

winner best comedy
2006 olivier awards



Heroes

written by Gérald Sibleyras
translated by Tom Stoppard

GALLERY
PLAYERS

October 26 - 29
Sir John Mills Theatre, Ipswich

Director's Notes

This has been a great play to rehearse. There has been much laughter, a sense of fun and a real collaborative spirit. At times we may have emulated the television series 'Grumpy Old Men'; but there is much more to this play than a trio of ageing old soldiers.

First staged in Paris in 2002, Heroes was a big hit for Gérard Sibleyras. Speaking in an interview he said, "I've always been moved by the horror of the First World War. All those young people going to war and not realising what awaited them. I heard that the veterans, even at a relatively young age, were retired and lived in military hospitals for 20 or 30 years, so that seemed like a good subject to explore."

The characters in this play are heroes in the sense that they have gone through a terrible war and are now at a dead end. They are forgotten. But it's very important to remember that the play does depict these people as veterans of a war rather than just as old people. It's an instant bond between them. And because of the importance of what they did, we hopefully see them as people we want to achieve happiness. Because despite being relatively comfortable, they are all in a desperate situation. All three spend their time reminiscing, engaging in petty squabbles and making barbed comments about each others' foibles and complaining about their institutionalised lives but at the heart of the play is that despite growing old and entertaining thoughts about mortality in reflecting on the past, we still search for meaning, we still look forward and, most importantly, we still hope.

In a joint interview for the Daily Telegraph prior to the West End production, Gérard Sibleyras and Tom Stoppard spoke about the play. Sibleyras' view was that Heroes "Is not only about human mortality, but "also about the universal desire to escape from the confines of your life".

Stoppard added: "Curiously enough, I think it's also a play about the fact that we don't die. That something of us continues, even if it's just somebody's memory of us. Corporeal death is not the whole story."

Without giving too much away, the play ends with an image of freedom that really sums up these feelings.

Steve Wooldridge



Photo: Owen Hines - Evening Star

Heroes

written by Gérald Sibleyras

translated by Tom Stoppard

Production Team

Directed by	Steve Wooldridge
Set Design	Dave Borthwick
Stage Manager	Sue Noakes
Deputy Stage Manager	Eleanor Whitmore
Lighting	Phil Rawe & Will Dowe
Sound	Steve Rowe
Properties	Sue Simmons
Programme	Steve Wooldridge and Steve Taplin
Publicity Design	Steve Taplin
Set Construction	Dave Borthwick, Ian Quickfall, Mike Cook, Mike Wadman, Graham Dowe, Steve Wooldridge
Front of House	Mike and Judy Wadman, Brenda Caddick, Linda Wooldridge, Rachel Lucock, Graham and Elaine Dowe



Acknowledgements:- David Henshall, East Anglian Daily Times
Chris Finbow, Museum St Methodist Church, Amberfield School, St Mary's
Church, Felixstowe, Keith Ottywill, Suffolk Fire Service, Graham Dowe for
help with publicity, Dennis Lowe Theatre Company, Ian Richardson, Ian and
Wendy of Victoria Nurseries, The lovely lady Linda, Jon Tavener and
everyone at Eastern Angles Theatre Company.

Gallery are happy to support the Charity Help For Heroes and collection
tins can be found at several points in the theatre.

Sir Tom Stoppard

One of the few playwrights whose work is so distinctive that his name has been transformed into an adjective – Stoppardian – Tom Stoppard is among the most influential writers to have had his work presented on the London stage.

Born in Czechoslovakia in 1937, Tomáš Straußler, as he was originally named, spent his early years fleeing the war, moving from his homeland to Singapore, Australia and then to India. His father, a doctor who remained in Singapore to help the war effort, was killed during the invasion, and when his mother married British army major Kenneth Stoppard in 1946, the family relocated to England.

Stoppard's early career was spent honing his writing skills as a journalist on The Western Daily Press, Bristol Evening World and literary magazine Scene. It was in the 60s that he turned his hand to playwriting, achieving his first major success with the 1967 National Theatre production of *Rosencrantz And Guildenstern Are Dead*. The tale of the two minor characters from Shakespeare's Hamlet saw Stoppard win the 1967 Evening Standard Award for Most Promising Playwright. When it was staged on Broadway, it won the Tony Award for Best Play.

