

A Noise Within Study Guide

Loot



A NOISE **15** WITHIN
2006/2007 ANNIVERSARY SEASON

A Noise Within

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About this Study Guide



Thank you for your commitment to sharing great literature with your students. It is a commitment that A Noise Within has shared with you since its founding in 1991, with the staging of its first play, William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

Classical works are an important part of our collective culture and history, and unless students are given the opportunity to read historical texts and to experience them live, as they were meant to be experienced, many will think of those written treasures as outdated words in a textbook anthology. With the goal of increasing student's lifelong understanding and enjoyment of classic works and theatre going, A Noise Within is honored to partner with you in the effort to preserve our literary heritage.

This study guide has been prepared as a prelude to A Noise Within's production of *Loot*. Please use it as a reference or as a teaching aid as you prepare your students to enter the classical world.

If your high school students are attending A Noise Within's performance of *Loot* and are participating in the post-performance discussion, they are fulfilling the following of California's Theatre Standards, as set forth by the State Board of Education:

Theatre Standards grades 9 – 12
Artistic Perception – 1.1 and 1.2
Creative Expression – 2.1
Historical and Cultural Context – 3.2 and 3.3
Aesthetic Valuing – 4.1 and 4.2

All of the information and activities outlined in this guide were designed to meet the 9th and 10th grade English language arts standards set forth by the state of California. Together, the activities fulfill the content standards as follows:

English Language Arts
Reading – 1.1, 1.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.5, 3.11 and 3.12
Writing – 1.1, 1.4, 1.9 and 2.2
Listening and Speaking – 1.1 and 1.11

Although these activities are designed specifically with the 9th and 10th grade standards in mind, they can be adapted to serve students in other grades as well.

About the Play **Cast & Characters**



Cast

McLeavy	Alan Blumenfeld
Fay	Jill Hill
Hal	Joshua Bitton
Dennis	Joseph Rye
Truscott	Geoff Elliott

Directed by Geoff Elliott and Julia Rodriguez-Elliott

Characters

Mr. McLeavy: an older, working class, Catholic widower mourning the death of his beloved wife. He is blindly obedient to authority to a point which overpowers his common sense.

Fay: the loyal nurse (with a shady past) of the recently deceased Mrs. McLeavy. She has been married seven times. All of her husbands died under mysterious circumstances.

Hal: the McLeavys' bisexual, delinquent son. He is incapable of telling a lie which often makes his career as a criminal difficult.

Dennis: Hal's bisexual, delinquent companion. He is an employee of the local undertaker and is responsible for burying Hal's mother.

Truscott: Inspector Truscott of Scotland Yard who claims to be a member of the Metropolitan Water Board. He believes in violence as a method of interrogation and would rather punish an innocent person than no one at all.

Meadows: Truscott's police officer sidekick.

About the Play *Synopsis*



MR. McLEAVY IS DISTRAUGHT over the recent death of his wife. His wife's nurse, Fay, enters to help him prepare for the day. Even though his wife has only been dead for a few hours, Fay encourages McLeavy to propose to her. Oddly, the wardrobe in the bedroom is locked. When Fay questions McLeavy's son Hal about it, he admits to locking it, and refuses to open it.

Hal's friend (and sometime lover) arrives acting as Mrs. McLeavy's undertaker. In actuality, Dennis is only working as an undertaker so that he and Hal can burrow through the basement of the funeral home into the bank next door. The locked wardrobe is full of stolen cash and police are combing the area. Hal and Dennis, in a moment of inspiration, decide to hide the money in the coffin and put the body in the wardrobe. The young criminals plan to escort the coffin to the burial site and exhume the body once the coast is clear.

Before they can leave, however, Inspector Truscott of Scotland Yard appears claiming to be a member of the Metropolitan Water Board. The Inspector searches the house; Dennis and McLeavy leave for the cemetery leaving Fay and Hal behind. Once alone, Fay confronts Hal with her knowledge of the crime, hoping for a share of the money. Truscott reappears aware of Hal's guilt and starts to interrogate. Hal is unable to lie and answers truthfully. The Inspector assumes that he is lying and beats him.

Dennis and McLeavy return. They have been in a car accident on the way to the funeral and the coffin is nearly demolished. Truscott reveals his true identity and reveals that Fay is responsible for the deaths of thirteen people, including all seven husbands and probably Mrs. McLeavy as well.

Fay decides that, rather than marry McLeavy, she will marry Dennis who is now a rich man thanks to his bank robbing. Hal, Dennis, Fay and Truscott split the money into four equal shares. Truscott can't arrest any of the three without exposing himself, so he arrests McLeavy, the only innocent person in the whole affair. ■

Loot A Production History



Joe Orton, Geraldine McEwan and Kenneth Williams during rehearsals for *Loot*.

1965 Touring Cast

McLeavy	Duncan Macrae
Truscott	Kenneth Williams
Fay	Geraldine McEwan
Hal	Ian McShane
Dennis	David Battley
Meadows	Anthony Brown

Directed by Peter Wood

LOOT WAS FIRST PERFORMED at the Arts Theatre Cambridge on February 1st 1965.

It was not well received by either the critics or the public. This was partially due to the miscasting of Kenneth Williams as Truscott.

Kenneth Williams was a very popular figure in television, radio (*Hancock's Half Hour*, *Round the Horne* and *Just a Minute*) and cinema with appearances in the popular *Carry On* films. He had a definite style (erudite and camp) and even today is the subject of caricature.

The casting of Williams had been Orton's inspiration and he wrote the part for him. In the original outline, the play was called *Funeral Games* and the nurse was the center of the action. Orton eventually switched things around so that it was more of a vehicle for the *Carry On* star.

Following the disastrous first night, producer Michael Codron, Orton and director Peter Wood met and cut scenes and lines. Although this made a small improvement, more alterations were to come by the middle of the week with huge rewrites and whole scenes being moved around.

The second date on the tour was Theatre Royal Brighton. When the cast reached the theatre, they were greeted by yet more rewrites and began rehearsing the new text during the day and performing the old version at night.

The original script had eighty nine pages, but by the end of the six week tour, the actors learned and inserted 133 pages of new material. Williams said, "We were in a terrible quandary wondering which version was the right one. We were tentative, which is death for Orton. You must take the stage with enormous conviction and panache."

The third date on the tour was Oxford's New Theatre. The production had the same success as it had in Cambridge and Orton wrote to Kenneth Halliwell, "Kenneth Williams is disastrous – just all his old performances from *Beyond Our Ken*. And then he wonders why he isn't getting laughs. We've now a rebellious company on our hands and a temperamental star."

