

ADG Europe presents

In Cooperation with International Theatre Company London

TNT theatre Britain in Shakespeare's tragedy of

# HAMLET

Directed and edited by Paul Stebbings

Original music by Thomas Johnson

Hamlet	Richard Keightley
Claudius	Richard Clodfelter
Gertrude	Natalia Campbell
Horatio	Richard Ede
Polonius	J.C. Hoyt
Ophelia	Sophie Franklin
Laertes	Dan Wilder
Other roles played by the ensemble	
Musical directors	Paul Flush & Thomas Johnson
Costume design Juliane Kasprzik	
Dramaturg	Phil Smith
Producer	Grantly Marshall

**PAUL STEBBINGS** is artistic director of TNT theatre Britain and The American Drama Group Europe. He was born in Nottingham and studied drama at Bristol University, where he received first class honours. He trained in the Grotowski method with TRIPLE ACTION THEATRE in Britain and Poland. Paul founded TNT theatre in 1980 and received regular Arts Council funding for work in the UK. Paul has also acted for NOTTINGHAM PLAYHOUSE and TNT and directed and written for SOUTH YORKSHIRE THEATRE, PARAGON ENSEMBLE Glasgow, TAMS THEATER Munich, the ST PETERSBURG STATE COMEDY THEATRE, the Athens Concert Hall MEGARON and the Russian TEATR EXPERIMENTA. His productions have toured to over twenty countries worldwide.



Festival appearances include WIZARD OF JAZZ at the Munich Biennale (critics prize), the Off Broadway Festival in New York, the Tehran Fajr Festival the Tokyo International Festival, and award winning performances at the Edinburgh Festival (THE MURDER OF SHERLOCK HOLMES, in which he played the title role). His numerous productions for ADGE and TNT include MACBETH, BRAVE NEW WORLD, MOON PALACE (a dance drama version of Paul Auster's contemporary novel) DEATH OF A SALESMAN, A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM and the recent prize winning HAMLET. One of Paul's main areas of interest is the integration of music and theatre which culminated in his large scale production of production of MOBY DICK. He has directed productions in Russian, Greek, German and most recently Spanish. In addition to FAHRENHEIT 451 this season sees the premier of his HAROLD AND MAUDE, and revivals of ONE LANGUAGE - MANY VOICES ( a exploration of Britain's colonial legacy), Oscar Wilde's CANTERVILLE GHOST and PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY and Shakespeare's HAMLET and MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM. In 2008 his productions tour to over thirty countries on three continents touring to cities as diverse as Beijing, Guatemala, Oslo, Tokyo London and Berlin.

## HAMLET — Director's notes.

**"HAMLET is not a drama of weakness, but of duty and self-denial"**

Boris Pasternak.

Any Director approaching HAMLET must first deal with the weight of artistic and critical interpretation that sits heavily upon this most famous of all dramatic texts. The temptation is to add a little more weight, another interpretation that allows the audience to view the original text through the supposed brilliance of the modern director. Shakespeare must be turned into "our contemporary" (in the famous phrase of Jan Kott). So recent HAMLETS I have seen included one where the Same actor played Hamlet and Claudius and the same actress Ophelia and Gertrude! Freud, Beckett and a host of other authorities are invoked as if Shakespeare was not enough.

What we are attempting is an exploration of the original. Of course we make no claims that this is a definitive version, nor are we trying to avoid interpretation; but our attempt is to draw the interpretation from the text rather than superimpose a simplification. For example, the text states that the Ghost cannot speak in the first scene and will only speak to Hamlet on its second appearance, to have the Ghost speak through Hamlet seems textually supported. The Ghost cannot appear even to his own (ex) wife, so he can only impact on the world of the living through his son. This sets up a chain of performances that work through others, which at its most extreme develops into the use of puppets and at its simplest refers to the performances that are given throughout the play, so that Claudius performs the dutiful step-father in his first scene, Ophelia performs as if she is' alone with Hamlet, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern perform the role of old friends, Hamlet performs the role of a madman. However, all these performances will end with the jester Yorick in death. The text constantly yields up images and scenes of performance, to explore this idea it is not necessary to bend the play to fit some external theory.