Stoppard followed up *Rosencrantz And Guildenstern Are Dead* with pieces including *The Real Inspector Hound* (1968), *Jumpers* (1972), *Travesties* (1974), *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* (1977), *Night And Day* (1978), *The Real Thing* (1982), *Hapgood* (1988), *Arcadia* (1993), *The Invention Of Love* (1997), *The Coast Of Utopia* (2002) and *Rock 'N' Roll* (2006), (to name but a few of his works) raising his profile, his award count and the esteem in which he is held in the literary world.

In addition to writing his own stage work, Stoppard has translated a number of plays into English, created works for television and radio, and worked, both credited and uncredited, on movies. His script for Terry Gilliam's *Brazil* received an Academy Award nomination, while his work on *Shakespeare In Love* went one better, collecting the Oscar for Original Screenplay.



The word 'Stoppardian' is often used to describe witty use of comedy while examining philosophical ideas, but there is also a sense of making often lofty and testing theories and principles seem accessible, as Stoppard's actor son Ed recounts: "He once said something like 'Chekhov writes about very simple things and somehow makes them feel incredibly weighty and complex and important, whereas I do the opposite.' He writes about things which are seemingly beyond the audience, but enables them to make that jump, which always makes audiences feel fantastic about themselves. He's also very good at bringing together a variety of characters with all of whom the audience is able to empathise. The emphasis may move from this character to that character or this relationship to that relationship, but there's still this kind of empathetic umbilical cord."

While the West End has not seen a new piece of work from the playwright since *Rock 'N' Roll*, such is the thirst for Stoppard's writing that London's theatregoers have been treated to a number of revivals in recent years. The National Theatre has twice staged his collaboration with Andre Previn, *Every Good Boy Deserves Favours*, *Arcadia* was revived in 2009, receiving a Laurence Olivier Award nomination for Best Revival.

While awards are far from the best way to summarise a career, Stoppard's count of four Tony Awards, four Critics' Circle Awards, seven Evening Standard Awards, a Laurence Olivier Award, a BAFTA Award and an Oscar serve as a strong indication of the esteem in which the playwright is held.

When the CBE, Knighthood and the Order of Merit are added, it is easy to see how, when the idea of the greatest British playwright is discussed, only Shakespeare is arguably head and shoulders above Stoppard.

Tom Stoppard
with
Gérald Sybleras



Heroes

written by G erald Sibleyras
translated by Tom Stoppard

Gustave Peter Phillips
Henri Phil Cory
Philippe George Holmes

Time and Place: France, 1959.
The terrace of a veterans' h opital.

(The French word h opital means not just a place where the sick are treated, but one of refuge and residence, like the Chelsea Hospital for army pensioners and invalided soldiers.)

There will be an interval of twenty minutes after Scene 3, during which refreshments will be available.



Gustave

Although described as a comedy, for me, *Heroes* is one of those plays where you sometimes feel bad about laughing as basically there is nothing amusing about the situation in which the characters find themselves.

Outwardly, Gustave has the most going for him but his agoraphobia and terror of the outside world is the stuff of nightmares. He can use his military background to make plans but can't put them into operation.

The play is about his desire to escape from the confines of his life but for me it is more about the legacy of war and how ordinary peoples' lives are ruined forever.

We have had great fun in rehearsal but it has also been quite challenging and I appreciate the support and friendship of Steve and the team.

Peter Phillips



Henri

When I was first approached by Steve to be in *Heroes*, I was naturally very pleased and said 'Yes' immediately. I was fortunate enough to have seen the original London production in 2005 with John Hurt, Ken Stott and Richard Griffiths (what a cast!)

Then I realised Steve wanted me to play a sixty five years plus old man with a game-leg. How could I resist?!

Heroes, for me, although based in an Old Soldiers Home in France, could be about the effect of war on the individual psyche, but the war isn't central, more of a backdrop to showcase the relationships between the three protagonists. Their mission to escape the home and take to the hill with the poplars seems more about facing ageing and mortality and the power of relationships.

It seems to me that each character has their own cross to bear and all seem alone in the world, just a bit pathetic. They pass their time on their private terrace waiting, it would seem for death (or Godot?!). I believe that with all their bickering, the three old soldiers care for one another very much, and in short, I hope you come to like them as much as I have.

I have found *Heroes* to be a totally uplifting, brilliantly funny and witty play and if this what 'retirement' will be like, count me in, it appears a hoot.