The show then went to Golders Green Hippodrome where it had received better reviews, but was still not good enough for London. Next stop - the seaside resort of Bournemouth which was experiencing unseasonable snow storms which precluded audiences from attending and then to the Manchester Opera House where some of Truscott's lines were banned (theatre censorship was still in place). Policemen were actually stationed in the wings to ensure that censorship rules were enforced.

Finally, the play reached Wimbledon and played to practically no audience. Throughout the tour Codron had advertised the show as "pre-West End" and was desperate to bring it in, but the proposed host, the Phoenix Theatre turned them down. The play finally closed on March 20 1965 without any future dates for the show and nearly destroying Orton's reputation.

Glossary of Terms

Loot is a very English play with English references. For those not totally familiar with the Queen's English, here is a glossary of terms:

Annulment: a judicial pronouncement declaring a marriage invalid

Battle of Mons: A battle of the first World War occurring on Aug 23, 1914.

Benedictine Monk: member of the monastic order established by St Benedict

Bequest: to give or leave personal property by will.

Bird: mildly offensive term for a woman

Borstal: a reformatory for juvenile delinquents

Burke and Hare: two 19th century grave robbers and murderers who sold bodies to Edinburgh medical schools.

'By Appointment.' Like jam: products that receive royal patronage are marked with the monarch's seal of approval.

Coatee: short coat

Cobblers: Cockney rhyming slang for testicles

Consummatum Est: Latin for "It is finished." Christ's last words.

Effing and blinding: a colloquialism for swearing

Embalm: to treat (a dead body) so as to protect it from decay.

Fait accompli: a thing accomplished and irreversible.

Fortnight: a period of two weeks

Freudian: relating to the psychoanalytic theories or practices of Freud – the founder of psychoanalysis who developed theories based on repressed memories, examined infantile sexuality and dreams,

Holloway: a prison for women in North London

Holyhead: the largest town on the Isle of Anglesey in North Wales.

Kip: sleep

Knocked us up: woke us up

Leeds: Industrial city in North Yorkshire

Loot: 1. goods usually of considerable value taken in war: 2: something appropriated illegally often by force or violence; illicit gains by public officials: 3: the action of looting.

Mother's Union: a global organization founded in England in 1876, committed to Christian family life.

M.P.: Member of Parliament

Muezzin: Muslim official who issues a call to prayer

Nappies: diapers

National Health: the government's health insurance for all citizens of the UK. Taxpayers are entitled to free medical service, prescriptions and things like eyeglasses, prosthetic

limbs, false teeth, etc. These items are often very unstylish and cheaply made.

Nicked: caught, imprisoned.

In the nick: in prison

Papal dispensation: authorization by the Pope which provides exemption from a rule of church law.

Papal nuncio: the Vatican's diplomatic representative

Piss-taking: attempts to mock, to deflate

Publican: pub-owner

Publican's tribute: Floral arrangement sent by the owner of the King of Denmark, a pub.

Put them in the club: make them pregnant

Quid: slang for the British pound.

Sadler's Wells: a theatre in London known for its opera and dance productions.

'strewth: God's truth

Stroppy: difficult to deal with

Take the mickey: tease, make fun of

W.V.S: Women's Voluntary Service

GLOSSARY COURTESY OF McCARTER THEATRE

An Interview with Simon Ward



SIMON WARD

played Dennis in the 1966 production of *Loot* which opened at the Jeanetta Cochran Theatre before

transferring to the Criterion Theatre where it played for 400 performances. Ward had trained with the National Youth Theatre before attending RADA. Following *Loot*, Ward went on to appear in some of the most prestigious and popular films of the 1970's including the title role in *Young Winston* (1972) for which he was nominated for BAFTA and a Golden Globe, *The Three Musketeers* (1973), *Hitler: The Last Ten Days* (1973), *All Creatures Great and Small* (1974) and *Zulu Dawn* (1979). He appears regularly on television, most recently in the Ralph Fiennes version of *Wuthering Heights* (which also starred his daughter, Sophie) and as Sir Monty Everard in the BBC TV series *Judge John Deed*.

Mr. Ward graciously shared anecdotes and insights about working with Orton and on this landmark piece of theatre.

Unlike the initial tour where the text was altered nightly, the text that the 1966 cast was given was the text that was performed. Ward recalled that the control that the Lord Chamberlain's role over censorship of plays was coming to a close. The script of *Loot* had Dennis use the word 'bugger' which had to be deleted or the play risked closure and the actors' arrest. While still at the Cochran Theatre, Joe came to Ward and told him to put the

word back in. Ward did so, but the entire cast were anxious about any repercussions.

Orton was at every rehearsal and indeed every performance. Ken Halliwell was also present at most rehearsals and during the process the cast realized just how much he had contributed to Joe's work. "We were all very fond of Ken, but you could sense a widening gap between the two of them."

Charles Marowitz utilized an improvisational method in his direction of the piece. This was a source of contention with its star Michael Bates who had stipulated in his contract that he would not improvise. However, when it came to performance, Bates could not help but add improvisational touches to add to the comedy of the play.

The humor is in the text—these characters are not caricatures and are each desperate to get what they want. The comedy comes out of the desperation. "I don't see it as a text that lends itself to improvisation," said Ward. In other words, like most farce, playing exclusively for the laughs works in opposition to what the playwright intended.

Ward recalled that Bates would come to the theatre dressed in a Trilby, brown mackintosh, and brogues and then would change into his costume for Truscott: a Trilby, brown mackintosh and brogues. Early on in rehearsals, Bates, when he realized that his character was a

corrupt policeman who actually gets away with it said, "I can't do a play about a corrupt policeman. I call the Twickenham police every time I go away!" Obviously, Bates had an arrangement with the police to keep an eye on his property when he was out of town on tour or filming and didn't want to 'rock the boat'.

The well-known anecdote about Orton bringing his recently deceased mother's false teeth to be used as a prop by Hal occurred about a month into the show's run. The cast were horrified, but as they had all gotten to know Joe, it was not something which totally surprised them.

The day after the deaths, the cast entered the theatre for that evening's performance. "It was quite a surreal experience", said Mr Ward. "Here we were acting in a play with this dead body onstage and this had just happened."

Although the show had won the 1966 Evening Standard Award for best play as well as an award for its star, Michael Bates, it was playing to 40% - 50% houses. In a morbid twist, the deaths of Orton and Halliwell made front page news and soon audiences were flocking to the Criterion. The play ran for 400 performances.

Since then, *Loot* has been produced on Broadway and revived several times in the West End. It is popular fare for the regional touring circuit as well as for repertory companies worldwide. ■

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY DAWN KELLOGG

Farce In a Nutshell

Farce [fahrs] noun. verb. 1. a light, humorous play in which the plot depends upon a skillfully exploited situation rather than upon the development of character. 2. humor of the type displayed in such works.

