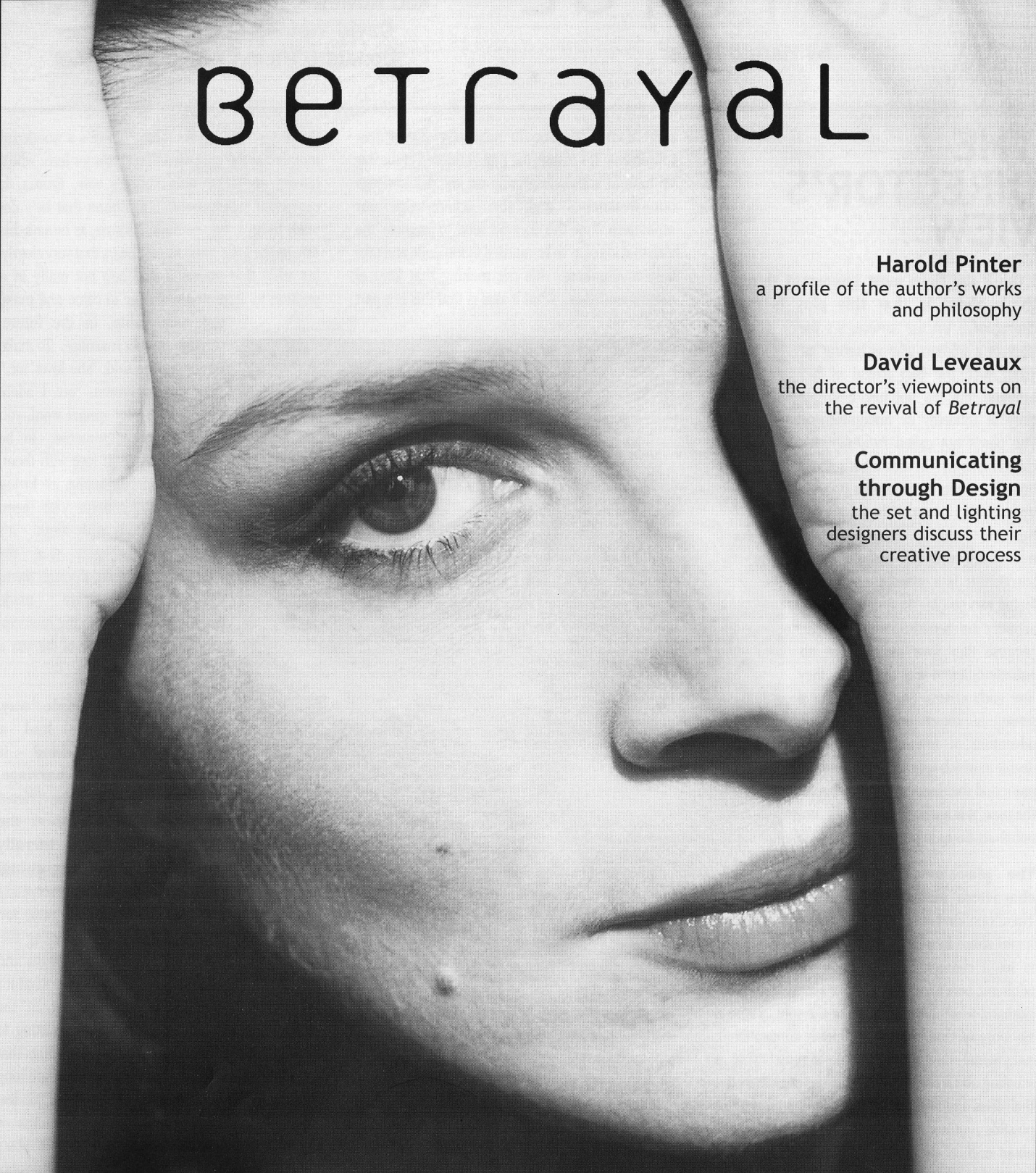


# THROUGH THE ARTIST'S EYE

A Publication of the Education Department at Roundabout Theatre Company

November 2000



## BETRAYAL

### **Harold Pinter**

a profile of the author's works  
and philosophy

### **David Leveaux**

the director's viewpoints on  
the revival of *Betrayal*

### **Communicating through Design**

the set and lighting  
designers discuss their  
creative process

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# THROUGH THE ARTIST'S EYE



## BETRAYAL

by Harold Pinter

David Leveaux - Director  
Rob Howell - Set and Costume Designer  
David Weiner - Lighting Designer  
Donald DiNicola - Sound Designer