Phil Cory



Philippe

Philippe is a member of a strange and exclusive quartet. The three other parts that make up this gang of misfits are Henri and Gustave, the friends he relies on and trusts implicitly, and a dog he is not sure of at all. Over the course of a few days the ordered and predictable life of our heroes is threatened by a series of 'unremarkable' events that test their friendship and individual resolve.

Philippe is a mercurial character who swings between reason and mania at alarming speed. His mind is haunted by fears and fantasies that drive his odd obsessions. Finally he is convinced of the need to escape from his demons and joins in a surreal plan to free himself and his fellow inmates. A flight of fancy or a bloody headache? Nothing is set in stone...or is it?

George Holmes



Gérald Sybleras

Acclaimed playwright Gérald Sibleyras was born in 1961 in Paris and his latest play is *Le Banc* (The Bench). His most notable remains the 2003 *Le Vent des Peupliers*, which has been translated and produced in countries worldwide including the United Kingdom, Germany, Uruguay and now the United States. The play premiered at the Théâtre Montparnasse and received four Molière nominations including Best Author. Tom Stoppard translated the play into English (*Heroes*) and it received its West End debut at Wyndham's, directed by Thea Sharrock. The production won the 2006 Laurence Olivier Award for Best New Comedy. Future translations and productions are planned for Australia, New Zealand, Spain, Finland, and many other countries.

His next play *L'Inscription* was produced in 2004 in Paris and later in Poland. *La Danse de L'Albatros* premiered in Paris in 2006. It was the hit of the season starring Pierre Arditi and other productions followed in Belgium, Canada and Italy. *Une Heure et Demie de Retard* (2005) (An hour and half late) adapted by Mel Smith, was produced in England and toured for several months. In 2003 *Un Petit Jeu Sans Consequence* (Consequences) was awarded 5 Molière Awards. The screenplay is in development with Focus Film.

As an adaptor into French, Sibleyras's credits include William Nicholson's *The Retreat From Moscow* (La Retraite de Russie), produced in Paris in January 2007; Daniel Keyes' *Flowers for Algernon* and Mike Leigh's *Abigail's Party*. He is currently adapting his play *La Danse de L'Albatros* for the screen.



supplier of tonight's plants!

1 Kettelbaston Way,
Westerfield Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP4 2XX
Tel: 01473 253980 Fax: 01473 288647
Email: info@victoria-nurseries.co.uk

*eastern
angles*

ROUNDS
THE
TWO TALENTS

or **Oliver Nicklefield's Bleak Little Tale of Two Mutual Expectations. And Son.**

By **Brendan Murray**

IPSWICH: November 23rd - January 7th
Sir John Mills Theatre, Gatacre Rd, Ipswich IP1 2LQ
WOODBIDGE: January 10th - 21st
Seckford Theatre, Burkitt Rd, Woodbridge IP12 4JH



BOX OFFICE
01473 211498
easternangles.co.uk





Gallery Players was formed in 1985 by Pat Taplin to produce rarely performed plays and musicals that larger companies would find uneconomic or which only use a few actors. The company quickly established a reputation for quality and excellence.

Our aims are broadly speaking:

- to exploit a niche for staging productions that are progressive and exciting in both content and execution.
- to embrace both new and established works
- to act as vehicle for engaging new talent as well as established members
- to foster a group of actors and technicians that are truly a community
- to foster links with schools and colleges

We generally stage three productions a year.

Performing lesser known shows is always difficult, particularly when it comes to building an audience and balancing the books, but by sticking to our aims we have grown an audience, that, hopefully, trust us to produce interesting work.

Although we have a strong pool of performers new blood and talent is always welcome.

The Gallery Players founder is Pat Taplin who has recently stepped down from running the group and now acts as President. The company is now run by a small steering group: Dave Borthwick, Helen Clarke, Richard Healey, Steve Taplin and Steve Wooldridge.

We encourage other directors to take the reins of their own pet projects, allowing them to cast freely and create individual shows with the backing of our excellent technical and production crew. Our only insistence is that the final show should entertain and stimulate our discerning audience and should exude that sense of professionalism we strive for.

Gallery Players have won several awards including the NODA Eastern Area Shield for Best Production with Carnival in 1999 and the Councillors Cup in 2000 and 2003 for The Bakers Wife and Kiss Me Like You Mean It.