DICTIONARY.COM

The aim of farce is to entertain by means of unlikely and extravagant (often impossible) situations, mistaken identity, verbal humor, innuendo and a fast paced plot. However, farce in order to be effective, must retain its humanity otherwise it risks sinking into burlesque.

The plots of farces do not generally involve frustrated young lovers who have insurmountable odds to overcome. They frequently focus on a transgression or a character's desperation to hide something from others resulting in a chain reaction. The protagonist gets to a point of no return believing that any course of action is better than being discovered, ultimately getting deeper and deeper in trouble. Audiences are encouraged to identify with the poor character, and hope for his or her success.

Often the transgression takes the form of a misunderstanding or misinterpretation. Sometimes it is a secret concerning the present or long-forgotten past which threatens the protagonist's security.

Farces generally move at a frantic pace toward the climax and there is most often a happy ending.

Usually a staged farce revolves around one set (often the drawing room of a home) with numerous doors leading to other rooms.

Farce is fairly tolerant of "bad" behavior and depicts humans with all their faults.

Farce is a theatrical tradition appearing at the beginning of classical drama. In early Roman times it had form as the Atellana, an impromptu entertainment intended to amuse crowds on market days and holidays. With titles such as *The Farmer*, *The Vine-Gatherers*, *The Woodpile* and *the She-Goat*, these were acted by stock characters: Bucco (the fat fool), Dossennus (the hunchback), Maccus (the Idiot), Manducus (The Glutton), Pappus (the Old Man). Two authors, Pomponius and Novius were the main exponents of these plays. The Atellan farces metamorphosed into mime.

Farce was very popular in France during the Middle Ages. The oldest known farce is *The Boy and the Blind Man* from the 13th century. Most were never written down, but the best known is *Maitre Pierre Pathelin* (c.1470). Moliere appeared in farce and this had an effect on the works which he would go onto write.

In England, there are many farcical elements in early Biblical plays and culminated in the work of John Heywood whose best known work was *The Playe called the foure P.P.; a newe and a very mery enterlude of a palmer, a pardoner, a potycary, a pedler* (c.1520) where each of the characters tries to outdo the other in lying. (The winner, by the way, is the palmer).

In the 18th and 19th centuries, farces on the English and American stage were parts of larger bills although

some did achieve success as vehicles for particular comedians.

Playwrights such as Pinero with *The Magistrate*, Brandon Thomas with *Charley's Aunt* are leading examples of early farce.

In the 1920's and 30's plays known collectively as the *Aldwych Farces* primarily written by Ben Travers (*Rookery Nook*, *Thark*) were vehicles for Ralph Lynn and Tom Walls. In the 1950's and 60's Brian Rix continued the trend with what became known as the *Whitehall Farces*. The bad boy of British Theatre, Joe Orton, epitomized the London of the Swinging Sixties with his farces, *Loot* and *What the Butler Saw*. Today the farces of Ray Cooney: *Funny Money*, *Run for Your Wife* and Michael Frayn's *Noises Off* grace the stages of the world.

Farce tends to survive in translation better than comedy. This is demonstrated by the immense popularity of Feydeau's farces – *Le Dindon* (1896), *L'Hôtel du Libre Échange* (1899) and *Une puce à l'oreille* (*A Flea in Her Ear*) written in 1907. These are performed worldwide to this day.

More recently, the farces of Marc Camoletti: *Boeing, Boeing* (1960) and *Don't Dress for Dinner* (1985) have been translated from their original French to be performed all over the world.

As long as there are desperate situations in need of cover-up, there will be farce! ■

Joe Orton Biography



Joe Orton (Jan 1, 1933 – Aug 9, 1967)

JOE ORTON'S NOTORIOUS LIFE and the horrific nature of his death overshadow his achievements as a playwright.

Joe Orton was born in Leicester, England on January 1, 1933 into a working-class family. After joining several amateur theatre companies, Orton took elocution lessons to get rid of a speech impediment and his Leicester accent. He was admitted to RADA in 1951 where he met fellow student Kenneth Halliwell who would become his mentor and lover. Halliwell encouraged Orton to read and study literature and nurtured his creative abilities.

Orton worked as an actor and stage manager for several years and he and Halliwell collaborated on an unpublished novel, *The Boy Hairdresser* (1960). They were arrested and spent six months in prison for defacing library books.

Orton's first two plays both written in 1963, *The Ruffian on the Stair* (written for radio) and *Entertaining Mr Sloane* show him to be a follower of Harold Pinter. The latter gained him overnight notoriety. *Loot* was his second full-length play, followed by two television plays: *The Good and Faithful Servant* (1964, broadcast in 1967) and *The Erpingham Camp* (1966, Orton's take on *The Bacchae*). *Funeral Games* was performed posthumously in 1968

as was *What The Butler Saw* (1969). At the time of his death, Orton was working on a screenplay for The Beatles, *Up Against It*.

Orton's work celebrates the vigor and rebellion of youth in the 1960's and advocates a more relaxed morality of the younger generation as a more realistic model for human behavior. Orton was a libertine. He was sexually promiscuous and disrespectful of authority and spoke with a blatant lack of sentimentality. When the Lord Chamberlain mandated that the corpse of Mrs McLeavy must not fall out of the wardrobe, he re-wrote it so that she would stay in the wardrobe, but stand on her head. When his own mother died during the run of *Loot*, he replaced the prop false teeth with those of his deceased mother – a perfect example, he said, of life imitating art.

During the night of August 9, 1967, Halliwell bashed in Orton's head with a hammer and then committed suicide with an overdose of Nembutal. For the last few years of their relationship, Halliwell had felt increasingly threatened by Orton's success and his blatant promiscuity. On the desk near Orton's diary, Halliwell had left a note: "If you read his diary all will be explained. K.H. P.S. Especially the latter part." ■

Joe Orton Timeline



1933

John Kingsley Orton born Jan 1

Adolf Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany

1934

Alcatraz becomes a federal prison in San Francisco, CA

1935

Amelia Earhart becomes the first person to fly solo from Hawaii to California

1937

Walt Disney's *Snow White* opens and becomes a huge hit.

1939

The Wizard of Oz premieres in NYC

General Franco assumes power in Spain at the end of the Spanish Civil War

World War II begins when Germany invades Poland

1940

Winston Churchill becomes Prime Minister of England

John Lennon is born in Liverpool England

1941

The US enters WWII on December 7

1944

IBM develops the first program-controlled calculator

1945

Orton attends Clark's College

World War II ends

President Roosevelt dies suddenly and Harry Truman takes the oath of office

1946

First meeting of the UN
UNICEF is founded

1947

Orton leaves Clark's College
The Polaroid Camera is introduced

1948

Mohandas Gandhi is assassinated in India

1949

The People's Republic of China is proclaimed
1984 by George Orwell is published

1950

Orton begins elocution lessons to correct a lisp and his Leicestershire dialect
The Korean War begins
US Senator Joseph McCarthy charges that Communists have infiltrated the State Dept
President Truman orders the development of the hydrogen bomb

1951

Orton begins to study at RADA and meets Kenneth Halliwell

1952

Princess Elizabeth becomes Queen Elizabeth II

1953

Orton and Halliwell write a novel together – *The Silver Bucket*
The Korean War ends
Eisenhower is inaugurated as President of the U.S.

