

PROSCENIUM

Outside Edge

By Richard Harris

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Wednesday 7th November to Saturday 10th November 2007
Compass Theatre, Ickenham

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OUTSIDE EDGE

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CAST:

Roger David Hampton
Miriam.....Shirley Wootten
Bob Rob Hurcum
Dennis..... Robert Ewen
Maggie Angie Sutherland
Kevin Paul Davis
Ginnie Denise Bone
Alex..... Charles Anthony
Sharon..... Clare Wooster

Directed by..... Lynette Shanbury
Shirley Wootten

Set design Richard Kessel

Stage Manager Reuben Pereira De Caires

Assisted by..... Caroline Bronne Shanbury

Sound/Lighting operation Mac

Costumes..... Anne Gerrard

Rehearsal prompt Sheila Harvey

Caroline Bronne Shanbury

The directors would like to thank: Bessborough Cricket Club, Kinetic for the
publicity design, East Lane Theatre Club.

The time is Summer 1979.

The Playwright

Richard Harris was born in London in 1934 and is one of the few popular writers in this country who combine a successful career in both theatre and television.

He began writing for the theatre in 1979 with “Two and Two Make Sex”. This was followed in 1984 with “Stepping Out” which was first presented at the Thorndike Theatre, Leatherhead and subsequently produced by Bill Kenwright at the Duke of York’s: it won the Evening Standard Comedy of the Year Award, and the Moliere Award for the Paris production. In 1985 “Outside Edge” transferred from the Hampstead Theatre to the Queens and also won the Evening Standard Comedy Award. All these early successes are very English comedies with settings – an evening class and a club cricket match – which enable him to highlight the eccentricities of the English class system, but he has also had success with writing thrillers. “The Business of Murder” ran for seven years from 1991 at the Duchess and Mayfair theatres and in 1998 “Dead Guilty” played at the Apollo. Richard Harris proved his versatility and scope as a dramatist with a platform production at the National Theatre of his play Visiting Hour and a translation of Ibsen’s “Ghosts” performed at the Comedy theatre in 2001 starring Francesca Annis and Anthony Andrews.

He began writing freelance episodes for British television in his mid-twenties. His first was in Sydney Newman’s 1960 series “Police Surgeon”, followed by several episodes of “The Avengers” and “The Saint” and contributions to mystery programmes like “The Edgar Wallace Mystery Theatre” and situation comedies like “Hancock”. He has helped to create several standout programmes of the crime and detective genres, such as “Adam Adamant Lives”, “Man in a Suitcase”, “Shoestring”, “A Touch of Frost” and most recently “The Last Detective”. He also won, in 1994, the prize for the best situation comedy from the Writers’ Guild of Great Britain for “Outside Edge”, adapted from his stage play.

Richard Harris has been an enormously successful, prolific and popular dramatist, writing comedies and thrillers which have a wide audience appeal; but he is also a serious artist, always writing sharp, witty and authentic dialogue which reveals a shrewd and sympathetic analysis and understanding of human relationships – a quality much in evidence in “Outside Edge”.

Villagers do not think village cricket is funny.

John Arlott

The Game

More than any other activity cricket arouses contradictory feelings – and the full spectrum is revealed in “Outside Edge”. For some, twenty two white-garbed players and two umpires, usually in funny hats, spending hours – and sometimes days – in a field with bat, ball, a set of arcane rules and often no discernible result represents the most trivial and pointless pursuit; for others, it brings moral stability in an increasingly disturbed universe. Thomas Hughes thought it more than a game: it’s an institution, while the most famous expression of cricket’s ability to build character and moral fibre is Henry Newbolt’s “Vitai Lampada”:

*There’s a breathless hush in the Close to-night –
Ten to make and the match to win –
A bumping pitch and a blinding light,
An hour to play and the last man in.
And it’s not for the sake of a ribboned coat,
Or the selfish hope of a season’s fame,
But his captain’s hand on his shoulder smote –
‘Play up! Play up! And play the game!*

Kipling, perhaps surprisingly, is less convinced of its value:

*Then ye returned to your trinkets; then ye contented your souls
With the flannelled fools at the wicket or the muddied oafs at the goals.*

And, unsurprisingly, it fails to cheer up A.E. Housman:

*Now in Maytime to the wicket
Out I march with bat and pad:
See the son of grief at cricket
Trying to be glad.*

Cricket is a rich source of imagery for many poets: Francis Thompson thought it might improve “The Rubaiyat”:

*Wake! For the Ruddy Ball has taken flight
That scatters the slow Wicket of the Night;
And the Batsman of the Dawn has driven
Against the Star-spiked Rails a fiery Smite.*

Andrew Lang indulges in a little cod existentialism:

*I am the batsman and the bat,
I am the bowler and the ball,
The umpire, the pavilion cat,
The roller, pitch, and stumps, and all.*

Bertand Russell also uses a cricketing simile: *To expect a personality to survive the disintegration of the brain is like expecting a cricket club to survive when all the members are dead.*

And Geoffrey Howe resigned because his captain, Margaret Thatcher, sent him to open the innings with a broken bat.

Bernard Shaw saw the game as quintessentially English: *The English are not very spiritual people, so they invented cricket to give some idea of eternity.* And for some, indeed, cricket is the very centre of their lives.

*I tend to think that cricket is the greatest thing that God ever created.
Certainly greater than sex, although sex isn't too bad either.*

Harold Pinter.

*A loving wife is better than making fifty in cricket or even ninety-nine,
beyond that I will not go.*

J. M. Barrie.

*It's a funny kind of month, October. For the really keen cricket fan it's
when you discover that your wife left you in May.*

Denis Norden.