### THE DIRECTOR'S VIEW

**I think the first, most important thing to think about is that this play is called**

*Betrayal*. On the surface, it's the story of a woman who is having an affair with the best friend of her husband, but it's not just a simple story of infidelity or unfaithfulness. The play's not called *Infidelity*, it's called *Betrayal*. In the end, it's about how love works, because this is not a woman who is out of love with her husband when she has the relationship with her husband's best friend, this is a woman engaged in loving two people. In a different way, actually, the men also love two people, because they love her, and in an entirely different way, as friends, they love each other. So, the play, in a sense, is about the cost of the adventure of loving someone, the degree to which love sometimes creates pain, and the degree to which, despite the pain, it is a wholly worthwhile and necessary thing to pursue.

**The play never judges the characters' actions or behavior.**

There's no kind of moral paradigm or moral shape in which we're supposed to see a character, as in: here's the adulterer, here's the wife and here's the husband who's been deceived by the wife. There is no sense of that kind of completely conventional, judgmental view of people. In a sense, what is startling about the play is that all the characters live their lives and deal with this situation with the best possible motives. There is an essential innocence about each of them, despite the fact that they are engaged in what you could say is a sort of immoral activity; but the play doesn't speak from that moral

point of view. It's morality runs rather deeper than judgement. It's just saying that at the end of the day we have to acknowledge who we are, acknowledge our weaknesses and also acknowledge our aspirations. Now, this does not serve to promote the idea that it's okay to be married to someone and take a lover elsewhere. It's not making that kind of recommendation. What it says is that this is a part



Illustration by John C. Crosman

of the human condition, and that if we spend these few minutes looking at moments of being in love, we can see both how pleasurable and how difficult it sometimes can be.

**In the play, we can see the enormous problems involved in people trying to reach each other.** Their medium is language, of course, as they're trying to reach each other with words; but those words themselves sometimes seem to betray

the person who speaks them. There's a wonderful moment in the play when the character Jerry, who's having an affair with Robert's wife, Emma, is compelled to acknowledge to Emma that he's not ready to leave his marriage, because, as he says, his wife Judith loves him. Emma hears that very clearly, but what that means is that he's not really in a position to leave that marriage to come and make

this relationship, in the future, perhaps another marriage. To make up for having said, "she loves me," Jerry says to Emma, "but I adore you." It's a very special word, you know, to adore someone, to be infatuated, to be in love with them, which is not the same as loving them, making a home with them, making a family with them. It's typical in the play that the characters, and then, through them, the audience, are made extraordinarily alert to the nuances, and if you like, danger, of the way a word can be heard.

**I think, in a simple way, anybody that has had a relationship of any kind - it doesn't have to be a marriage, it could be your first boyfriend of girlfriend - will know the experience of feeling literally invincible at the beginning.**

There is a feeling that everything naturally falls into place, until you become capable of conducting this relationship with ease, delight and pleasure. We also all know what it's

like when you reach a certain point in the relationship and discover that you are starting to make mistakes. When you start saying things that you didn't really mean to say, when there are long silences that you can't easily, creatively fill, you feel yourself just coming apart in the process of conducting that relationship. I think anybody who's been through that process would recognize this play. You don't have to be middle aged and married to know what this play's about. - David Leveaux

# THE WORLD OF THE PLAY



## FROM THE DIRECTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

**We really conceived the production from the beginning as being an act of memory, because it starts from now and actually goes backwards.** As a consequence, it struck me that you remember important turning points in your life very selectively. You don't remember everything. In other words, if you could imagine having a huge, shocking argument, a row with somebody you love, strangely enough, you might just notice something like an ink stain on the corner of the rug. Whenever you thought about that moment later, somehow that ink stain on the corner of the rug would be there. You didn't notice that there was a Picasso on the wall, you didn't notice where the mirror was, you just noticed that ink stain. In a way, what we're trying to do is re-create this specificity and intensity in the way something is remembered. To that extent, we're taking away anything that doesn't have a direct bearing on the particular emotional context of a given scene. So, for instance, one of the characteristics of the apartment that Jerry and Emma rent to conduct their affair in is that it changes over time. From the beginning of the relationship, Emma starts to turn it into a home. She brings curtains for it. She brings a tablecloth from Venice. When they finally break up, the place seems totally bare. What matters? What are the items that matter in that moment in her memory? It's the table that they used to have a meal or a drink together, and it's the bed. We've put those two items into a white room. We return to this white room

throughout the play, and in each scene the objects, the furniture and the particular artifacts that are in that room are to do with the memory of what that particular moment was about. - *David Leveaux*

## FROM THE SET DESIGNER'S PERSPECTIVE

**In technical terms, what I have to get involved in with this play is the rhythm and movement of the journey, because we travel through a number of scenes.** There is a constant emotional stream running through as we move from place to place, so by having the same room slightly shifting, slightly reinventing itself but fundamentally remaining the same, we create a place where emotional relationships and ties can be analyzed.