1955

McDonald's is founded
Disneyland opens its gates

1956

Orton and Halliwell write *The Boy Hairdresser*
Grace Kelly marries Prince Rainier III of Monaco

1957

Orton and Halliwell write the novel *Between Us Girls*
The USSR launches Sputnik I

1958

Alaska becomes a state
The U.S. Congress creates NASA

1959

Orton writes *Fred and Madge* (pub 2001)
Fidel Castro takes control of *Cuba*
The Vietnam War begins

1961

Orton writes *The Vision of Gombold Proval*, a novel published as *Head To Toe* after his death. He submits *The Visit* to The Royal Court Theatre.
John F Kennedy is inaugurated as President of the U.S.
The Berlin Wall is constructed

1962

Orton and Halliwell are arrested on May 5th for damaging library books. They spend six months in jail

1963

The BBC buys *The Boy Hairdresser* from Orton

Orton writes *Entertaining Mr Sloane* and acquires Peggy Ramsay as his agent

Orton writes *The Good and Faithful Servant*

1964

Orton writes *Loot*

Entertaining Mr. Sloane opens at the New Arts Theatre before transferring to Wyndham's Theatre and then the Queen's Theatre

The Boy Hairdresser is broadcast as *The Ruffian on the Stair*

Martin Luther King Jr wins the Nobel Peace Prize

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 becomes law

1965

Loot opens at the Arts Theatre, Cambridge

Orton visits Tangiers and writes *The Erpingham Camp*

Entertaining Mr. Sloane opens at the Lyceum Theatre in New York

Malcolm X is assassinated

1966

Loot is revised and opens at the Jeanetta Cochran theatre before transferring to the Criterion Theatre

The Erpingham Camp opens at the Royal Court Theatre

Orton begins writing his diaries and *What the Butler Saw*

Orton's mother dies on December 26th

1967

Loot wins the Evening Standard Award for Best Play

Orton drafts a screenplay for The Beatles – *Up Against It*

First performance of *The Good and Faithful Servant*

Orton is murdered by Halliwell on August 9th. Halliwell then commits suicide

Loot ends its run after 400 performances

1968

Loot opens at the Biltmore Theatre in New York
Funeral Games, a one-act play is produced

1969

What the Butler Saw opens in London

Crimes of Passion opens in New York

1970

What the Butler Saw opens in New York

1971

Head to Toe published

1975

A Joe Orton season is held at the Royal Court Theatre

1978

John Lahr publishes *Prick Up Your Ears*

1986

Loot opens at the Manhattan Theatre Club and transfers to the Music Box Theatre

Orton's diaries, edited by John Lahr are published

1987

The film version of *Prick Up Your Ears* is released

London In the Swinging 60's



IT TOOK NEARLY A DECADE for the British economy to recover after the post World War II period of rationing. With the election of a Labour Government in 1964 and Harold Wilson in Downing Street, there was a new economic optimism which captivated England. The second half of the decade was dominated by a youth-oriented, cultural revolution.

London in the mid to late 1960's was the capital of all that was cool. London was full of vibrant innovators. Carnaby Street in the West End to King's Road in

Chelsea were centers of fashion and places to be seen. The mini-skirt as invented by Mary Quant, bell-bottomed trousers, Twiggy's short pageboy haircut, little coats with big buttons and go-go boots all made a huge impact on the fashion world.

The boys from Liverpool—the Beatles—were to dominate the world music scene along with the Rolling Stones, Merseybeat, Freddie and the Dreamers, Cliff Richard, Adam Faith, Gerry and the Pacemakers, The Searchers and trendy nightclubs opened all over the city. The Mersey Sound was a rhythmic fusion of blues and country and western with a British sheen. Pop art exploded in the galleries with work by Richard Hamilton, Peter Blake and David Hockney.

James Bond burst on the scene with *Casino Royale* in 1967 and films such as *Alfie* (1966) and *Georgy Girl* (1966) were worldwide hits. The *Carry On* films starring Sid James, Kenneth Williams (who originated the role of Truscott

in *Loot*), Charles Hawtrey, Hattie Jacques and Barbara Windsor were rollicking and just a little rude and the stars became household names. Television shows such as *The Avengers*, *Adam Adamant*, the politically satirical *TW3 (That Was the Week that Was)* with David Frost and *Doctor Who* were hits and the Mini-Cooper was the most popular vehicle on the road. (Ironically, only now is the Mini becoming one of the most popular cars in the US.) Top toys were Tiny Tears, Action Man and Twister. The satirical magazine *Private Eye* was launched and flourishes still today. To top it off, England won the World Cup in 1966 in a home victory.

Politically, in the second half of the decade, Edward Heath became leader of the Conservative party, the Race Relations Act, the Divorce Act, Prices and Incomes Act, the Sexual Offences Act and the Abortion Act were voted in. Labour nationalized the steel industry and Britain abolished capital punishment and the voting age was reduced to 18.

Dr. Beeching, the self appointed Chairman of British Rail ranked high among one of the decade's greatest vandals. He decided to revamp the railways from the romance of steam to the efficiency of diesel. He maintained that the huge growth in car ownership in the UK (from 2.25 million in 1951 to 8 million in 1964) as well as freight-carrying lorries were in huge competition with the railways. In the process, he closed 2,128 railway stations and axed 67,000 jobs in the mid-sixties.

The 1960's were the last decade that shillings and pence were used. The farthing was obsolete in 1961. By the middle of the decade it was apparent that if Britain were to join the Common Market, it would have to go decimal. Decimalization eventually would come in 1971 when Edward Heath's government came to power.

Gay rights in the UK

Although Orton was one of the most visibly gay mainstream playwrights of the 60's, he never wrote what we would call "gay plays". He questioned dramatic and sexual conventions prior to the beginning of the gay movement. His scripts flirt with illegal acts and homosexual themes, but he insisted that there should not be anything queer or camp or odd about the relationship between Hal and Dennis in *Loot*. He said, "Americans see homosexuality in terms of fag and drag. This isn't my vision of the universal brotherhood. They must be perfectly ordinary boys who happen to be f***ing each other. Nothing could be more natural. I won't have the Great American Queen brought into it."

