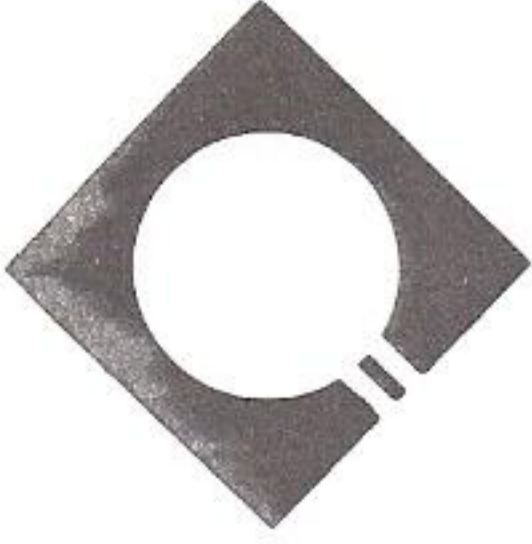




*the
fall
of the
house
of
usher*

*by
steven
berkoff*





THE QUESTORS THEATRE COMPANY

VICE-PRESIDENTS: PRESIDENT: JUDI DENCH DBE
SIR BRIAN BATSFORD, ALFRED EMMET OBE,
ROGER REES, MICHAEL WILLIAMS

IN THE STUDIO

First performance: 22nd May 1988

THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER

by

STEVEN BERKOFF

adapted from the tale by Edgar Allen Poe

"A house with its own soul — a house that outwardly manifests the crumbling nature of Roderick's inner decay — the actors must be the house and its decaying fabric, must speak as stones and the memories of the house that are seared into its walls — must be the death rattle and atmosphere must be the environment and since humans are born of the environment they must reflect it."

The tale was written by Poe in 1839 when he was thirty years old, Berkoff's play was first performed by his own London Theatre Group in 1974, and in many ways formed the basis of his reputation as one of the most innovative and imaginative writers who has brought a new vitality to the art of drama.

This piece of theatre darts from the sombre mood of the original tale to high comedy in Berkoff's treatment.

continued page 4

THE CAST

RODERICK USHER VIC POMPINI
MADELINE USHER ANNIE KIMBER
DOCTOR, SERVANT, EDGAR IAIN REID

Directed by JOHN WILSON

THE CREW

DESIGN: HARRIET BOWES
LIGHTING DESIGN: NICK PITT
COSTUME DESIGN: KATY WINKWORTH
SOUND DESIGN: MARTIN COSTER
STAGE MANAGER: JIM CRADDOCK
DSM: GRAHAM HODSON
PROMPT/ASM: DENYS GASKILL
ASM: OLEK BRZESKI
LIGHTING ASSISTANTS: KATHRYN AUSTIN,
MARTIN SAPSED,
JEANNETTE
ROSSLYN BLAKEMORE
MAKE-UP DESIGN: PAULINE HUDSON
KIRSTY HANSON

Thanks to: ANDREW DIXON, JULIE CRUTTENDEN,

THE AUDIENCE

"By leaving space for the spectator, by eliminating the junk of sets and crowded detail of over explained narrative, in other words by freeing the stage and giving it space the spectator can become part of it and is linked to the events by the demands of his imagination that is interpreting for itself what is happening. He is necessary for our success. We make demands on him to 'read' our symbols. He hasn't got time to think or time to drift. By giving him everything as in conventional theatre he will enjoy the spectator role for a while but eventually he will become oppressed, he no longer 'participates': his imaginative resources become congealed and his mystery depleted, and he will become a stunted conscious being with no power to tap his unconscious resources. The outward manifestations of such theatre are boredom and restlessness, one gets hot and the mind starts to think about a multitude of problems that feast on a neglected brain."

Finally. On the House of Usher.

Steven Berkoff



The story hinges on Roderick Usher, the last of his line, who is inexplicably suffering from a dreadful malaise and nervous agitation. The Narrator of the story is an old friend whom Roderick has asked to visit him to help revive his spirits. On arrival at the House of Usher, the narrator surveys the scene "with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller upon opium". The traveller who comes from the real world — and the reader — immediately becomes aware of the despair pervading this bleak and forbidding place.

The narrator not only learns of Roderick's peculiar frame of mind, but also of his attachment to his sister Madeline, whom he glimpses only once before she appears to die of an incurable illness. Roderick's own condition worsens, and he insists that they place Madeline's body, in her coffin, in the vaults of the house. This they do, and the visitor stays on for a few more days, until one night a storm brings the two men together. Strange noises, heard above the crashing of the storm, leads to an apparition of the lady Madeline, then to a horrifying denouement.

The prevailing theme is typical of Poe — that of premature burial. Not only is Madeline encased in her coffin while still alive, but Usher himself is entombed in his own house, oppressed by an atmosphere "which had reeked up from the decayed trees a pestilent and mystic vapour, dull, sluggish, faintly discernible, and leaden-hued".

There is of course also an element of autobiography in the story. Roderick Usher, whose actions were "alternatively vivacious and sullen", is an embodiment of the manic-depressive at his lowest ebb, and in this reflects Poe's own depressive and delicate sensibilities.

THERE WILL BE NO INTERVAL AND DUE TO THE TYPE OF STAGING USED FOR THIS PRODUCTION, IT WILL NOT BE POSSIBLE FOR LATECOMERS TO BE ADMITTED ONCE THE PERFORMANCE HAS BEGUN.

COMING EVENTS


NEXT IN THE PLAYHOUSE

STATE OF THE ART

by B.F. Herst

Directed by John Davey

Winner of the 1988 Questors Playwriting Competition

Sponsored by 

June 4, 8, 9, 10, 11 at 7.45pm

June 5 at 3.00pm

Members FREE

NEXT IN THE STUDIO

MAKING NOISE QUIETLY

by Robert Holman

directed by Helen Walker

A composition of 3 short plays:

Being Friends, Lost and Making Noise Quietly

June 18 – 25 at 7.45pm

These plays contain scenes and language which may be considered unsuitable for children.

ARE YOU A MEMBER OF THE QUESTORS YET!

For full details of membership, pick up an application form from the Box Office Foyer or telephone 01-567 0011 (10am – 5pm, Mon – Fri). Why not attend one of our **NEW OR PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS EVENINGS** and have a conducted tour of the theatre complex. This is also a good opportunity for people who are thinking of becoming more actively involved with productions and who would like to be pointed in the right direction! Join us any **WEDNESDAY** evening at 8.00pm in the Grapevine Bar.
