

PROSCENIUM

Home

David Storey



7.45pm Compass Theatre, Ickenham

Tickets £10

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Wednesday 10th March to Saturday 13th March 2009
Compass Theatre, Ickenham

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Cast

Harry..... Colin Hickman
Jack Duncan Sykes
Alfred Robert Ewen
Marjorie..... Anne Gerrard
Kathleen Evelyn Moutrie

Directed by..... Crystal Anthony

Stage Manager..... Margaret Rudolph
Lighting and Sound..... Mark Sutherland.

The action passes on the terrace of a house

Act 1 Scene 1 Morning
Scene 2..... A short time later

Act 2 Afternoon

The Author

Introduction

David Storey has the rare distinction of being a successful and well-respected dramatist and an equally successful novelist – and he has published a volume of poetry. The plays have been, for the most part, naturalistic portraits of societies revealed through very particular central events: the behind-the-scenes rituals of a rugby team (*The Changing Room*), the erection of a marquee for a wedding reception (*The Contractor*), a day in the life of an art college (*Life Class*). Most of them have been inspired, to a certain degree, by personal experience.

Early Life

David Storey was born in 1933, the third son of a miner, living on a housing estate in Wakefield. Though there was a colliery at either end of the estate, it was not exclusively a mining community, and in the Storey household, at least, there was no question of anyone following in paternal footsteps. ‘My parents were determined that their children shouldn’t go into coal mining. My father described it as working like a rat in a hole, and he certainly didn’t want his children to follow on from that.’ Similarly the father in *In Celebration* tells his sons: ‘I’ve spent half my life making sure none of you went down the pit.’

Thus, with his parents’ support, David gained entry to Queen Elizabeth’s grammar school, Wakefield. But though the future was obviously rosier for him than for many of his colliery-bound contemporaries, it nevertheless became apparent to him that his destiny was being mapped out in a similar way. ‘We were all embarking on the same rails, ones which were going to carry us to a predetermined end, i.e. we’d all end up as schoolteachers or professionals of some sort.’ So he decided at 15 that he was going to be an artist and a writer, and on leaving school two years later informed his parents that he was bound not for university but for an art school. ‘My father and mother thought that the notion of being an artist was a waste of their efforts ... financially they washed their hands of me – not emotionally – but they said it didn’t seem reasonable for them to go on supporting me.

Luckily for young Storey, his artistic potential was matched by athletic prowess, and by signing a 14 year contract to play professional rugby league for Leeds he was able to finance his art studies. After two years at Wakefield Art School he won a scholarship to the Slade in London and though his contract stipulated that he should live within 20 miles of the ground, the club allowed him to go to London, and during term time paid for him to return for matches at weekends. This was not entirely a comfortable arrangement: he felt 'the other players, young coal miners, resented the artist swanning in for matches. At the Slade I was seen as a bit of an oaf. I only really felt at home in the train.'

First Writing

He left the Slade in 1956, decided to stay in London, bought himself out of the contract with Leeds, began work as a supply teacher and began to send his novels on the publishers' round. One of the seven novels he wrote between 1952 and 1960 was *This Sporting Life* and despite several rewrites it failed to find a publisher. Coming home at the beginning of one half-term in 1958 to find another rejection he began to wonder if he was writing in the right medium: 'Every novel I was sending out was being rejected and I thought I could write a play over a half-term week-end, and get down everything I felt about my situation; it wouldn't take like since there was only dialogue and it didn't require the descriptive passages of a novel' (This may sound like the naivety of a novice but Storey has tended to write most of his plays in a matter of days).

The result of the week-end was a play, *To Die with the Philistines* about a schoolteacher cracking up – 'which I felt I was going to do if I kept on doing it much longer'. Indeed Arthur Middleton, the anti-hero, not only went mad, but ended up committing suicide.

In 1960 he finally found a publisher for *This Sporting Life*, which was both a critical and popular success, and was followed by *Flight into Camden* and *Radcliffe*, and Storey was seen as a member of the Northern, working class realist writers, who included Alan Sillitoe, John Braine and Stan Barstow.