In his plays, the masculine men: Sloane in *Entertaining Mr Sloane*, Hal and Dennis in *Loot* and Nick in *What the Butler Saw* are never exclusively gay. These were his versions of the "Angry Young Man" as epitomized in John Osborne's plays of the late 1950's. Orton's characters reflect his anger on the repressive effects of puritanical family values and the establishment on gay man's sexual aspirations.

In order to understand where Orton was coming from, one must understand that homosexuality was illegal in the UK until 1967. Orton himself lived on the edge and his promiscuity kept him in constant threat of arrest.

Henry VIII introduced the first legislation against homosexuals with The Buggery Act of 1533. This offense was punishable by public hanging and was lifted in 1861.

Le Roy le veult

"Forasmuch as there is not yet sufficient and condign punishment appointed and limited by the due course of the Laws of this Realm for the detestable and abominable Vice of Buggery committed with mankind of beast: It may therefore please the King's Highness with the assent of the Lords Spiritual and the Commons of this present parliament assembled, that it may be enacted by the authority of the same, that the same offence

be from henceforth adjudged Felony and that such an order and form of process therein to be used against the offenders as in cases of felony at the Common law. And that the offenders being herof convict by verdict confession or outlawry shall suffer such pains of death and losses and penalties of their good chattels debts lands tenements and hereditaments as felons do according to the Common Laws of this Realme. And that no person offending in any such offence shall be admitted to his Clergy, And that Justices of the Peace shall have power and authority within the limits of their commissions and Jurisdictions to hear and determine the said offence, as they do in the cases of other felonies. This Act to endure till the last day. of the next Parliament"

[Bailey, 147-148, and H. Montgomery Hyde, *The Love That Dared Not Speak Its Name: A Candid History of Homosexuality in Britain*, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970) [British title: *The Other Love*]

The law only ran until the end of the next Parliament and it was reenacted three times. In 1541 it was enacted to continue in force in perpetuity. In 1547, Edward VI's first Parliament repealed all felonies created in the last reign. In 1548, the provisions of the 1533 Act were slightly changed—the punishment was still death, but goods and lands were not forfeit, and the rights of wives and heirs were safeguarded. Mary's accession brought about the repeal of all Edward's acts in 1548. It was not until 1563, that Elizabeth I's second Parliament reenacted the law and the law of 1533 (not 1548) were given permanent force.

In 1828, the statute of 1563 was revoked by a consolidating act, but the death penalty was retained. In 1861 life imprisonment, or a jail time of at least ten years, was substituted for the death penalty. All these laws were against buggery. Other sexual activities were not specifically criminalized.

In 1885 Mr. Labouchere introduced an amendment to the Criminal Amendment Act of 1885. It read:

48&49 Vict. c.69, 11:

"Any male person who, in public or private, commits or is party to the commission of, or procures or attempts to procure the commission by any male person of any act of

gross indecency with another male person, shall be guilty of a misdemeanour, and being convicted thereof shall be liable at the discretion of the Court to be imprisoned for any term not exceeding two years, with or without hard labour.”

Private acts were now under the scope of the law. This became the Blackmailer’s Charter, and was the law used to convict the playwright Oscar Wilde who was sentenced to two years in Reading Gaol.

The direct effects of this law were not restricted to England. Because of England’s success as a colonial power, and its tendency to impose its entire legal structure on the ruled areas, legal prohibitions against homosexual activity derived from this law extended well outside England.*

In 1965 in the House of Lords, Lord Arran proposed the decriminalization of homosexuality. In 1966 Humphrey Berkeley MP proposed the same in the House of Commons. He was defeated in the 1966 general election and attributed this to the unpopularity of his actions. In the new parliament, Labour MP Leo Abse took up the issue and ensured that the Bill progressed.

In 1967 the Sexual Offenses Bill was put before parliament. Lord Arran, one of the bill’s sponsors, made these remarks at the third reading before the Lords:

Because, of the Bill now to be enacted, perhaps a million human beings will be able to live in greater peace. I find this an awesome and marvelous thing. The late Oscar Wilde, on his release from Reading Gaol, wrote to a friend: “Yes, we shall win in the end; but the road will be long and red with monstrous martyrdoms.”

My Lords, Mr. Wilde was right: the road has been long and the martyrdoms many, monstrous and bloody. Today, please God! sees the end of that road. I ask one thing and I ask it earnestly. I ask those who have, as it were, been in bondage and for whom the prison doors are now open to show their thanks by comporting themselves quietly and with dignity. This is no occasion

for jubilation; certainly not for celebration. Any form of ostentatious behaviour; now or in the future any form of public flaunting, would be utterly distasteful and would, I believe, make the sponsors of the Bill regret that they have done what they have done. Homosexuals must continue to remember that while there may be nothing bad in being a homosexual, there is certainly nothing good. Lest the opponents of the Bill think that a new freedom, a new privileged class, has been created, let me remind them that no amount of legislation will prevent homosexuals from being the subject of dislike and derision, or at best of pity. We shall always, I fear, resent the odd man out. That is their burden for all time, and they must shoulder it like men – for men they are. The Sexual Offenses Act 1967 was passed only 13 days before Orton’s murder and decriminalized certain homosexual activities between adults, but established a higher age of consent for homosexuals (aged 21) and “in private” excluded acts taking place in a hotel room and in private homes where a third person was present – even if the person were in a different room. The Act did not extend to Scotland and Northern Ireland where all homosexual activities remained illegal.

Two days after the bill became law, Orton saw a straight couple innocently talking and enjoying each other’s company in public. He wrote in his diary:

‘I saw a young boy, blond and very healthy-looking, filling a bucket with water on the promenade. As he turned the tap off he looked up. Our eyes met. A great spasm of rage overtook me. I find lust an emotion indistinguishable from anger. Or, at least, anger predominates when I see something I can’t have.’

Legalizing homosexuality did not and would not (had he lived) stop Orton’s anger. The ironic and ridiculous way that he portrays heterosexuals in his comedies is a result of the bitter, painful consciousness of a gay man whose idea of normalcy was always questioned. ■

*[ref. H. Montgomery Hyde, *The Love That Dared Not Speak Its Name: A Candid History of Homosexuality in Britain*, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970)]

Orton On Orton



Joe Orton by Lewis Morley (1965)

The following is taken from an interview with Barry Hanson which appeared in the programme notes of Peter Gill's Royal Court production of *The Erpingham Camp* and *The Ruffian on the Stair* (*Crimes of Passion*) in June 1967.

"I was born in Leicester thirty-three years ago. Father a gardener, mother a machinist. I had quite an ordinary schooling. I didn't get my eleven plus. I wanted it at the time. So I left school and did this supposedly business

course for a year, but it didn't do me any good because I'd no aptitude for keeping accounts and things like that... Yes, I was sacked from all the jobs I had between sixteen and eighteen because I was never interested in any of them. I resented having to go to work in the morning, and very often I didn't bother—I just looked in shop windows, or if it was a nice sunny morning I'd sit in the Town Hall square and have an ice-cream.