**What's important, I think, is that we serve the audience with an arena in which these relationships can clearly be seen, and not lost in the fussiness of life.** What's useful is if you can see a single figure feeling lonely while they are in a room with somebody else. Physically they're not lonely but emotionally they are. I'd like to be able to see that, the moments, the emotional shifts, happening in a completely exposing but embracing arena.

**Since Pinter's work is so distilled, it seemed appropriate to try and achieve the essence of whatever these spaces may be.** What's interesting is to try and use a similar language with the aesthetics. I don't mean words-language, but a

similar sort of currency, in a sense, that Pinter is using with his words. He's being so essential. Get to the essence. What has Pinter done; why has he done it? He's put them in a social environment in a lonely way, so we must create a space that would hold lonely figures.

**To find that arena, you need to keep asking yourself, "What do you need; what is too much?"** What would a single room flat - that as lovers we're about to buy - what might that be like? How romantic might it be, what flavors might surface in the architecture that we are going to present? Is it just completely anonymous, or does it aspire to have some classical, gentler, romantic themes in there?" That's where some of the paneling comes in; you just feel as if there is a detail there, a grandeur and a fickleness about it, which makes it so devastating when there are two people who are broken, because it's a beautiful space.

**When you use this approach, a fascinating thing happens: each element put within a space carries much more weight, much more value.** What's important for the pub, for instance, is that we see those two people at a table. We don't need to know about the bar or the wallpaper, those are surface requirements, but the pub table -- the nature of it, the base, the pedestal -- and each chair have to do so much more work. We rely on them heavily. Whereas, if we just pushed a great big truck on or revolved the set around and there was a huge pub, that table and chair wouldn't be as important, because you have all the other useless information. You'd be receiving so much information, that what's actually important wouldn't surface in the way that I hope it will here. - *Rob Howell*

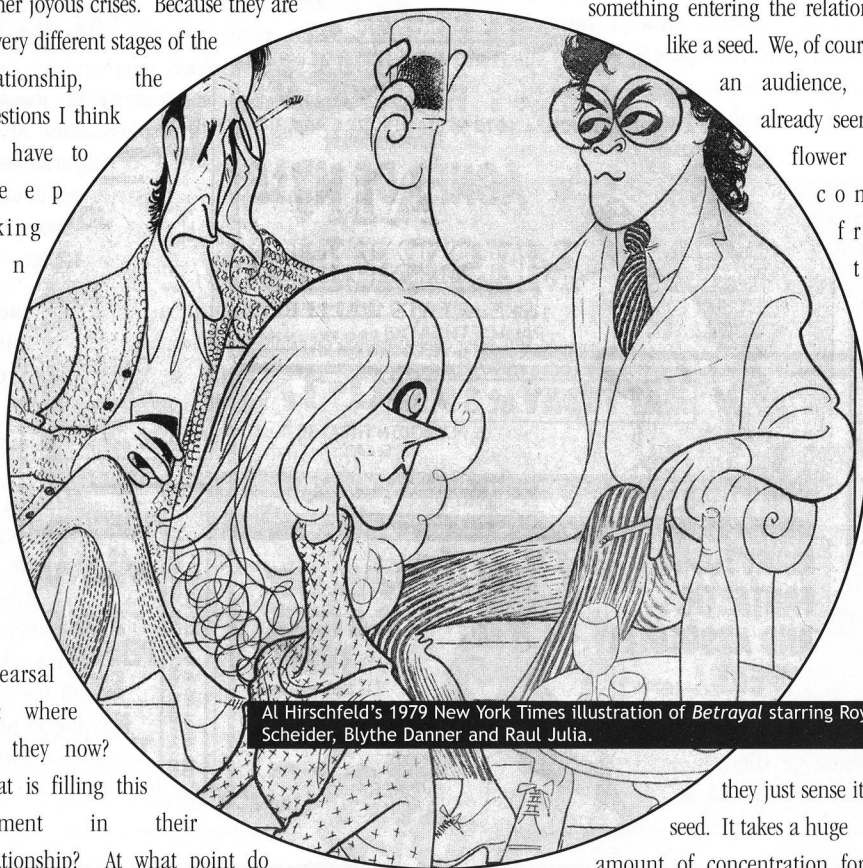


A model of the set for *Betrayal*.



