

# THE EXORCISM

by  
Don Taylor



## introduction

Don Taylor began writing while at school. At fifteen he wrote his first play, and his first full length play at university. In the period after he graduated, BBC television entered an extremely creative phase. The Wednesday Play gave writers like Dennis Potter and directors such as Ken Loach many opportunities. Arts based programmes – Monitor is the most famous – created opportunities for filmmakers Ken Russell and John Schlesinger.

Against this background, Don Taylor began his directing career, and directed main line plays at the age of 23 for the BBC. He directed six David Mercer plays and was doing seven plays a year for television from scripts.

In 1967 Don Taylor began both writing and directing, and in total has worked on around seventy television productions.

With all that experience, not unnaturally, Don Taylor received approaches from various American film producers, but always declined their offers, sensing he would be required to make too many artistic compromises. His near contemporaries Lindsay Anderson and Karel Reisz took this route and found themselves battling to make films, whereas Don Taylor has worked continuously.

When he gave up television, he started a theatre company, which put on plays in fringe theatres and shortly afterwards he started an independent radio production company.

Speaking about *The Exorcism*, Don Taylor said . . . .

"It came about because I was short of money, and I went to the BBC Arts Features Department. I hadn't done a television play since 1965 and I went to talk to them. They told me that there was no money for anything, apart from Christmas. So we did it at Christmas 1971, and it was enormously successful. Anna Cropper played Rachel – a wonderful performance.

There was a stage version later on. I guess its producers wanted a commercial success and they asked me to make a stage play. I tried to enrich the play, which felt rather like a short story in its original television form.

The first stage realisation proved terrible. The director completely rewrote the play without my permission. I wanted to close it down, but my agent advised me against that course of action. He said that if I closed the play down before opening night, and people had paid money in advance bookings I wouldn't be very popular!

When a play fails in the West End it's usually forgotten, but an amateur theatre company asked me to let them to it, and I said only on condition that they performed my original stage version."

Asked if he thought the play worked well on stage because it's set in a confined area Don said, 'You put people in a confined space and see what happens. I didn't intend to break any original ground as a writer with this play, because I was using a ghost story to say something very political since it's really about that period.

The extraordinary thing is that it was written in a very certain time, at an affluent time when there was plenty of money around, so I wrote a play about that period and about having to take responsibility for the suffering that you inflict on others. It had a context in 1971 and it has a different political and social context now. Inside that context it's really a ghost story and full of the frisson of the unexplained'.

Don Taylor is delighted *The Exorcism* is being presented at The Questors. He has fond memories of The Questors Theatre. 'When I was thirteen or fourteen I was at Chiswick Grammar School. I entered for several acting competitions and one of them was at The Questors. I played on the stage of the Old Tin Hut and won a prize!'

## art exhibitions

*Upper Foyer*

22 March - 19 April

### VIVIENNE CALEY

Since leaving College (Epsom, Sunderland and Middlesex Universities), her work has been exhibited in England and the USA, where she lived for several years. She is now resident in Ealing.

Her work has developed in figurative and abstract ways, trying to find a spiritual quality, or another world through pattern and design.

*In the Grapevine*

22 March - 19 April

### LISA SHEPHARD

With a background in woven textiles, Lisa strives to seek ways of fusing this area with other fibre art forms. The challenge in doing so results in work which integrates paper making, wood and embroidery with woven lengths.

Inspired by both nature and man-made structures, she creates vessels and imagery from materials which suggest the opposing characteristics of these two elements.

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*First night of this production, Saturday 29th March 1997*

## **C a s t** in order of appearance

Dan	MARK NEALE
Edmund	RICHARD BROWN
Margaret	AMANDA BERNSTEIN
Rachel	HILARY BURNS

The action takes place in the living/dining-room of  
Edmund and Rachel's cottage.

Time: The early 1970's.

Act I: Afternoon.

Act II: A short while after.

*There will be one interval of fifteen minutes.*

## **P r o d u c t i o n**

Director	PAT GOWMAN
Designer	ANDY DIXON
Costume Designer	BRYANNE MELVILLE
Stage Manager	SYLVIA WALL
A.S.M.s	DAVID JOHNSON
	JACKIE TOWNSEND
	LIZ TROTT
Prompter	GORDON MILLER
Lighting Design	PETER WALTERS
	TERRY MUMMERY
	KERRY BARNER
Sound Design	MALCOLM SMITH
Sound Operator	LAURENCE LEWIS
Constructor	JIM CRADDOCK
Make-up	GREASEPAINT

*Grateful thanks to:* MARK MORAN, PHIL PINKHAM, ERIC LISTER,  
CHRIS SYDENHAM, NIGEL BAMFORD and HOUSE SERVICES,  
THE MALVERN THEATRE PLAYERS



THE PLAYHOUSE IS EQUIPPED WITH AN INFRA-RED SOUND TRANSMISSION SYSTEM FOR USE BY PEOPLE WITH HEARING DIFFICULTIES. IT IS NOW POSSIBLE TO USE THIS SYSTEM WITH PERSONAL HEARING AIDS SWITCHED TO THE TV POSITION. To obtain the appropriate receiver please contact the Duty House Manager.  
THE PLAYHOUSE IS EQUIPPED WITH A LIFT WITH ACCESS TO THE BAR AND UPPER FOYER LEVELS FOR THOSE WITH MOBILITY PROBLEMS.