At night I belonged to an amateur dramatic society, in fact I belonged to so many it got ridiculous—the rehearsals for the shows clashed. I wanted to be an actor but didn't know how to go about it so I wrote to the Information Bureau in Leicester. They said I'd have to go to R.A.D.A. or some recognised dramatic academy and they gave me a whole list of elocution teachers. I went to one called Madame..., I don't know why they called her Madame, because there was nothing Madam-ish about her at all, she was just an ordinary, pompous middle-class lady and she didn't think much to me, just a job, I could tell that; she offered coffee and I said yes, and she

asked me did I take sugar and I said yes and she went away and came back with the coffee with sugar, but it wasn't sugar, it was saccharin in the bottom of the cup and so I thought 'Oh, yes, she's a right bitch' and she had these biscuits in a biscuit barrel, you know, these awful cheap biscuits. Oh, she didn't think much to me, she thought much more of a pompous, middle-class young man who was going to her because she thought he was going to be God's gift to the English stage and I was very glad to notice that he turned out to be a disaster. She had no taste.

But she did tell me how to get a grant from the Education Authorities. She arranged an evening show of all her pupils to show how talented they were and I and this girl, her pupil, did the quarrel scene of Oberon and Titania from 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' and I had a marvellous idea. I thought I'd play Oberon green, so I bought a lot of green distemper from the local shop. I'd no idea about stage make-up, and put on a pair of bathing trunks and just covered myself from head to foot in green, including my hair, surprising I didn't get a skin rash; then I got a green bedspread from my mother's and father's bed and wrapped that round me and appeared on the stage in this fantastic outfit, the bedspread and covered in green distemper while the girl wore a conventional muslin ballet dress as Titania. Anyway, it was very successful because Madame introduced me afterwards to this man who was in charge of giving away grants, someone quite important and I had a long; talk with him and he thought it was all very interesting. Anyway they gave me a very generous grant...

"I did actually get into R.A.D.A. the first time. It was rather extraordinary. For audition I did a piece from 'Peter Pan' between Captain Hook and Smee, I think it was, both at

the same time, a schizophrenic act, it was quite alarming, I don't know how I did it. It impressed the judges and when I took the letter round to Madame she could hardly conceal her rage that I'd got in, and she continued to be bitchy, because when I went to R.A.D.A.. I was supposed to have had eight lessons, actually I'd had seven, and she kept writing and saying I hadn't paid her for the last lesson. I don't know if I ever did pay her. I didn't have a very good time at R.A.D.A. really, because I found that in the very first term I actually expected to be taught something. It was complete rubbish. I wasn't taught anything and I learned at the end of the term that I was more enthusiastic and knew more about acting at the beginning of my first term than I did at the end. And during the next two terms, I had two years there, I completely lost my confidence and my virginity.

"Then I went into Rep for four months and I was bored; I did a lot of moaning; then I left the theatre and got married and that didn't work out. Well, I had no real feeling about it at all, it just didn't work out, I mean, I was too young ...we just drifted apart, no rows, I mean, those kind of marriages generally last. However one is liberal about modern marriage, there is this responsibility. I don't like possessions and a wife and children are possessions, they have to be possessed and supported. After a year I came back to London and started writing. I never wanted to be a writer, I always wanted to be an actor, but then I did have a talent for writing, but I never got anything published at all, never. I had to take lots of different kinds of jobs.

"I don't have a chip on my shoulder about having been sent to prison. I do know, however, that the kind of people who walked out of 'Loot' are the kind of people who are magistrates. Now they can't do anything about me as the author of 'Loot', but when I was in their power, the same person before I wrote either 'Loot' or 'Sloane', then they could do something. No, I realise what I did was unforgivable, I'm just unrepentant. But I

objected to public money going on dull, badly written books under the heads of successful lady authors on the backs of their book jackets. I think one was written by Lady Dartmouth. . The libraries had a tremendous amount of space for rubbish but none for good books. I also used to write false blurbs on the book flap which the Magistrate described as mildly obscene. So they made an example of me. My activities had been going on for a long time. "No, I liked prison. I mean the only things I had against it were the small things. When I was in Brixton, the lavatories were disgraceful, they were always overflowing and were in a filthy state: there weren't enough of them and that kind of thing. I was on remand, you see, so I didn't get out to work in the prison. I was locked in my cell for twenty-three hours a day. This didn't worry me much. I used to read a lot. Not the Bible, which we were supposed to read, but strange things like 'Hatter's Castle', the sort of thing I'd never normally dream of reading, cheap novels and papers. I didn't trust the psychiatrist because I knew anything I told him would eventually be reported to the authorities.

"Well obviously you've got to have police they're a necessary evil. I mean I've no objection to them tracking down murderers and bank robbers, clearly you can't have people behaving in a completely anarchic way. I believe though, that they interfere far too much with private morals — whether people are having it off in the backs of cars, or smoking marihuana, or doing the interesting little things that one does. Oh no, they don't terrify me because I know how to deal with them. For instance, you never tell them the truth, you tell the most convenient lie, but one which they'll believe. And, of course, you're awfully nice. I mean, when they got me into the police station the best thing to do, I found, was to be as nice and utterly vulnerable and open as possible, because it's no good standing on your rights once they've got you in their power. It may be cowardly.. Well, I wasn't actually beaten up, but he hovered around...whereas if you mess them about they get nasty.

"I hope that the violence in my plays is not of an inconsequential nature, I mean, not violence for its own sake. I'm always horrified by violence in some things, especially American films and novels. I watched an American series on TV called 'The Invaders' and the violence in that seems to me purely gratuitous. I mean, it was necessary for the old man in 'Sloane' to be beaten up on the purely pragmatic grounds of the plot and I couldn't have had the play working otherwise, in the same way to go back to the old cliché about Shakespeare; you can't have certain scenes in 'King Lear' without having Gloucester's eyes put out. No, violence for its own sake I'm very much against. "The style isn't super-imposed. It's me. You can't write stylised comedy in inverted commas, because the style must ring of the man, and if you think in a certain way and you write true to yourself, which I rope I am, then you will get a style, a style will come out. You've only got to be sitting on a bus and you'll hear the most stylised lines. People think I write fantasy, but I don't; some things may be exaggerated or distorted in the way some painters distort and alter things, but they're realistic figures. They're perfectly recognisable. I don't like the discrimination against style that some people have, every serious writer has a style. I mean, Arnold Wesker has a style, but people don't normally think of him as a stylist, in the same way they think of Wilde, Firbank or Sheridan. Style isn't camp or chi-chi. I write in a certain way because I can express in naturalistic terms. In the whole naturalistic movement of the 20's and 30's you can't ultimately have anything except discussions of Mavis's new hat; you can't have people. With the naturalistic style I couldn't make any comment on the kind of policeman that Truscott is, or on the laws of the Establishment. Oscar Wilde's style is much more earthy and colloquial than most people notice. When we look at Lady Bracknell, she's the most ordinary, common direct woman, she's not an affected woman at all. People are taken in by "the glittering style". It's not glitter. Congreve is the same. It's real — a slice of life. It's just very brilliantly written, perfectly believable. Nothing at all incredible.