We particularly reject the interpretation of Coleridge and Schlegel, reiterated by Laurence Olivier in his preface to the 1949 film: "Hamlet is the tragedy of a man who cannot make up his mind". The philosopher Prince is seen as the extreme example of the paralysis of the intellectual. This interpretation, very much the product of nineteenth century Romanticism, relies on simple hindsight: the Ghost tells the truth, why doesn't Hamlet act upon it? I feel there are two answers to this and once the idea is dispatched we can get on with letting the play and its central character operate as Shakespeare intended. Firstly, it is a great mistake to analyse what happens in the play as opposed to what is said. Neither Hamlet himself nor Horatio are very concerned with this issue of thought versus action, supposedly the central theme of the play. Two or three lines can be found in its support. This is hardly a tragic flaw on a par with

Macbeth's ambition or Lear's selfish folly, it also supposes that Hamlet is a philosopher, whereas he never truly engages in philosophical discussion but constantly reacts to events. Hamlet is trying to make sense of The "rotten state" of his world. We feel that unless the killing of Claudius will somehow "put the world to right" Hamlet will not perform this murderous act. Murderous yes, because "conscience makes cowards of us all". It is "conscience" that paralyses the Prince, not thought. Hamlet is searching for an action that will "set this world to right" but in all conscience he cannot find one. Why? Well, firstly, I suggest he does not believe the Ghost. The "Mousetrap" play is as much a test for the Ghost as the King. But it is Hamlet's actions after he proves that his uncle did murder his father that are the most telling: he does not take the opportunity to kill Claudius at prayer but rushes to confront his mother. These two actions make no sense for an Avenger, but They do make sense if we see Hamlet as a melancholic, depressive and burdened young man, overwhelmed with grief and disgusted by his mother's sexuality. This is the Hamlet we first see, who wishes that his "too solid flesh would melt" and recoils at incest before he ever meets the Ghost. This is the Hamlet of "To be or not to be, who even rejects the idea of an afterlife as an "undiscovered bourn (place) from which no traveller ever yet returned." Hamlet struggles to place the idea of revenge that will "set the world to right" within the framework of his melancholic nihilism; for "man delights me not, nor woman...". This hatred of life manifests itself in sexual disgust (not incestuous desire for his mother, Freud has nothing to say about this play in our opinion). And also in violence towards all those who love him - indeed, violence towards love and procreation. This violence encompasses madness, as the only proper response to the "rotten" world and indeed the human condition: "who would the fardels bear?" (The weight of human existence). Only Death will provide an answer, but suicide and murder seem to Hamlet to only to confirm the futility and wretchedness of human existence. Death is only appropriate as an accident, he can kill Claudius but only on an Impulse, without forethought (hence he kills Polonius by mistake). Death rules the world anyway, and even a king will pass through the guts of a beggar. Hamlet prays for a path that is morally clear, but "conscience makes (him) a coward", and only madness and its mirror of theatre will provide a haven of sense and meaning. The tragedy in this, the fatal flaw, is that Hamlet in seeking to make sense of the rotten state of Denmark merely increases its depravity. Ophelia, Laertes and even Polonius are to a varying degrees innocent and yet he destroys them. He also fails to save his own mother, his revenge is private, unacknowledged and therefore incomplete. He has tried to be "cruel to be kind" but he has ended only in cruelty and the sea of troubles overwhelms him.

## Shakespeare's theatre and TNT

The company has been performing Shakespeare's works almost continuously since the summer of 2000. Almost one thousand performances have taken place in over thirty countries on three continents. The sequence was: *MACBETH*, *A MIDSUMMERNIGHT'S DREAM*, *HAMLET*, *ROMEO AND JULIET*, *KING LEAR* and *TAMING OF THE SHREW*. Revivals of these productions developed rather than repeated the first incarnations.

Shakespeare's texts remain the densest and richest theatrical texts we have been privileged to work upon. While the quality of the poetry and depth of theme and character are well known it is always a lesson in humility to discover the excellence of Shakespeare's theatrical craft. We often sense that Shakespeare is "on our side" in rehearsals. This is especially so when a company works as we do with resources similar to Shakespeare's own. We have a small troupe of multi-skilled actors who double roles and even swap genders as needed, we use live music and minimal set. We have to be able to perform without theatre lighting. We have to appeal to a wide audience and our greatest weapon is the imagination of that audience. The resources of a large modern theatre often impede these plays. For example Shakespeare never had slow or complex set changes between scenes, the plays should be fast and furious (how else can they fit "within the two hours traffic of our stage" to quote *ROMEO AND JULIET*).

