



**ROSENCRANTZ
and GUILDENSTERN
are DEAD
by Tom Stoppard**



The Questors Theatre Company

Ten of the Best

In April 1964 Alfred Emmet's production of *Brand* opened the new theatre with a Gala Performance in the presence of Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother. The tenth birthday of the new playhouse provides an opportunity to look back on our work of the past decade, to see what we have done, what we have not done and to assess how well we have done.

As far as what we have done is concerned, the main acting group has presented no less than one hundred and thirty-six plays. One hundred and ten of these were full length plays and forty-one were first productions. Inevitably English writers predominated among the ninety-one authors represented, but forty-two of the plays came from thirteen different countries, France, America, Russia, Norway, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Sweden, Rumania, Italy, Greece, Switzerland and Hungary. After Shakespeare, with eleven plays, the best represented authors were James Saunders with six, and Ibsen and Pinter with four each.

On the face of it these figures would seem to justify our claim that we present 'the very best in world drama' but a closer examination of the list reveals a number of surprising gaps. Only *Hecabe* and *Oedipus* are from the classical theatre of Greece and Rome. Only *Edward II*, *The Alchemist* and *The Duchess of Malfi* represent the English Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre outside the Shakespearean canon. Only *The Country Wife*, *The Provok'd Wife*, *The Beaux Stratagem*, *The Way of the World*, *She Stoops to Conquer* and *The School for Scandal* are from the century-and-a-half of classic English comedy which followed the Restoration. There is only one full length Strindberg, and only two plays by Brecht, only one by Coward, and only one by Wilde. From the modern English theatre, Osborne, Arden and Eliot are only represented by one play apiece, while from the modern American theatre, O'Neil, Miller and Williams are not represented at all.

Finally, to help me in assessing how well we have done, I asked a number of members who have been active for the past decade, to list their ten best productions of the last ten years. It was certainly a difficult task, and that was reflected in many of the replies I received. It was also, I hope, an interesting and worthwhile exercise, and that again was reflected in many of the replies — "It made me very nostalgic brooding over it", "It revived many happy memories", "Thank you for stirring up some pleasant memories" and "We trust you enjoy the sifting process as much as we did the selection".

For what it is worth, the eleven best — for there was a tie at tenth place — were, in strict chronological order:

- 1965— Sardou's *Let's Get a Divorce* directed by Alan Chambers.
- 1966— Saunders' *A Scent of Flowers* directed by Peter Jeffries.
- 1967— Brecht's *Mother Courage* directed by David Gower.
- 1968— Pinter's *The Homecoming* directed by Stephen Hollis.
- 1968— Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* directed by Alfred Emmet.
- 1969— Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* directed by David Gower.
- 1970— Lawrence's *A Collier's Friday Night* directed by Michael Custance.
- 1971— Seneca's *Oedipus* directed by David Gower.
- 1972— Saunders' *Hans Kohlhaas* directed by Bill McLaughlin.
- 1972— Orkeny's *Catsplay* directed by Spencer Butler.
- 1973— Shakespeare's *As You Like It* directed by Michael Custance.

If anything, I suspect that this list goes some way to supporting my own view that there is a very real Questors style and tradition, based essentially on respect for the text. I have always believed that we are a writers' theatre, and that our best work is achieved often by small casts, working closely together, exploring the script and seeking to discover and present the author's intentions. Where we have tried to superimpose our own ideas on those of the writer's, we have — not surprisingly perhaps — been singularly unsuccessful.

It might have been interesting to discover the ten worst productions of the past decade, and at least one of my sample produced a list of 'most especial brickbats', but this is a birthday and a time for celebration, and perhaps such a list is best left for another, less happy, occasion!

Martin Bowley
Chairman

From De Profundis

by Oscar Wilde

I know nothing in all Drama more incomparable from the point of view of Art, or more suggestive in its subtlety of observation, than Shakespeare's drawing of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. They are Hamlet's college friends. They have been his companions. They bring with them memories of pleasant days together. At the moment when they come across him in the play he is staggering under the weight of a burden intolerable to one of his temperament..... Of all this, Guildenstern and Rosencrantz realise nothing. They bow and smirk and smile, and what the one says the other echoes with sicklier iteration.

