

THE HOSTAGE

by

BRENDAN BEHAN



THE QUESTORS THEATRE COMPANY



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First performance 15th March 1980

THE HOSTAGE

Brendan Behan was commissioned by Gael Linn (an organisation formed to preserve the Irish language) to write a play in Gaelic. Under the title of *An Giall*, *The Hostage* was first performed in Dublin in 1958.

Joan Littlewood then bought it for staging at Stratford in an adapted form, including the addition of several characters and the songs — there were none in the original. Apparently Joan Littlewood left Brendan Behan in her flat to make the alterations while she went on a holiday before the first rehearsal. On her return she found Behan, a quantity of empty bottles — but no alterations. She then virtually imprisoned Behan in the flat while he dictated the revisions to her (sometimes from the horizontal) until the text was ready.

So successful was the Stratford production that in 1959 *The Hostage*, revised a second time, was presented in Paris at the Theatre des Nations Festival. It was voted the Play of the Year. So it was that Behan found himself representing (of all countries) Great Britain, and being chauffeured around Paris in a car bearing the Union Jack. There was even a special reception at 'a famous American Bar' (see the notes on Behan between 1947 and 1952). The staff immediately recognised Behan and welcomed him as a long lost friend, to the astonishment of Behan's guide from the Ministry of Culture.

In 1960 the second revised edition of *The Hostage* was performed in London's West End at Wyndhams Theatre. Since then it has been performed around the world. Some trouble was caused over the film rights while Brendan Behan was in New York owing to the fact that after a few drinks he was willing to sell the film rights to anybody who made him an offer. At least one law suit arose from the subsequent confusion.

The text used in this production is that basically of the second revised version (i.e. that first played in Paris in 1959) with a few amendments using the text originally used at Stratford in 1958. A few of the songs have been omitted.

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THE CAST

Singer	RICHARD COWNE
Pat	NEVILE CRUTTENDEN
Meg Dillon	CILLA BAZLEY
Monsewer	PATRICK BACON
Rio Rita	MARTIN RUTHERFORD
Princess Grace	RICHARD LEWIS
Mr. Mulleady	NED GETHINGS
Miss Gilchrist	ANNA MARIA ASHE
Colette	JULIA COOKE
Ropeen	JULIE BRIDGMAN
Leslie Williams	EDDIE GROSSMAN
Teresa	KRYSTYNA PIERZCHALA
IRA Officer	DUNCAN ROWBERRY
Volunteer	MICHAEL GREEN
Russian Sailor	JOHN KEARNS
Policemen	TONY PLUMRIDGE, RICHARD COWNE
Pianist	GORDON PEACE

<i>Directed by</i>	.....	Richard Halberstadt
<i>Setting Designed by</i>	.....	Bob Anderson
<i>Musical Director</i>	.....	Don Kincaid
<i>Choreography by</i>	.....	Lynda Smith
<i>Lighting by</i>	.....	Andrew Dixon
<i>Sound by</i>	.....	Charles Lacaille

The action of the play takes place in an old house in Dublin in 1958.

THERE WILL BE TWO INTERVALS OF 15 MINUTES EACH

Stage Managers GRAHAM GOODALL, PETER WALTON
Deputy Stage Manager ANGELA WALTON
Assistant Stage Managers. PAULINE JEANNERET
PETER McEWAN
APRIL PAYTON
ALLAN PAYTON
BEATA ROMANOWSKA
JIM SHARP

Wardrobe. TERRY WEIRZAN, EDITH RICKET
LUCIA HEAVER

Properties BOB RICKET, ROBERT JONES
Assisted by. NINA ROBINSON, ALAN JONES

Construction PETER WALTON, BOB ANDERSON
Assisted by. PETER McEWAN, JIM SHARP

Lighting Assistants. JONATHAN MANN
ALISON COLSTON-LAKE

Prompt RITA FENOUGHTY

Sound Assistant GRACE LACAILLE

Our thanks to the Coarse Acting Team for helping us in our Get In.

Food by Safeways Ltd.

There is an exhibition in the Foyer giving a brief outline of major events in the history of Ireland, including notes about the IRA and its association with Sinn Fein.

The Director wishes to express his thanks to those who have helped with this production and the exhibition including Dorice Hannan, Jill Gee, Anna Maria Ashe and Tom Pritchard.