"In spite of all one hears to the contrary, critics are human beings, and human beings make snap judgments. People always like to put you in compartments and I didn't like this. I think compartments of any kind are bad. They do it in sex 'he's a leather fetishist ' or 'he likes little girls in pink knickers'. Well, I think one should like everything, or try everything in all spheres of life. I don't think one should reject any experience — although I don't really fancy being beaten or anything like that.

"Yes, I was approached to do a film script for the Beatles. I said it would have to be an absolutely original script. Paul McCartney said do whatever you like. I said that means you'll never be able to do it. He said as long as it's good, that's all right. So I did the script and I was very pleased with it and my agent was very pleased with it and she's not an easy woman to please. Well, we sent it away and didn't hear anything for over a month, then we finally get this little note from Brian Epstein, that it wasn't suitable for the Beatles. Well, what did they want? They got a brilliant script. There were, of course, certain things. Because all teenagers were supposed to imitate the Beatles I mustn't have the Beatles doing certain things. I wrote a story, but actually as it turned out, by page 25 they had committed adultery, murder, dressed in drag, been in prison, seduced the daughter of a Priest, I mean the niece of a Priest, blown up a war memorial and all sorts of things like that. I can't really blame them but it would have been marvellous. I only wrote it because I wanted to, I don't have to be careful about what I write. The fact that Brian Epstein says it isn't suitable doesn't worry me, I'll do it and sell it to someone who will. I mean, I hadn't used any foul language. I hadn't gone as far as I can go if I really wanted to. I was very good on that. Oscar Lewenstein thought it was the best thing I'd written and he has every intention of doing it.

"I've always wanted to do a film called 'Carry on, Jesus' which would be a send-up of one of the Hollywood movies, and one could cast Kenneth Williams as Simon Peter. The trouble

with the 'Carry on' films is that they should be, even in their own terms of reference, better. There are lots of terribly funny jokes we could make about tools and things like that, you know, all the postcard humour, but I never think it's good enough at present.

"I always rewrite plays. I get an idea and I do several drafts of it. What I usually do is to put it away for a while and then do a final rewrite. In fact 'The Ruffian on the Stair' was written in 1964 and the B.B.C. did it. But the version we're doing in 'Crimes of Passion' is only very vaguely like it, because since then I've had a whole new idea, although the skeleton is the same, a lot of it is totally different and totally new and I'm now satisfied that that is as far as I can go in this particular play and I don't want to do anything on it ever again so that I've got that out of my system. It's the same with Erpingham Camp, because I did a version of it for television. It all began when Lindsay Anderson gave me this idea. He said he was doing a film which he'd got from the Bacchae. He asked if I could do anything with it. I said I'd like to and went away and wrote 17 pages. Lindsay read it, but it wasn't his idea any longer, so I was left with the 17 pages, but what I'd done had really interested me so I turned it into a play for television, and when television had finished with it, there was another gap of a year, by which time I'd thought about it a lot more in stage terms, and I completely rewrote the characters. Now I've got that out of my system.

"I like pop music. I collect old records and new ones on the basis that they may become part of pop history. That's all I'm interested in because I don't like classical music. There was a time when I tried to educate myself to liking it, but I just think it's a noise — a terrible racket, probably because I'm tone deaf. I love all those stupid songs like 'Marta, rambling rose of the wildwood'. I've just bought a record of Carl Brisson where he does a scene from 'The Merry Widow'. It's utterly ludicrous but he does it in style and it's true to itself. It's very moving. I have an old record of Cavan O'Connor singing 'Kathleen Mavourneen' and

it's really rather sad as well as being ridiculous. People have said I'm anti-Catholic: I'm not really, I just think they're very funny. I've never really come into contact with any dangerous Catholics. Those I've known have usually been Irish and I like the Irish, I don't know why. I mean, they're the most infuriating people on earth. I've never been to Ireland. I just have a sort of irrational feeling about them.

"There have always been reactionaries, I think it's a mistake to call them Fascists because that really only applies to a certain period in history. Where people go wrong when they talk about fascism is that they always think of the Nuremberg Rally and there is really nothing wrong with the Nuremberg Rallies, the emotion, the bands and marching and all that, I mean they're marvellous, I get really involved and very emotional, but it's the purposes to which these things are put that's always evil. And the jackboot; it's a symptom of that particular country. I mean if you really wanted to spot the nasty equivalent of fascism in England you have to read the letters to the Radio Times and the T.V. Times. The B.B.C. is, for instance a monstrous propaganda organisation, the worst since Dr. Goebbels. It did give me my first encouragement in that it accepted 'The Ruffian on the Stair'. In a small enclave of the B.B.C there are people who are fine, the Third Programme. They are genuinely liberal. I don't like the sort of liberal that is the reactionary underneath, you know the kind of Pamela Handsford Johnson liberalism. There's a lot more wrong with the world than teenage sex and drug taking.

"England, I don't know what will happen to it. I think there's a certain section of England that's marvellous. You can call it swinging London, but it just sort of expresses something that is there, a splendid liberalism, but only in a certain little bit of London. I mean, in New York, when Dudley Sutton was in 'Sloane' and had to have his hair dyed, it was very embarrassing. People actually passed remarks in the street, whereas they wouldn't here. You can do all sorts of things in London, and long may it remain so." ■

Behind Every Good Playwright is a Brilliant Agent Margaret (Peggy) Ramsay

ORTON'S AGENT, Peggy Ramsay was the doyenne of literary agents, with an enviable stable of clients including: Eugene Ionesco, John Mortimer, David Hare, Caryl Churchill, Alan Plater and Alan Ayckbourn, Christopher Hampton, Alan Bleasdale and Simon Callow. She played a minor role in the success of Harold Pinter and Samuel Beckett.

Peggy was a rare breed: part mother, part monster with a work ethic to rival those younger than her years. She was intelligent and shrewd and worked pretty much up until her death at the age of 83.

She was creative and knew as much about the theatre business as her clients. When her client Robert Bolt, for example, came to her with a play that he had written about Sir Thomas More and Henry the VIII, Peggy declared that with the number of cast playing courtiers and townfolk it would be impossible and financially unviable to produce it. She suggested creating the character of the Common Man to represent the populace. *A Man for All Seasons* went on to win several Tony Awards, six Oscars, Golden Globes and numerous other awards for performances as well as for the script and screenplay.