When at last, by means of the play within the play and the puppets in their dalliance, Hamlet 'catches the conscience of the King', and drives the wretched man in terror from his throne, Guildenstern and Rosencrantz see no more in his conduct than a rather painful breach of court etiquette. That is as far as they can attain to in 'the contemplation of the spectacle of life with appropriate emotions'. They are close to his secret and know nothing of it. Nor would there be any use in telling them. They are little cups that can hold so much and no more.

Towards the close, it is suggested that, caught in a cunning spring set for another, they have met, or may meet, with a violent and sudden death. But a tragic ending of this kind, though touched by Hamlet's humour with something of the surprise and justice of comedy, is really not for such as they. They never die. Horatio who, in order to report Hamlet and his cause aright to the unsatisfied'

Absents him from felicity awhile

And in this harsh world draws his breath in pain,

dies, though not before an audience, and leaves no brother. But Guildenstern and Rosencrantz are as immortal as Angelo and Tartuffe and should rank with them. They are what modern life has contributed to the antique ideal of friendship. He who writes a new *De Amicitia* must find a niche for them and praise them in Tuscan prose. They are types fixed for all time. To censure them would show a lack of appreciation. They are merely out of their sphere: that is all.

ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN are DEAD by Tom Stoppard

DIRECTED BY	BILL McLAUGHLIN
Setting designed by	DAVID WATERHOUSE
Costumes designed by	MARY ANDERSON
with	MAUD CULHANE
Mime by	WYLLIE LONGMORE
Lighting by	BOB HARRIS

Music by MARC WILKINSON
(composed for the National Theatre production)

First performance: Saturday 20th April 1974

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead

ROSENCRANTZ	Neville Cruttenden
GUILDENSTERN	Duncan Livingstone
THE PLAYER	David Gower
ALFRED	Gavin McQueen
TRAGEDIANS	Richard Lewis Wyllie Longmore Paul Philpott Brian Rich
HAMLET	Richard Gaunt
OPHELIA	Rosemary Parry Jones
CLAUDIUS	Kenneth Ratcliffe
GERTRUDE	Ruth Tremayne-Smith
POLONIUS	Philip Remington
HORATIO	Alan Chisholm
1st AMBASSADOR	John Holloway
COURTIERS AND ATTENDANTS	Alfred Anderson Michael Bridgeman Alan Chisholm Elizabeth Chisholm Cathy Fraser John Holloway Christopher H. Lee Grant Wright

THE ACTION TAKES PLACE WITHIN AND AROUND
THE ACTION OF *HAMLET*

There will be two intervals of 10 minutes

<i>Stage Manager</i>	Derek Arnold
<i>Deputy Stage Manager</i>	Christopher H. Lee
<i>Assistant Stage Managers</i>	John Barber John Clayton Jenny Jay Andrew Muir Sue Sotheran
<i>Lighting</i>	Bob Harris Graeme Holford Leslie Smith
<i>Sound</i>	Steve Shedlock John Boyce
<i>Construction</i>	Geoff Dobson Eleanor Panayi Bob Stock David Anning
<i>Props</i>	Jean Derby Janet Woolbar
<i>Wardrobe Mistress</i>	Freddie Edwards
<i>Assistants in all departments</i>	Peter Phillips Jane Longbottom

Costumes made by Questors wardrobe department and
from the Royal Shakespeare Company wardrobe.

Publicity design – Mary Anderson
Production photographs – Marcel Hodges

Synopsis

Hamlet, king of Denmark, has been murdered by his brother Claudius, who has seduced Gertrude, the king's wife. Claudius has supplanted on the throne the dead man's son — also named Hamlet — and married the widow with indecent haste. Young Hamlet meets the ghost of his dead father, who relates the circumstances of his murder and demands vengeance. Hamlet vows obedience, and counterfeits madness to escape the suspicion that he is threatening danger to the king.

His behaviour is attributed to love for Ophelia (daughter of Polonius, the court Chamberlain), whom he has previously courted but now treats rudely. He tests the ghost's story by having a play acted before the king, reproducing the circumstances of the murder, and the king betrays himself. A scene follows in which Hamlet violently upbraids the queen. Thinking he hears the king listening behind the arras, he draws his sword and kills instead Polonius.