We will never know if the texts printed in the famous Folio edition of Shakespeare's complete works some seven years after his death are definitive. It was thought so for many years but now the weight of scholarship suggests that the Folio may represent a literary version "written up" by Shakespeare for publication and private reading. Poetry had high status in Elizabethan and Jacobean England, theatre was low status. Indeed the theatres were to be closed within a generation of Shakespeare's death. Even in Shakespeare's lifetime poetry began to threaten popular theatre. Soon after *KING LEAR* was written Shakespeare's troupe moved to the Royal Court and the later, more poetic, plays lack the muscular theatricality of his earlier works. (With the honourable exception of the *TEMPEST*).

What is interesting is that there are alternative texts to the Folio, the so called Quartos, (names that come from the smaller sheets of paper they were printed upon). Some of these alternative texts may be corrupt, pirated copies but increasingly they are being recognised as theatrical versions of the texts. They are shorter and often more dynamic. For example, in the First Quarto of *HAMLET* (which TNT use as the basis for our production), there are scenes that do not exist in the longer Folio. Hamlet's mother is reintroduced at a crucial moment. The position of "To be or not to be" is different and better. These feel like amendments Shakespeare made to the script after it was first performed. Many scholars believe that the *MACBETH* we know is a short version of a longer play. There are no "Quarto" versions of *MACBETH* and it is so much more focused than the other tragedies.

We have taken the standard text and edited it, presuming to make our own version much as an acting company in Shakespeare's own time might have adapted and cut the original. We have tried to approach the text in the spirit of the original dramatic editing so obvious in other quarto texts. We hope that Shakespeare's ghost will understand if not forgive.

## Actors CV

**RICHARD KEIGHTLEY** trained at Drama Studio London. Theatre includes: PURGATORY (Kings Head), *Orgilus* in THE BROKEN HEART (White Bear), OTHELLO (Upstairs at the Gatehouse), *Le Prince* in a French production of LA DISPUTE (Normandy, Oxford and London), *Lysander* in A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM (Oxford Shakespeare Company) and the title roles in HAMLET (Palatine Theatre Company) and DR FAUSTUS (Left Handed Theatre Company). Other: Voiceover work for Rewind Films and various rehearsed readings (Union Theatre, Goldsmith's College). This is Richard's second production for TNT, having performed the role of Marley in their recent A CHRISTMAS CAROL.

**Natalia Campbell** trained at Lee Strasberg Studio & Middlesex University. This is Natalia's third production for TNT & ADG having joined the company to play the role of Kate in THE TAMING OF THE SHREW in 2006, and Hippolyta & Titania in last year's production of A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Other theatre credits include: THE FORTUNE CLUB, THE WIND & THE WASH TUB, PALACE OF FEAR & BOLLYWOOD JANE (all at Leicester Haymarket) ALI BABA & THE JUNGLE BOOK (Muscat Festival Oman) TAJ (BIG PICTURE COMPANY, UK Tour) STARFISH (Theatre mongers) THE HUNCH BACK OF NOTRE DAME & ABABIAN NIGHTS(O.T.T.C) TEN TINY FINGERS, NINE TINY TOES (Firefly Productions) and TANGO ARGUMENTINO (The Flying Gorillas, South American Tour). She also performed as Tilly in a new musical NOTHING BUT DREAMS (Greenwich Theatre) for which she also wrote the script.

Television work includes EASTENDERS, CASUALTY & MODERN MANNERS, all for the BBC, and other work for DISCOVERY CHANNEL, GMTV & SKY. She has also worked on new writing, workshops & rehearsed readings for Soho Theatre, Leicester Haymarket, Nottingham Playhouse & The International Playwriting Festival.

**RICHARD CLODFELTER** is managing director of ADG Europe. He studied English literature and theatre at universities in Colorado and in his native state of North Carolina and acted in theatres from Orlando to New York City before beginning work with ADG Europe in 1986. He has directed over 20 productions in Europe, many of which he also acted in and served as manager. Recent acting roles include Lear in the acclaimed TNT Theatre/ADG Europe production of KING LEAR in Central America, Kayerts and Muhammad Ali in MANY VOICES, Baptista and Gremio in THE TAMING OF THE SHREW, and Oberon in A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM. He is also director/actor/manager for ADG Europe's longest running show: A CHRISTMAS CAROL. He lives in Munich and keeps New York always close to his heart.