1. The taking of food and drink into the auditorium is NOT permitted.
2. The use of cameras, video-cameras or tape equipment during the performance is also prohibited.
3. Patrons are requested to turn off portable telephones and beepers in the auditorium, since the activation of these during a performance is offensive to audience and actors alike.

## coming productions

### In the Playhouse

#### ENTERTAINING MR SLOANE by Joe Orton

Of Joe Orton *The Observer* wrote: "He is the Oscar Wilde of the Welfare State gentility". "Sloane was the first play to dramatise the psychopathic style of the sixties — that ruthless, restless, single-minded pursuit of satisfaction — transformed by drugs and rock into myth." —*John Lahr*, biographer of Joe Orton.

12, 15 - 19 April at 7.45pm; 13 April at 2.30pm

### In the Studio

#### THE THREE SISTERS by Anton Chekhov

The most lyrical of Chekhov's last great plays. Three sisters dream of returning to the Moscow of their childhood. Stranded in a remote provincial town, with only the military to bring poetry and magic into their lives, they seem incapable of taking control of their own lives. At times absurd, prophetic, but always deeply human, the characters in this play shine with a natural goodness and compassion.

19, 21\*, 23 - 26, 30 April, 1 - 3, 7 - 10 May at 7.45pm.  
20, 27 April, 4 May at 2.30pm.

\*Charity performance for *Friends of the Earth*.

### In the Playhouse

#### NEW PLAYS FESTIVAL

#### From Cradle to Grave (A celebration of the British Co-operative movement) by Phillip Sheahan for The Questors PlayBack.

Based on interviews by the PlayBack team with local people including 'co-operators' (as they were known), the play gives an insight into the power and influence this remarkable organisation had on the lives of working men and women.

10, 13, 14, 16, 17 May at 7.45pm.  
11, 17 May at 2.30pm

#### Requiem for Swallows by Henry Mason

This, the winner of the 1996 National Student Playwriting competition is a beautifully written piece in free verse. Marcus, the son of Misha and Maggie, is the only real character in the play. He tries to reconcile himself to his dead parents, the four incarnations of whom act out attitudes and memories.

20 - 24 May at 7.45pm

preceded by

#### 3 Masks of O by Dannie Abse

The plot is based on a disastrous fire at an amateur theatre venue in South Wales and the subsequent cancellation of the Crwys Players production of *The Three Masks of Orpheus*.

20 - 24 May at 7.45pm

## information

### THE GRAPEVINE CLUB

The Questors has a fully licensed Bar which is now open to all members. The Bar is open every evening plus lunchtimes on Sundays. Questors members are requested to sign in their guests when entering the bar.

### THE HOTPLATE

Delicious hot and cold food is available in the upper Foyer between 6.30pm and 8.00pm during the run of Playhouse productions, and coffee, tea and cakes are served during the interval. No hot food will be provided at the Sunday matinées.

### NOTE

The Hotplate is not open for Studio productions, but when Studio performances coincide with those in the Playhouse, it will endeavour to serve those audiences whenever it is possible.

### NEW MEMBERS EVENINGS

Why not attend one of our new, or prospective members evenings, and have a conducted tour of the Theatre complex. Tours start and finish at the Grapevine Bar, 8.00pm every Wednesday.

### THE STUDENT GROUP

The Questors runs a two-year part-time student course in Acting; details can be obtained from the office.

### YOUNG PEOPLE'S GROUPS

There are a number of groups for younger members. These cater for all age groups, from 5-17. The classes are intended to create awareness of the theatre and provide a stimulating channel for imagination.

### For The Questors Theatre

President	Dame Judi Dench
Artistic Director	Spencer Butler
Artistic Directorate	John Horwood, Norman Wilkinson
Director of Studies	David Emmet
Chair	John Davey
Vice-Chairman	Steve Hames
Company Secretary	Sue Blake
Club Secretary	Christine Garland
Finance Director	Ken Kettle
Stage Director	Nick Hawker
Marketing Director	Sonja Garsvo
Theatre Manager	Elaine Orchard
Productions Secretary	Christine Greening
Membership Secretary	Alice Pennicott
Marketing Officer	Fleur Lloyd
Programme Editor	Vincent McQueen
Questopics Editor	Laurence Lewis
Sponsorship	Alan Drake
Box Office Management	Bridgett Strevens
Programme Sales Organiser	Val Blaxland
Front of House Manager	Eric Lister
Press Relations	Sandra Hutchinson
Wardrobe Care	Persil, Comfort and Stergene
	Courtesy of Lever Bros.
	Dry-cleaning by C.D.S.

### Administration

The Questors office is open from 9.30am until 5.00pm every weekday.

If you wish to make contact for details of membership, or hiring the Theatre and rehearsal rooms, telephone the office on 0181 567 0011.

### Membership

If you wish to become a member please fill in the application form (copies in the Foyers); just send it to the Theatre with the appropriate subscription. 0181 567 8736.

### Box Office

For personal callers the box office is open every Wednesday evening 6.45pm to 8.30pm; Monday to Friday 11.00am to 12 noon; during productions 6.45pm to 8.30pm; Sunday matinées 2.00pm to 2.30pm;