The king now determines to destroy Hamlet. He sends him on a mission to England, with intent to have him killed there. But pirates capture Hamlet at sea and send him back to Denmark. He arrives to find that Ophelia, crazed by grief, has perished by drowning. Her brother, Laertes has hurried home from Paris to take vengeance for the death of his father. The king contrives a fencing match between Hamlet and Laertes in which the latter uses a poisoned sword and kills Hamlet: but not before Hamlet has mortally wounded Laertes and stabbed the king; while Gertrude has drunk a poison cup intended for her son. In his dying words, Hamlet chooses Fortinbras, a militant young Norwegian, as his successor.

Summoned by Claudius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern — two friends of Hamlet from university days — arrive at court to keep an eye on his behaviour and report back to the king. Hamlet realises that they have come to spy on him and runs verbal rings around them (Act II, Scene 2)

R and G report their failure to make Hamlet explain himself. They add that he seems to have been cheered up by the arrival of a troupe of strolling players, who are to give a performance before the court (Act III, Scene 1)

After the play, R and G again try to pump Hamlet. They get no change out of him. He likens himself to a pipe on which they are vainly attempting to play (Act III, Scene 2)

Claudius tells R and G about the murder of Polonius. He orders them to get hold of Hamlet and discover where he has hidden the body (Act IV, Scene 1). They question Hamlet and discover nothing. He describes them as the king's sponges; and, when they try to detain him, escapes with contemptuous ease (Act IV, Scene 2)

R and G, who have been ordered to accompany Hamlet on his voyage to England, escort him to the ship (Act IV, Scene 4). They bear with them a letter from Claudius to the English king. Unknown to them, it contains instructions that Hamlet is to be executed immediately on his arrival in England.

Hamlet reveals to his confidant Horatio that he stole Claudius' letter during the voyage to London, while R and G were asleep, and replaced it with another, commanding the English king to put them to death as soon as they delivered it (Act V, Scene 2)

Ambassadors from England bring word that the order contained in Hamlet's letter (which they assume to have come from Claudius) has been duly carried out, and 'Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead' (Act V, Scene 2)

Shakespeare as Folklore

(What follow are excerpts from an article contributed by Irving Wardle, drama critic of The Times, to the magazine New Society. In it he discusses the curious reluctance of British dramatists to use Shakespeare's works as raw material for plays of their own.)

.....As we receive it, the Shakespearean tradition has been kept alive by poets, actors, directors, critics, leader writers – by everyone, in fact, except his own professional successors. There seems to have been an unspoken rule warning playwrights to keep their hands off. Even before the romantic age and the cult of originality, the writers kept their distance.....

The development of 'director's theatre' in this country has taken place almost entirely in Shakespearean production; and it has grown up largely because directors have been occupying a place left vacant by the playwrights.

In other countries this is not the case. Thus, Shakespeare accounts for a large proportion of the standard operatic repertory, almost all of it Continental work. Even the Shakespearean musical is an American invention. And foreign dramatists have shown no inhibitions in turning to Shakespeare as source material. The case of *Hamlet* alone is enough to demonstrate this. Goethe in *Clavigo* uses the play as springboard for his own study in the contradiction between romantic loyalty and self-realisation. In Musset's *Lorenzaccio* it underlies the harlequin feature of the hero and the treacherous masquerade of the Medici court. It gives Chekhov an entire framework for *The Seagull*, extending from the main relationships to such incidental episodes as the play within a play.....

Even from these restricted examples, it is clear that the reinterpretation of Shakespeare is no hack trade for a writer. With this evidence, the reluctance of British dramatists to engage in it is all the more difficult to understand. But there it is. Any infringement of the taboo automatically prompts derision and outrage.....

Reasons for the bardic boycott are there if you look for them.... The very familiarity of Shakespeare makes it harder for a British than for a foreign writer to take what he needs and ignore the rest. Instead of feeling free to select isolated elements as source material, he is liable to be drawn into the Shakespearean magnetic field and lose control over his own work. There is an obvious parallel in classical Greek drama, a favourite hunting ground of the modern playwright. Among all the reworkings of Oedipus, Antigone and Electra, plays by modern Greek writers are conspicuously absent.....

