparkling white trainers and the smallest suitcase.

Shen Te is a young woman, casually dressed in mismatched clothes - grey tracksuit bottoms, a long baggy grey t-shirt under a blue Adidas vest, blue socks and bright green plastic sliders. Over all this, when we first meet her, she wears a fluffy, dark blue dressing gown, soon discarded and replaced by a red and white checked tabard, with a name badge pinned to it. Shen Te's black hair is swept back into an untidy bun at the top of her head and her face is devoid of make-up. She wears a silver necklace with a small circular disc that she clutches in moments of stress.

Shen Te disguises herself as her cousin, **Shui Ta** – with the addition only of a stick-on black moustache, which astonishingly convinces everyone, when combined with numerous plastic balls shoved down her tracksuit bottoms. Later, Shui Ta wears a black jacket, with a badge reading CEO.

Mrs Shin was the owner of a tobacco shop and is a feisty lady with a kind heart. Her brown hair is cut in a scruffy bob, and she has sparkling brown eyes. Mrs Shin wears a shiny 80's blue shell suit with pink detailing, and a large pink bum bag that matches her bright pink crocs.

We next meet an entire family – demanding and shrill. The **Husband** is elderly, and clad in army greens, olive combat trousers, lighter green padded waistcoat, revealing a rat tattoo on his left arm. He has a white moustache and has his short white hair held back with a strip of green-brown camouflage material. The **Wife** is in tight leopard print leggings, leopard print Ugg boots, a padded green waistcoat over a tight green t-shirt with the words 'Just for Love' on it and with her long black hair wrapped round huge pink curlers. The couple have a **Son**, who has a striped cap with a helicopter blade on top, and denim shorts and waistcoat. They also have a **Brother**, in denim shorts, a yellow cap and stripy t-shirt. The brother has a hugely pregnant **Wife** in a purple dressing gown with large purple pants barely covering her huge bump.

An outraged **Carpenter** storms in, carrying a tall assembly of black plastic snap together shelves. He's in tatty brown, stained dungarees, worn over a blue denim shirt, with an empty tool belt at his waist and a blood-stained bandage around his head.

The **Landlady** is an imposingly tall woman, brightly and richly dressed in a gold sequin skirt, gold cowboy boots and pink puffa waistcoat, with a matching pink chiffon scarf, all under a swirling checked cape. She has a shiny black bob and diamanté framed glasses, and always carries two bags of clear plastic with gold chain handles. One is stuffed full of paper money and the other with Ferrara Rocher chocolates.

Another member of the richer classes is **Shu Fu**, a supermarket owner, in a vulgarly checked blue suit, huge shades and numerous gold chains around the collar of his beige turtleneck sweater. He wears bright tan shoes and a single tan leather glove on his right hand.

Finally, in the numerous main characters, we meet **Yang Sun**, an unemployed pilot and his mother, **Mrs Yang**. Yang Sun is a good-looking young man, and wears a long black leather pilot's coat, lined with sheepskin, with airforce badges on the sleeves and front. Under it, he wears green shorts and a white vest, with sturdy brown boots, while on his head are goggles and sometimes a brown leather pilot's cap.

The material of Mrs Yang's tightly fitted coat and knee-high boots is patterned with drawings of paper money and her long, straight black hair reaches down to her waist.

Other characters who appear include a man in a black body suit and full gimp mask, covered with studded straps and chains; a human-sized Rat in grey fur, with a long grey tail, a black nose, prominent teeth and pink ears; a Lawyer in a black business suit with a wide and bright yellow tie, who constantly carries a briefcase; a Grandad in pyjamas and slippers, stumbling round with a cane; a Policeman in a bright green tropical uniform of shorts and jacket, with a black peaked cap and sturdy black boots and an Old Woman, clad in leather shorts and silver studded leather waistcoat, with tattoos all over her arms and legs and resplendently ginger hair, piled high and contained with a red bandana.

CAST AND CREATIVES

Wang, a water-seller, is played by Leo Wan

Shen Te and Shui Ta are played by Ami Tredrea

First God by Callum Coates

Second God by Tim Samuels

Third God by Nick Blakeley

Mrs Shin, a Widow and Brother's Wife are played by Suni La

Yang Sun, an unemployed pilot and Boy are played by Aidan Cheng
Mrs Yang, his mother, and Wife are played by Louise Mai Newberry
Lin To, a carpenter/Shu Fu and Waiter are played by Jon Chew
Mrs Mi Tzu, a landlord, and Old Woman, a Shop Owner, are played by Melody Brown
Husband, Priest and Rat are played by Togo Igawa
Man, Jobless Man, Policeman and Brother are played by Camille Mallet de Chauny

Movement Director	Carrie-Anne Ingrouille
Musical Director and Voice Coach	Lauren Dyer
Sound Designer	Alexandra Faye Braithwaite
Composer	DJ Walde
Lighting Designer	Jessica Hung Han Yun
Designer	Georgia Lowe
Director	Anthony Lau
Translator	Nina Segal
Written by	Bertolt Brecht