NO DISCUSSION

The usual open discussion will not be held after this production on account of arrangements for English Amateur Theatre Week.

Instead, why not try your hand at writing a short critique (up to 200 words) of this show? A prize of two seats for The Questors production of your choice, with free programmes and interval drinks, will be awarded for the criticism adjudged to be the most balanced and perceptive.

Address to 'Criticism' at The Questors Theatre, to arrive not later than **Wednesday, 2nd April.**

BRENDAN BEHAN

- 1923 Brendan Francis Behan born in Dublin on 9th February. In his childhood he joined a youth organisation (Fianna Eireann), a training ground for the IRA to which he transferred as a messenger boy in 1937.
- 1939 Sent to Liverpool by the IRA to plant bombs. Caught and sentenced to 3 years in a Borstal.
- 1942 Released and expelled from England. Returned to Ireland. Wrote the first article for which he was paid. On Easter Sunday attended the Easter Rising Commemoration Parade at Glasnevin Cemetery and became involved in a fracas between members of the IRA and the police. Behan fired a gun at the police. Later caught and sentenced to 14 years.
Spent some time at Mountjoy Prison, some time at the Currah Camp. At the latter there were three groups: The Officials, the Un-officials (to which he technically belonged), and a third group which approved of neither of the other two. Members of one group were forbidden even to talk to members of the other groups, but Behan mingled freely among his friends in all the groups.
- 1946 General Amnesty. Behan released. Continued writing in secret because his mother disapproved.
- 1947 Returned to England illegally (because of the expulsion order served on him in 1942) on IRA business. Arrested and sentenced to 4 months in Strangeways.
Spent some time in Dublin, some time in Paris, engaged in house-painting (his trade and that of his father) and writing stories, articles, etc. In Paris he also took on the job of a pimp in 'a famous American Bar'. (Behan had spent a lot of his earlier life in brothels because it was one of the few places where he could get a drink after hours). Eventually he was discovered and the manager threw him out.
- 1952 Two plays performed on Irish Radio: *Moving Out* and *A Garden Party*.
- 1954 Behan's first full-length play, *The Quare Fellow*, (based on his experiences in Mountjoy Prison) performed in Dublin.
- 1955 Married Beatrice Salkeld, to whom he remained faithful ('in my own way') until his death.
- 1956 Joan Littlewood, in need of a play to save her theatre at Stratford, produced *The Quare Fellow* with great success.
- 1957 *The Big House* performed on BBC radio.
- 1958 *The Hostage* first performed. Behan's book 'The Borstal Boy' (based on his experiences in Borstal) published.
- 1959 Returned to Dublin where 'The Borstal Boy' had been banned because of its language. Started writing a third play, *Richard's Cork Leg*.
Spent time in Dublin, London, Paris and New York. Health failing. After a spell in a London hospital gave up drinking, but later, during a stay in New York, was lured back to the bottle.
- 1964 Found dead in Dublin on March 20th.
- 1972 Behan's third full-length play *Richard's Cork Leg* (unfinished at his death) put together and produced in Dublin.
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COMING IN THE MAIN THEATRE.....

MARCH 24 – 29

ENGLISH AMATEUR THEATRE WEEK

MARCH 24 & 27

The Talisman Theatre Company
presents

THE DAUGHTER-IN-LAW

by D.H. LAWRENCE

MARCH 25 & 28

Bolton Little Theatre
presents

DEALING IN FUTURES

by HAROLD BRIGHOUSE

MARCH 25 & 29

Bradford Playhouse
presents

TRAVESTIES

by TOM STOPPARD

APRIL 19 – 26

The World Premiere of
THE GIRL IN MELANIE KLEIN

by JAMES SAUNDERS

based on a novel by Ronald Harwood

IN THE STUDIO.....

APRIL 10 – 13

The Tower Theatre Company
presents

STEVIE

by HUGH WHITEMORE

MAY 1 – 4

FOUR NEW PLAYS by QUESTORS WRITERS

THE OLD PIER by Norman Tucker

THE HOUSE-WARMING by Judith Harry

PLODDING ON by Robert Jones

CYCLES by Phillip Sheahan

AT THE FILM SOCIETY.....

APRIL 25 at 11p.m. in the Theatre – NETWORK