Not counting Charles Marowitz's 80-minute 'cut-up' version of *Hamlet*, which provoked the routine howls of protest a few months ago (I thought it was brilliant), there have been two signs of a writer's return to Shakespeare. The first comes from America. It is the work of a hitherto unknown playwright, Barbara Garson, who is hailed by Robert Brustein (usually a very reliable critic) as an 'extraordinarily gifted parodist' and as the author of one of the most 'brutally provocative' and 'grimly amusing' plays in the whole American repertory.

The piece in question is *Macbird*, a reworking of *Macbeth* focussing on the American political scene of the past six years. The title role is occupied by Lyndon B. Johnson; President Kennedy features as Duncan, and Robert Kennedy as Malcolm. "Characters such as the Egg of Head (Adlai Stevenson) enjoy Hamlet-like soliloquies about whether to leave the new administration or work for change from within....."

The other example is Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* – another *Hamlet* variant, but unlike any other I have encountered. It is also probably the first play in theatrical history with a pair of attendant lords in the lead. Stoppard does nothing to fill out their blank outlines. Their blankness is the whole point. They exist only to be totally involved in great events. When they are not wanted they are left together in a bare ante-room of the palace, spinning coins and playing word games to pass the time until the next call comes.

Their situation and their style of cross-talk obviously relate them to the two tramps in *Waiting for Godot*. Stoppard never introduces material that is not in Shakespeare. But he manages to provide his two heroes with an existential development. They discover the letter authorising their execution, and choose to continue the voyage and deliver it, so as to emerge from the shadows of nonentity for a single moment.

Two plays do not make an impressive total: but at least they show that Shakespeare can still activate original writing and that he is as adaptable to modern political allegory and existential comedy as he was to subjective romanticism and Russian naturalism. The field is wide open.

EXHIBITION

During the run of ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD there will be an exhibition of paintings by Jeanne Walpole, Kate Field and Maria Baras.

REFRESHMENTS

Sandwiches and coffee are available in the Foyer before performances, and refreshments including ice cream, will be served during the interval.

FOYER BAR

The Foyer Bar is open on performance evenings from 7.00 p.m. to 7.45 p.m. and during the interval. It operates on a theatre licence and anyone attending a performance may use it, including guests. No bar membership is involved. Interval drinks may be ordered at the bar before the performance commences. The Grapevine Club continues as a private bar.

ON FRIDAY AND SATURDAY THE BAR IS ALSO OPEN AFTER THE SHOW.

DISCUSSION

A discussion is held after each production by The Questors to which all members are invited. The discussion on ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD will be held after the performance on Saturday, 27th April in the Foyer.

PLEASE DO NOT SMOKE IN THE AUDITORIUM

PLEASE DO NOT TAKE DRINKS INTO THE AUDITORIUM

The Questors is a Club Theatre

Only members may book tickets and membership cards must be produced at the box office. Full details on membership are available from the Administrator on request.

Forthcoming Productions:

THIRD INTERNATIONAL AMATEUR THEATRE WEEK April 29th — May 4th

Companies from:

U.S.A. — Tulsa Little Theatre

FRANCE — Le Cercle d'Art Populaire of Paris

POLAND — Teatr Stu of Cracow

Members free seats NOT available.

Tickets 80p & 50p

Season tickets for all 3 companies — £1.60 & £1.00

May 18th - 25th at 7.45 p.m.

SIX CHARACTERS IN SEARCH OF AN AUTHOR

by Luigi Pirandello

Translated by Frederick May

Members free seats NOT available

Tickets 80p & 50p

NEW PLAYS FESTIVAL

June 22nd — July 6th, 1974

June 22, 26, 30 July 4 at 7.45 p.m.

THE OWL-WINGED FACULTY

by John Norman

June 23, 28 July 3 & 6 at 7.45 p.m.

THE LAST ANALYSIS

by R. H. Bowden

June 25, 29 July 2 & 5 at 7.45 p.m.

YOURS TILL IRELAND EXPLODES

by Harry Barton

Members free seats available.

Guests 80p & 50p

For The Questors Theatre

Administrator	GORDON CALEB
House Manager	STAN EAMER
Box Office Manager	WIN WRIGHT
Stage Director	ADRIENNE TALBOT