The success of the film of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* led to an

invitation to write the screenplay for a film of *This Sporting Life*, to be directed by Lindsay Anderson.

The Dramatist

This experience inspired him to try to get his first play performed and in 1966, with a new non-suicidal ending and a new title, *The Resurrection of Arthur Middleton* opened at the Traverse in Edinburgh. The following year the play was produced at the Royal Court, transferred to the West End and Storey shared the Evening Standard's Most Promising Playwright Award with Tom Stoppard.

The experience of seeing *Arthur Middleton* on the stage inspired him to write a series of plays for the Royal Court, most directed by Lindsay Anderson: 'I felt at home at the Royal Court. The whole atmosphere of the place was conducive to collaborative work, about which at that point I knew very little – I don't think I'd been to the theatre more than about a dozen times.'

Storey has talked of his plays falling into three broad categories. First, 'traditional plays of relationships' as in the case of *In Celebration* which dramatises the contrast between the contentment of the coal-mining father and his 'gentrified', professional sons. Secondly the 'work plays' such as *The Contractor* and *The Changing Room*, and finally 'the more overly poetic style' of *Cromwell* and, in particular, *Home*.

The Play

Home was produced at the Royal Court in 1970 and came very quickly after *The Contractor* which moved Harold Hobson to write in the Sunday Times: 'Improbable as it might seem that any author could in the space of a few months write two plays equally haunting and equally concerned with a deep and inexplicable, or at least unexplained, sadness, this is what Mr Storey has achieved. Yet the script of *Home* could not have been more different from its naturalistic predecessor, with its spare, enigmatic dialogue reminiscent of Pinter and Beckett.'

"The Chekhov of the North" was Dominic Dromgoole's description of Storey when he revived *Home* for the Oxford Stage Company. 'They

have a theatricality that people love – there is no more true inheritor of Chekhov's giftthe concentration on atmosphere and feeling, being in no hurry to make things happen (adding that Storey would probably regard that as 'complete cock'). Like Chekhov Storey rarely writes about the ambitious or the successful, being interested, as he himself said, not in rebels, or even in misfits but in 'liabilities'.

Although there are moments of comic resolve and moments when the characters connect, *Home* is a study of loneliness, where the characters reflect on families, on an England long gone, and which probably never existed, and on the war.

Goodbye, by Alun Lewis

So we must say Goodbye, my darling,
And go, as lovers go, for ever;
Tonight remains, to pack and fix on labels
And make an end of lying down together.

I put a final shilling in the gas,
And watch you slip your dress below your knees
And lie so still I hear your rustling comb
Modulate the autumn in the trees.

And all the countless things I shall remember
Lay mummy-cloth of silence round my head;
I fill the carafe with a drink of water;
You say, 'We paid a guinea for this bed,'
And then, 'We'll leave some gas, a little warmth
For the next resident, and these dry flowers,'
And turn your face away, afraid to speak
The big word, that Eternity is ours.

Your kisses close my eyes and yet you stare
As though God struck a child with nameless fears;
Perhaps the water glitters and discloses
Time's chalice and its limpid useless tears.

Everything we renounce except ourselves;
Selfishness is the last of all to go;
Our sighs are exhalations of the earth,
Our footprints leave a track across the snow.

We make the universe to be our home,
Our nostrils took the wind to be our breath,
Our hearts are massive towers of delight,
We stride across the seven seas of death.

Yet when all's done you'll keep the emerald
I placed upon your finger in the street;
And I will keep the patches that you sewed
On my old battledress tonight, my sweet.

Our Next Production

The Bacchae

By Euripedes - A version by David Greig

One of the greatest of all Greek tragedies – savage, comic and intensely lyrical – The Bacchae powerfully dramatises the conflict between the emotional and rational sides of the human psyche. The magnetic Dionysos – icon, hedonist, god – returns home with his cult of female followers to exact his revenge on Thebes, unleashing the full force of female ecstasy on the city.

Directed by Kathleen Jones

Wednesday 4th November to Saturday 7th November 2009

7.45pm Compass Theatre, Ickenham

Box Office : 020 8866 7075

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