**RICHARD EDE** . This is Richard's fifth production for TNT and ADGE. He created the role of Lucentio and Gromio in the recent TAMING OF A SHREW , played the lead role of MS for two seasons in Paul Auster's MOON PALACE , Fagin in OLIVER TWIST throughout Europe and Asia and has recently performed on the roles of both Oberon and Bottom in MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM on three continents . Richard has portrayed an eclectic mix of characters over the years, including The Tinman in THE WIZARD OF OZ (Epsom Playhouse), Sandy in Ben Elton's GASPING (Cragrats Theatre), and Stanley and The Mask in a new musical entitled THE MASK (National Tour.) He has also gained roles in a number of other new musicals – as Dr. Steerforth in PARLOUR GAMES (Cragrats Theatre), and most recently as Frank Schwartz in NOTHING BUT DREAMS (Greenwich Theatre) for which he also wrote the score. Richard loves to travel, and has been lucky enough to perform in Dubai, Thailand, Japan and Oman. He was also seen as 'The Beast' in Colchester Mercury's 'Beauty and the Beast' which proved the most successful and popular show in the theatre's history.

**Sophie Franklin** grew up in Oxford. At 18 years old she started her 3 yr course at the Guildford School of Acting. She graduated in 2002 with a first class degree and then moved to London where she spent the first 6 months playing one of her most researched roles to date – 'waitress'! Since then she has performed in Shakespeare's 'The Tempest' at the prestigious Old Vic Theatre and recently toured the UK major theatres playing Meg in Louisa May Alcott's 'Little Women'. This is Sophie's fourth production with TNT, having played Abigail in 'The Crucible' , Doris in MANY VOICES, and Bianca in the recent China tour of TAMING OF THE SHREW.

**THOMAS JOHNSON** graduated from Oxford University before joining DR.FOSTERS THEATRE CO., where he spent five years as resident composer/MD. He has subsequently written dozens of scores for many theatre companies, including THEATRE ALIBI, POLKA THEATRE, THE ROYAL NATIONAL THEATRE, SEATTLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE, LONDON BUBBLE, TRAVELLING LIGHT, NEW PERSPECTIVES, NORDEN FARM, NOTTINGHAM PLAYHOUSE and ORKNEY YOUTH THEATRE. His music has been performed to audiences worldwide, from Singapore to St. Petersburg, including a Broadway run of Travelling Light's award-winning production, INTO THE WEST. Choral work includes SONGS YOU CAN SING ON A SMALL TRAIN (a Year of the Artist award) and GILGAMESH: AN ORATORIO for STROUD COMMUNITY CHOIR. Thomas has also written scores for several BBC RADIO 4 drama productions. In his ten year association with AMERICAN DRAMA GROUP he has written the scores for their productions of THE MURDER OF SHERLOCK HOLMES, THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY, THE GREAT GATSBY, OLIVER TWIST, STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE, DAVID COPPERFIELD, GULLIVER'S TRAVELS, A CHRISTMAS CAROL, GRAPES OF WRATH, the award winning HAMLET, KING LEAR and OLIVER TWIST. He lives in Stroud with his partner and two sons.

**Dan Wilder** trained at E15 Acting school London, and was born in Huddersfield in the north of England. He has always enjoyed the Shakespeare and is delighted to be in this production. He is a keen musician and regularly plays his own music around London. His Theatre Credits Include: *Single Spies*, *Hobson's Choice*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *The Lad Aladdin*, (York Theatre Royal) *Orphee*, *La Fanciulla Del West*, (The Royal Opera House) *Brave New World*, (Solent People's Theatre) *The Good Samaritan*, *The Critic*, *Ghosts*, (Hampstead Pentameters Theatre) *Romeo & Juliet*, (Mercutio - OneOff Productions) *Much Ado About Nothing*, (Benedick - English Theatre in Venice) *Brandy For The Parson*, (Wonderful Beast) His Film and TV Credits Include: *A Concert*, *The Laundrette*, *The Veranda* (Film Independants). *The DamBusters*, *The Bomb Plot*, *The History of Interrogation* (Tiger Aspect)