However, the great West Indian writer, C.L.R. James brings more of a sense of proportion: *What do they know of cricket, who only know of cricket.* And, finally, Wendy Cope clearly feels that it is not omnipresent and all-important:

*There isn't much cricket in Hamlet,
There isn't much cricket in Lear.
I don't think there's any in Paradise Lost,
I haven't a copy right here.*

Where Does Your Ticket Money Go?

This season we have increased the cost of our tickets to £10 and, in the light of this increase, appreciate your attendance this evening. We always aim to provide value for that money through our careful choice of plays and commitment to high performance standards, and hopefully encourage in our audiences a desire to return to watch future productions. However, amateur theatre and operatic groups are continually grappling with a seemingly relentless increase in costs and our own expenditure, for example, has risen substantially as a result of the liquidation of Arts Culture Harrow and the subsequent effects on performance and rehearsal costs at the Arts Centre. Furthermore, while professional theatre benefits from subsidy and sponsorship, we are competing in some instances at very similar prices.

Over the course of a season, our aim is to produce a balanced season of plays, offering different challenges to performers and audiences alike and in order to do this, assumptions are made that some productions will enjoy popular support, whilst others appeal to a smaller audience. Ultimately, we try to break even but, as with most predictions in life, we are often surprised at the plays that attract the biggest audiences. What is reasonably constant for Proscenium, however, is that audience numbers per production range from 240 to 300, as a rule.

With costs per production (2006-7) in the region of £3,300, we know that the average show will cost us more than we produce in box office income. The shortfall is made up by income from programme sales, rehearsal subs from actors and backstage teams and, on an annual basis, membership fees, donations, and fund-raising activities, often involving all-night Shakespeare readings or fish and chips. (Shakespeare offers the additional bonus of providing royalty-free performances!).

k i n e t i c
MARKETING COMMUNICATION DESIGN

Curtain up...

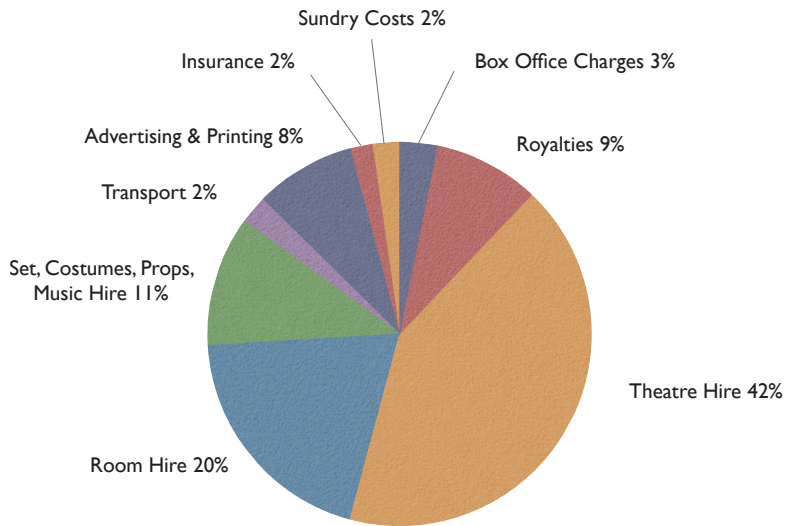


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The following graph shows the average breakdown of costs last season. It's just for interest, but hopefully gives an insight into how we spend your money. We thank you for your support and hope that you will continue to enjoy our productions for many seasons to come.

Average Production Costs by Type 2006-2007



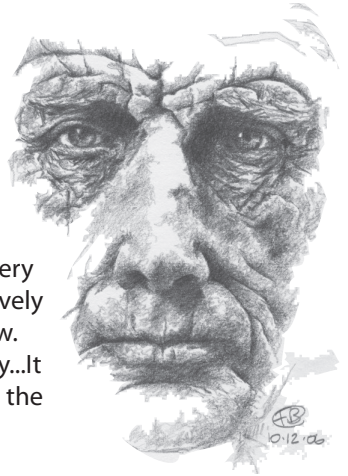
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Our Next Production

Waiting For Godot

By Samuel Beckett

Two dilapidated bums fill their days as painlessly as they can. They wait for Godot, a personage who will explain their interminable insignificance, or put an end to it. They pass the time 'which would have passed anyway.' A brutal man of means comes by, leading a weakling slave who does his bidding like a mechanical doll. Later on he comes back, blind, and his slave is mute, but the relationship is unchanged. Every day a child comes from the unknown Godot, and evasively puts the big arrival off until tomorrow...It is a tragic view. Yet, in performance, most of it is brilliant, bitter comedy...It is a portrait of the dogged resilience of a man's spirit in the face of little hope.



Original artwork by France Belleville

Directed by Michael Gerrard

Wednesday 16th January to Saturday 19th January 2008
7.45pm Compass Theatre, Ickenham
Box Office : 020 8866 7075

About Proscenium

George Woollands and Margaret Rendle founded Proscenium in 1924.

The first production was the now little-known "The Tide" by Basil McDonald Hastings. Since then, the company has performed nearly 250 plays, using Harrow as a base since 1945.

In this time Proscenium has built up a strong reputation for performing challenging plays (both classic and contemporary) to a high standard.

For more information on Proscenium, and to join our mailing list, please visit our web site :

<http://www.proscenium.org.uk>

**This season is dedicated
to the memory of
Roderick Jones (1931-2007)**

Contact us at:

www.proscenium.org.uk

Chairman

DUNCAN SYKES

Artistic Director

MARK SUTHERLAND

Secretary

SHIRLEY WOOTTEN

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