

The Season

November 3, 4, 5, 6
Blood Wedding
by Federico Garcia Lorca
Travellers

January 26, 27, 28, 29
The Caretaker
by Harold Pinter
Travellers

March 29, 30, 31, April 1
Three Sisters
Anton Chekhov
Travellers

May 24, 25, 26, 27
Pygmalion
by George Bernard Shaw
Compass

Company contacts

Secretary: Crystal Anthony,
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Harrow Weald.

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PROSCENIUM

76th SEASON

1999 - 2000

PROSCENIUM

The Caretaker

By Harold Pinter

January 26th – 29th, 2000
Travellers Studio, Harrow Arts Centre

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The Caretaker

By Harold Pinter

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|----------------------------------|---|
| Mick | Robert Ewen |
| Aston | Duncan Sykes |
| Davies | David Pearson |
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| Directed by | Mark Sutherland |
| Stage Manager | Margaret Rudolph |
| Assisted by | Jenny Glover |
| | Crystal Anthony |
| Lighting | Charles Anthony Colin Tufnell Philip McCusker |
| Sound | David Watkins |
| Set Design | Alan Glover |
| Set Construction | Alan Glover Paul Davis Charles Anthony |
| Stage Furniture and Props | Jenny Glover |

The play takes place in a house in West London

Act 1 A night in winter

Act 2 A few seconds later

Act 3 A fortnight later

There will be one interval of fifteen minutes

Thanks also to Colin Hickman, Barry Rudolph and Evelyn Moutrie

Harold Pinter (1930-)

Harold Pinter was born in East London, the son of a Jewish tailor. He was educated at Hackney Downs Grammar School where he acted in school productions. After two unhappy years at London's Royal Academy of Dramatic Art he left his studies. In 1949 Pinter was fined by magistrates for having as a conscientious objector refused to do his national service.

In 1950 Pinter started to publish poems in *Poetry* (London) and worked as an actor on a BBC Radio programme, *Focus on Football Pools*. He studied for a short time at the Central School of Speech and Drama and toured Ireland from 1951 to 1952. In 1953 he worked for Donald Wolfit's company in Hammersmith.

After four more years in provincial repertory theatre under the pseudonym David Baron, Pinter began to write for the stage. His first full-length play, *The Birthday Party*, was produced in 1958. Most reviewers were hostile, but in rapid succession Pinter produced the body of work which made him the master of 'the comedy of menace.'

In 1960 Pinter wrote *The Dumb Waiter*. With his second full-length play, *The Caretaker* (1960), Pinter made his reputation as a major modern talent. It was followed by *A Slight Ache* (1961), *The Collection* (1962), *The Dwarfs* (1963), *The Lover* (1963) and *The Homecoming* (1965), perhaps the most enigmatic of all his works. After *Betrayal* (1978) Pinter wrote no new full-length plays until *Moonlight* (1994). Short plays include *A Kind of Alaska* (1982), inspired by the case histories in Oliver Sack's *Awakenings* (1973).

Several of Pinter's plays were originally written for British radio or TV. Since the 1970s Pinter has directed a number of stage plays, and the American Film Theatre production of *Butler* (1974). In 1977 he published a screenplay based on Marcel Proust's *A la Recherche du Temps perdu*. Closely associated with the director Peter Hall (1930-), he became an associate director of the National Theatre after Hall was nominated as successor to Lawrence Olivier. Pinter has received many awards, including the Berlin Film Festival Silver Bear in 1963, BAFTA awards in 1965 and in 1971, the Hamburg Shakespeare Prize in 1970, the Cannes Film Festival Palme d'Or in 1971, and the Commonwealth Award in 1981. He was made a CBE in 1966.

In his own words...

'*What I'm interested in* is emotion, which is contained, and felt very, very deeply. Jesus, I don't really want to make a categorical statement about this. But, perhaps, it is ultimately inexpressible. Because I think we express our emotions in so many small ways all over the place – or can't express them in any other way.' (1971)



A woman once wrote to Harold Pinter to ask him to explain *The Birthday Party*. 'These are the points I do not understand: 1. Who are the two men? 2. Where did Stanley come from? 3. Were they all supposed to be normal? You will appreciate that without the answers to these questions I cannot fully understand your play.'

Pinter replied: 'These are the points I do not understand: 1. Who are you? 2. Where do you come from? 3. Are you supposed to be normal? You will appreciate that without the answers to these questions, I cannot fully understand your letter.'



...*Alan Ayckbourn*, then a callow 20-year-old playing Stanley in an early production of the play in Scarborough, had the temerity to ask Pinter for some biographical details of the mysterious concert pianist. 'Mind your own f***ing business,' he was told. 'Just say the lines.' Undeterred, Ayckbourn pursued him to a pub where he intended to press the point, but before he could, a man rushed in claiming to have killed his mother-in-law by ramming her up a chimney. Pinter had to hear the man's story, and Ayckbourn never did discover where Stanley came from or where he was going...

...*Everything to do with the play is in the play,*' he wrote in 1958, echoing Eliot. 'Meaning which is resolved, parcelled, labelled and ready for export is dead, impertinent – and meaningless...'



...*If there's one thing* that makes Pinter really angry, it's being characterised as someone who is permanently enraged. It is, he believes, a way of marginalising him. 'According to the press I rage about everything. If I said casually, for example, that Flintoff should bat at number three for England, there'd be a headline the next day saying 'Pinter rages against England selectors'...