Following the BBC airing of *The Ruffian on the Stair*, it was Peggy who encouraged a young Joe Orton to keep a diary. His journals are frank and detail the last eight months of his life. In them he writes down everything from overheard conversations on busses to sexual escapades (to say that Orton was promiscuous is an understatement). Orton had intended them for publication and writes himself as a character.

Peggy had very strange relationships with her clients (most of whom were men). These ranged from a nurturing mother figure to a sort of Norma Desmond romantic relationship with actor/writer Simon Callow and which he writes about in his book.

Peggy bought Joe Orton a fur coat:

"You look very pretty in that fur coat you're wearing', Oscar Lewenstein said as we stood on the corner before going our separate ways. I said, 'Peggy bought it me. It was thirteen pounds fifteen.' 'Very cheap,' Michael White said. 'Yes, I've discovered I look better in cheap clothes.' 'I wonder what the significance of that is?' Oscar said. "I'm from the gutter,' I said. 'And don't you ever forget it because I won't.'"
—Orton's diary, 9th January 1966.

It was Peggy, not his lover Halliwell, who Orton chose to accompany him to the Evening Standard Awards of 1966 when *Loot* was awarded Best Play of the season. Needless to say, this sparked Halliwell's already jealous nature. It was Peggy who went to the morgue to identify their bodies after the murder/suicide.

Her life has inspired a play, *Peggy for You* by Alan Plater; a book by Simon Callow, *Love is Where it Falls*; a biography by Colin Chambers —*Peggy—The Life of Margaret Ramsay, Play Agent* and features heavily in *The Orton Diaries* and John Lahr's *Prick Up Your Ears—the Biography of Joe Orton*. All make fascinating reading! ■



Orton & Edna Welthorpe (Mrs)

FROM THE MID 1950'S ON, Orton used a pseudonym to create havoc in the press—berating everything from Littlewoods Mail Order Service, The National Trade Press Ltd, Smedley's Pie Fillings, the Ritz Hotel, to Kenneth Williams regarding his appearance on some TV shows, and even his own plays. Edna was a “self-designated watchdog of public morals.” Orton would do this partly to mock the morally upright English middle-class who liked (and like) to write letters of general complaint to newspapers. He would then bring in other characters to respond to Mrs. Welthorpe's opinions.

Edna's letter to Smedley's Fruit Pie Fillings:

Flat 4
25, Noel Road
London, N.1.

30th April 1965

Dear Sir:

I recently purchased a tin of Morton's blackcurrant pie filling. It was delicious. Choc-full of rich fruit. Then, wishing to try another variety, I came upon Smedley's raspberry pie filling. And I tried that. And really! How can you call such stuff pie filling? There wasn't a raspberry in it. I was very disappointed after trying Morton's blackcurrant.

Please try to do better in future. And what on earth is 'EDIBLE STARCH' and 'LOCUS BEAN GUM'? If that is what you put into your pie fillings I'm not surprised at the result.

I shan't try any more of your pie fillings until the fruit content is considerably higher. My stomach really turned at what I saw when I opened the tin.

Yours sincerely,
Edna Welthorpe (Mrs.)

Edna's letter to the newspaper condemning *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*:

Sir –

As a playgoer of forty years standing, may I say that I heartily agree with Peter Pinnell in his condemnation of *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*. I myself was nauseated by this endless parade of mental and physical perversion. And to be told that such a disgusting piece of filth now passes for humour! Today's young playwrights take it upon themselves to flaunt their contempt for ordinary decent people. I hope that the ordinary decent people of this country will shortly strike back!

Yours truly,
Edna Welthorpe (Mrs.)

Recommended Resources

Joe Orton's Published Works

All of Orton's stage and TV plays are available in *Orton: The Complete Plays* (Grove Press) which also has a great introduction by his biographer John Lahr.

Plays (Stage and TV)

The Ruffian on the Stair
Entertaining Mr Sloane
The Good and Faithful Servant
Loot
The Erpingham Camp
Funeral Games
What the Butler Saw

Screenplay

Up Against It: A Screenplay for the Beatles

Novels

Head to Toe
Between Us Girls
Lord Cucumber and The Boy Hairdresser (by Joe Orton and Kenneth Halliwell)

Diaries

The Orton Diaries, Including the Correspondence of Edna Welthorpe and others; edited by John Lahr

Biography

Prick Up Your Ears by John Lahr

Film

Prick Up Your Ears, director Stephen Frears, featuring Gary Oldman as Joe Orton, Alfred Molina as Kenneth Halliwell and Vanessa Redgrave as Peggy Ramsay.

Sources

The compiler would like to thank the following for their contribution to this study guide:

Simon Ward

Wikipedia

Stop Messin About – The Kenneth Williams website: www.stopmessinabout.co.uk

The Orton Diaries, Including the Correspondence of Edna Welthorpe and others; edited by John Lahr

McCarter Theatre Resource Guide on *Loot*, by Laurie Sales

About *A Noise Within*



A Noise Within's mission is to produce the great works of world drama in rotating repertory, with a company of professional, classically- trained actors. *A Noise Within* educates the public through comprehensive outreach efforts and conservatory training programs that foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of history's greatest plays and playwrights.

As the only company in southern California working in the repertory tradition (rotating productions using a resident ensemble of professional, trained artists), *A Noise Within* is dedicated solely to producing classical literature from authors such as Shakespeare, Molière, Ibsen, Shaw, and Euripedes.

The company was formed in 1991 by founders Geoff Elliott and Julia Rodriguez-Elliott, both of whom were classically trained at the acclaimed American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco. They envisioned *A Noise Within* after recognizing a lack of professional, classical productions and education in Southern California and sought out and assembled their own company of actors to meet the need. All of *A Noise Within's* resident artists have been classically

trained, and many hold Master of Fine Arts degrees from some of the nation's most respected institutions, such as Juilliard, Yale, and the American Conservatory Theatre. In its fourteen-year history, *A Noise Within* has garnered over 500 awards and commendations, including the Los Angeles Drama Critics' Circle's revered Polly Warfield Award for Excellence and the coveted Margaret Hartford Award for Sustained Excellence.

In 2004, *A Noise Within* accepted an invitation to collaborate with the Los Angeles Philharmonic for a tandem performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Hollywood Bowl.

More than 25,000 individuals attend productions at *A Noise Within*, annually, and between performances at the theatre and touring productions, the company draws 13,000 student participants to its arts education programs every year. Students benefit from in-school workshops, conservatory training, and an internship program, as well as subsidized tickets to matinee and evening performances, discussions with artists, and state standards-compliant study guides.



A Noise Within
California's Classical Theatre Company

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