

## Cast Interview: Tim Lewis

*Tim Lewis was one of the actors operating Topthorn, and played Major Callaghan in the original cast. He gave this interview in October 2007*

### **Where did you train as an actor?**

I trained at Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

### **Have you worked for the National Theatre before?**

I was in *The Man of Mode* in the Olivier earlier in 2007.

### **How did you come to be involved in the War Horse project?**

During the run of *The Man of Mode* I was involved in one of the initial, month-long War Horse workshops at the National Theatre Studio.

### **What are the main differences and similarities between portraying a character through puppetry and inhabiting one as an actor? Which do you prefer?**

The main difference for me is that as a puppeteer I can channel and focus all my energy into and through the puppet, instead of going through myself. I'm not sure if that makes sense, but I find that sometimes it gives me a little more freedom to play because the pressure – the focus of the audience – isn't on me. I've never done any puppetry before, so this has all been a very steep learning curve for me. I love it, and thoroughly enjoy the work I'm doing on this show, but I think that I'll always prefer acting.

### **How easy have you found it to adapt to working so closely as a team with the other Topthorn puppeteers?**

It's been quite a hard process, simply because of the fact that there are three of us playing one part. In rehearsals there were times when we were literally all pulling in different directions! But with time, practice and a few heated discussions we were able to breathe, move and work together as one. All in all it's been an absolute joy – they're great lads.

### **What do you think it is about Handspring company that makes them so unique?**

They're just really, really nice guys! They have a huge amount of love, passion and joy in their work. And I think that is manifested in their astoundingly beautiful creations. I'm a big fan.

### **Has working with two directors rather than one affected your working process at all?**

It's been quite handy, actually! When one of them has been busy sorting something else out, the other has been available to talk to in their

stead. They've worked fantastically together as a team and very much speak with one voice.

### **What have you particularly enjoyed about the War Horse process so far?**

I have loved learning new skills and pushing my body in new ways with the puppets. It's been a real baptism of fire into the world of puppetry, and I've loved it. The company make up an incredibly supportive and creative team and it's been both instructive and a lot of fun to work with them.

### **And conversely, is there anything that you have found particularly difficult?**

I actually found the rehearsal process quite difficult and rather stressful at times. I think that this part of the process of working on a new play and therefore having a lot of major changes and re-working right up until opening night. My body has also found it quite difficult adapting to the job, and I've developed some problems with my wrists and in my back. But I am gradually learning how to cope with the strain and to stay strong.