...*His refusal to explain*, to seek the roots of his inspiration, can be frustrating for audiences. He doesn't care. 'Will the audience absorb the implications or not?' he once wrote to a bemused director. 'Ask the barber.'



'...*As a director I give the actors* one note at the very end of the other notes, one note: If you want the audience to love you, you're finished. When an audience is a good and intelligent audience, I like them as much as anybody does. But you've got to take a strong view, saying you're going to get what we're giving you, you're not going to get what you want. There has to be someone in charge of a theatrical enterprise, and it has to be the work itself...' (1993)

'...*Why don't you just say the line*, rather than thinking and thinking,' he once said to an actor rehearsing one of his plays. 'It will come and you'll feel OK, really...'



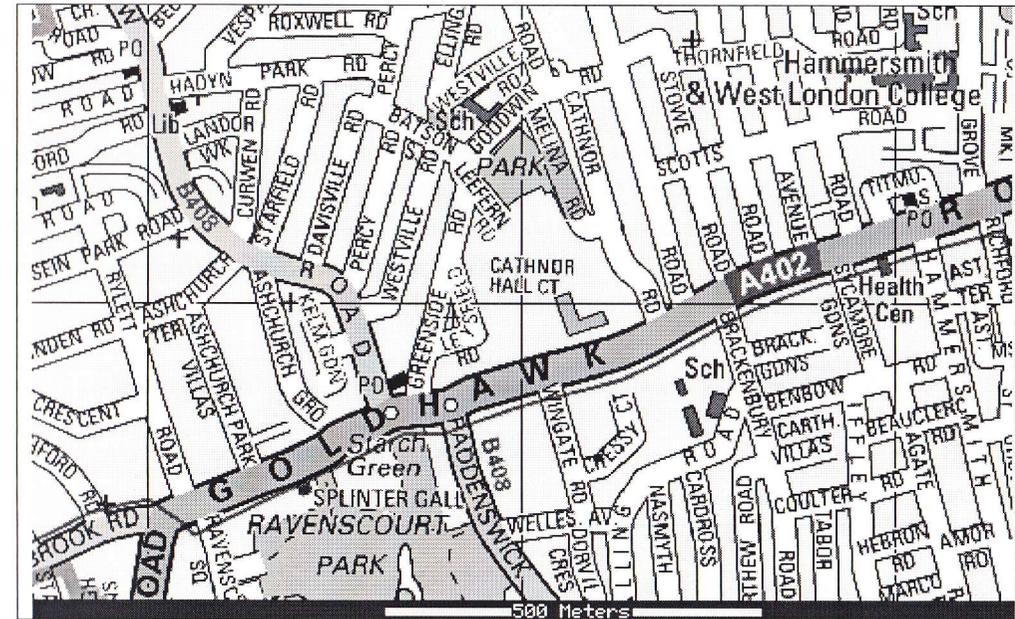
'*Once many years ago*, I found myself engaged uneasily in a public discussion on theatre. Someone asked me what was my work "about". I replied with no thought at all and merely to frustrate this line of enquiry: "the weasel under the cocktail cabinet". This was a great mistake. Over the years I have seen that remark quoted in a number of learned columns. It has now seemingly acquired a profound significance, and is seen to be a highly relevant and meaningful observation about my own work. But for me the remark meant precisely nothing.' (1970)



'*I am not concerned* with making general statements. I am not interested in theatre used simply as a means of self-expression on the part of people engaged in it. I find in so much group theatre, under the sweat and assault and noise, nothing but valueless generalisations, naïve and quite untruthful. I can sum up none of my plays. I can describe none of them except to say: "This is what happened. This is what they say. This is what they did."



'...*I'm well aware* that I have been described in some quarters as being 'enigmatic, taciturn, terse, prickly, explosive and forbidding.' Well, I do have my moods like anyone else, I won't deny it. But my writing life ... has been informed by quite a different set of characteristics which have nothing whatsoever to do with those descriptions. Quite simply, my writing life has been one of relish, challenge, excitement...'



Last Words...

Harold Pinter was at the funeral of the distinguished journalist Charles Wintour yesterday. Some felt his reading, a passage from his own work, *The Caretaker*, was odd, however. Must have been his favourite play.
(Mark Inglefield, *The Times* 14/12/1999)

Sources:

Stephen Moss, *The Guardian*, 4/9/99
Michael Scott (editor), *Harold Pinter - The Birthday Party, The Caretaker, The Homecoming - A Casebook* (Macmillan, 1986)

Further reading:

Michael Billington *The Life and Work of Harold Pinter* (Faber, 1996)
Mel Gussow *Conversations With Pinter* (Nick Hern Books)

Proscenium

George Woollands and Margaret Rendle founded Proscenium in 1924. The company's first production was the now little-known *The Tide*, by Basil McDonald Hastings. Since then the company has performed nearly two hundred and fifty 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.

If you would like to find out more about Proscenium, please contact:

The Secretary, Proscenium, 0181.954.2761

Our Next Production

Three Sisters

By Anton Chekhov

Three Sisters was first staged nearly one hundred years ago in January 1901, but the play can still reach out and touch its audience now. The themes of the play are universal, and it is the very ordinariness of the characters which seems to address us personally. The Prozovs and friends are just like us: laughing, hoping, looking forward – just living.

At the Travellers Studio, Harrow Arts Centre, March 29th to April 1st 2000

For further details contact

Proscenium Box Office 0181.422.0400

In accordance with the requirements of the Council:
"Persons shall not be permitted to sit or stand in any of the gangways intersecting the seating, or to sit in any of the other gangways."