**J.C. Hoyt** having played roles in 34 of Shakespeare's 38 plays, is happy to be a part of this TNT/ADGE production of the First Quarto *HAMLET*. Most recently, he played Scrooge in ADGE's production of *A CHRISTMAS CAROL* – for his 13th year! In New York, he played the Old Actor in *THE FANTASTICKS* at the Sullivan Street Playhouse, and won critical acclaim in Fernando Arrabal's *ON THE TIGHTROPE*. Last year, he played Morrie in *TUESDAYS WITH MORRIE* at the Oldcastle Theatre in Bennington, Vermont, and Father Farley in *MASS APPEAL* at the Bickford Theatre in Morristown, New Jersey. In other American regional theatres, he has played Willy Loman in *DEATH OF A SALESMAN*, Vanya in *UNCLE VANYA*, Marius Byleveld in *ROAD TO MECCA*, Andrew Wyke in *SLEUTH*, Sir in *ROAR OF THE GREASEPAINT* ... and many others. He studied with Harold Clurman and Sir Tyrone Guthrie. Originally from Minnesota, he makes his home with the wonderfully talented Katrina Ferguson, in Morristown, New Jersey.

## TNT theatre

The company was founded in 1980 by Paul Stebbings and other actors trained in the Grotowski method in Britain and Poland. While valuing the imaginative and physical techniques of the Polish director they wanted to extend their work into comic and popular forms with greater contemporary relevance. Their first production, *HARLEQUIN*, was a commedia dell'arte based on the life of the Russian artist Meyerhold and his struggles with Stalin. (The play was revived in 1989 and became the first play about Stalinism to be performed throughout Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall). Other productions took popular forms and explored serious themes; such as finance and fairy tales in *FUNNY MONEY*, vaudeville and war in *ENGLISH TEA PARTY* and the detective thriller and violence in *THE MURDER OF SHERLOCK HOLMES*. Since its foundation all TNT productions have been written or edited by Paul Stebbings and Phil Smith. The company's approach to the classics is to critically examine the themes of the original rather than slavishly present a hallowed text. Since 2000 the company has extended this approach to interpretations of Shakespeare with considerable international success. Music plays an important role in the company's work, and most productions include a newly commissioned score. Notable music theatre productions include *CABARET FAUST* (inspired by Klaus Mann's *MEPHISTO*) and the *WIZARD OF JAZZ* (prize winner at the Munich Biennale) both scored by the well known composer, John Kenny. TNT's most ambitious production to date was the integrated drama, dance and music version of Melville's *MOBY DICK*, with a score by John Kenny and Paul Flush. Other long term members of TNT are the choreographer Eric Tessier Lavigne and composer Thomas Johnson.

TNT began its collaboration with The American Drama Group Europe and producer Grantly Marshall in 1993. Notable productions include *BRAVE NEW WORLD*, *LORD OF THE FLIES*, *THE GRAPES OF WRATH*, *THE CRUCIBLE*, *OLIVER TWIST* and the multi award winning *HAMLET*. TNT has received regular funding from the British Council and the UK Arts Council and collaborated or co-produced with organisations such as the Athens Concert Hall (Megaron), The St Petersburg State Comedy Theatre (Akimov), Tams Theatre Munich and St Donats Arts Centre (Wales) and the current long term collaborations with Costa Rica's Teatro Dionisio (Café Britt) and Milky Productions in Beijing. TNT has toured from the London to Shanghai, from Guatemala to Tokyo, from Atlanta to St Petersburg and Tehran to Berlin in venues that range from village halls to opera houses and from Royal palaces to National theatres. We borrow our motto from the great Soviet theatre director Meyerhold:

**“Tragedy with a smile on its lips”.**

Repertoire 2008

MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM, HAMLET by William Shakespeare,  
A CHRISTMAS CAROL (in Spanish and English) Charles Dickens,  
CANTERVILLE GHOST, PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY by Oscar Wilde,  
FARENHEIT 451 by Ray Bradbury plus a multi-cultural project MANY VOICES  
based on Britain’s colonial experience.

Details: [casting@tnt-theatre.net](mailto:casting@tnt-theatre.net)  
or on the producer’s website: [www: adg-europe.com](http://www.adg-europe.com)  
or TNT, 28 Danes Rd, Exeter EX4 4LS, Britain.