For more information please phone Steve Taplin (01473 833403) or Steve Wooldridge (01473 413675). To join our mailing list contact either Steve's by phone or email steve@wahoo-clothing.co.uk

Our Motto is 'making theatre exciting' which we like to think we do, most of the time!



FUNDRAISING
IN SUPPORT OF
**HELP for
HEROES**

Help for Heroes was founded by Bryn and Emma Parry in October 2007 out of a desire to help the wounded Servicemen and women returning from Afghanistan and Iraq. The message of the charity is simple: We are strictly non political and non critical; we simply want to help. We believe that anyone who volunteers to serve in time of war, knowing that they may risk all, is a hero. These are ordinary people doing extraordinary things and some of them are living with the consequences of their service for life. We may not be able to prevent our soldiers from being wounded, but together we can help them get better.

www.helpforheroes.org.uk

Friends of Gallery Players

Mrs J. Bolton
 Mrs P. Curtis
 Mr.Mrs. P. Holder
 Mrs. M. Morton
 Dennis Pennock
 Ally & Roy Riley
 Ms. S. Steedman

Brenda Caddick
 Mrs B. Dredge
 Jean Harvey
 Mr.Mrs.C. Mudd
 Philip Rawe
 Ms. D. Savage
 Mrs. P. White
 Mr.Mrs Quelch

Mrs. D. Cornford
 Paul Goymour
 Margaret Morphew
 Mrs. P. Osborne
 Mr.Mrs Richmond-Hardy
 Mr.Mrs E. Smart
 John Whitear

If you would like to help us to continue to present our shows to a high standard and, just as importantly, help to raise money to help others, perhaps you would like to become a 'Friend of the Gallery Players'?

You will receive advance information and discount booking forms for all our productions & newsletters.

To become a 'Friend', or for any information on other forms of sponsorship or advertising please contact Steve Taplin on 01473 833403 or email steve@wahoo-clothing.co.uk

**Honorary Friends:- Gary Avis,
 Margaret Haddock & Michael Morton**

Past Shows:-

1985 Cowardy Custard, 1986 Happy as a Sandbag, 1987 Sail Away, 1988 Something's Afoot, 1989 Company, 1990 The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas, 1991 The Hired Man, 1992 Snoopy - The Musical, A Little Night Music, 1993 Stepping Out, Cabaret, 1994 Assassins, The Ghost Train, Into the Woods, Hobson's Choice, 1995 Man of La Mancha, Steel Magnolia's, City of Angels, Scent of Flowers, 1996 Little Shop of Horrors, The Most Happy Fella, Blue Remembered Hills, 1997 Dancing at Lughnasa, Pacific Overtures, Chicago, Hard Times, 1998 The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui, Sweeney Todd (The Demon Barber of Fleet Street), Shadowlands, Something's Afoot, 1999 Carnival, Trip to Bountiful, The Boys From Syracuse, Tons of Money, 2000 On Golden Pond, The Bakers Wife, Kiss of the Spiderwoman, A Slice of Saturday Night, One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest, 2001 Mrs Warren's Profession, A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum, Billy, Breezblock Park, 2002 The Memory of Water, Flora The Red Menace, A Slice of Saturday Night, Radio Times, 2003 Kiss Me Like You Mean It, Days of Hope, Honk!, And A Nightingale Sang, 2004 Bouncers, Merrily We Roll Along, Talking Heads, You're A Good Man Charlie Brown, 2005 Kindertransport, She Loves Me, A Night At The Dogs, 2006 Amy's View, Passion, With Love, Colder Than Here, 2007 This Happy Breed, Grand Hotel, You Want Chilli Sauce With That & Marry Me A Little, The Sunshine Boys, 2008 Oh Kay!, Spend Spend Spend, To Kill A Mockingbird, 2009 The Long Road, Follies, Flare Path, 2010 Ordinary Days, Rent, Spring & Port Wine, 2011 My Mother Said I Never Should, Our House, Heroes

Forthcoming Shows:- 'Putting it Together', a musical review of the songs of Stephen Sondheim. Spring 2012 (see back page for details)



putting it together

a musical 'review' by Stephen Sondheim
concept by Stephen Sondheim and Julia McKenzie

March 21st - 24th 2012
Sir John Mills Theatre, Ipswich
Box Office 01473 211498
book online www.easternangles.co.uk