## DRAMATIC STRUCTURE

**The play is built out of nine quite short scenes; it's a short play.** Each one of them is a moment in time from various stages of this relationship. So, if you like, it's nine points of crisis, which are not always bad crises, sometimes they are rather joyous crises. Because they are at very different stages of the relationship, the questions I think we have to keep asking in



Al Hirschfeld's 1979 New York Times illustration of *Betrayal* starring Roy Scheider, Blythe Danner and Raul Julia.

rehearsal are: where are they now? What is filling this moment in their relationship? At what point do certain kinds of fear, certain kinds of guilt begin to erode that relationship? The key thing about the play from a structural point of view is that it goes backwards in time. This is very important, because we begin after the relationship has ended and then work our way back to the point where it started, seven years before. In a sense, as we go backwards, the audience is accumulating a knowledge about how this relationship finished up, which is a greater knowledge than the people who are actually conducting the relationship.

**The challenge for the actors is to play characters with less and less knowledge, as**

**opposed to more and more knowledge.** Yet, they're also working back to a purer and purer form of loving. In that sense, they are developing. The effort is upward, rather than downward, the effort is towards something positive, as opposed to a gradual descent into something negative. It's difficult for the actors toward the end of the play, which is actually toward the beginning of the relationship, when the characters feel the finest, most delicate intuition of something entering the relationship

like a seed. We, of course, as an audience, have already seen the flower that comes from that seed, but

they just sense it as a seed. It takes a huge amount of concentration for the actor, because they have to always remain in the present tense. For them, it's uncluttered by the future. For the audience, however, the future begins to accumulate a kind of power, because we've been through it, we've lived through it, and we apply everything we know about that relationship and the journey of that relationship to the first moment when these two come together. That makes for something extraordinarily poignant, because the very moment of ignition this love affair is, of course, colored in our imaginations, but not with the character's, because they are innocent of it. They're looking at a future with enormous hope, and the tension between these two points of view is really

where the emotional force of this play lies.

***Betrayal* was the first play that Harold Pinter wrote that was directly about the subject of love.** Therefore, I think many people felt that it was perhaps a more personal play for him. It's not entirely personal in terms of the situation, although there may have been autobiographical elements that led him to write it. There was a kind of mixed response when it was first produced, because some people just saw it as Pinter writing about a rather privileged group of people living in nice houses who just have the ability to indulge in these affairs. But in fact, others recognized, and gradually over the years it became increasingly recognized, as being a much, much deeper play than that. It really goes to the core of the question of human loneliness, and what we do in order not to be alone. That is what gives this play the stature of a classic. - David Leveaux

## REGARDING THE PLAYWRIGHT

**The amazing sensitivity of clever and brilliant writers such as Pinter is that it's always a fresh experience seeing one of their plays.** There are always new things that you hear when you read it for the tenth time or the fifteenth time, or when you see it again and again. Things will bubble to the surface at a different moment, and you'll often hear people who work on these plays say, "I've never heard that before, oh, I'd didn't realize that it was quite that thing."

**If it's authentic, great writing, it's trying as best as it can to convey the facts of our experience directly.** The trick is to find increasingly radical ways of getting at those facts, because every time a fact is given in public it immediately begins to be coated with cliché, until the point where we are no longer able to recall what it was that it was really like. Love is a classic instance is of this. You use the word "love" and there's a whole set of assumptions that have to do with stars in people's eyes. Frankly, when I was a kid at sixteen and I'd go and see some sort of romantic bauble

about love, I'd just sit there thinking, "oh come on, don't be silly." Frankly, you don't have any time for that, because you're in the business of getting to grips with the way the world is. You don't want a fantasy, you want *it*, and great art is about trying to grasp *it*.

**Pinter writes absolutely from that point of view.** He asks what the world is actually like as opposed to presenting what we'd like it to be in a smoothed out, logical, explained way. Life is more jagged than that, more surprising than that. I think he was one of those writers who set about, not to reorganize reality, but to come up with another means for trying to grasp it. It isn't that he said, "I'm going to dispense with realism, and I'm going to move to a more poetic form." No, on the contrary he just said, "the models we have to share and express the realities we live with need to be renewed," and so he set about renewing them. I don't mean in a conscious, intellectual way, but that's what he did. That gave him what people call a particular "Pinteresque" style.

**The famous Pinter pauses are actually very witty.** They're very practical things. They're not solemn things. He put them in for very practical reasons. It was the word he could use to explain that something had momentarily reached a point where someone or two people or whatever recognized something that can't really be expressed. Emma says to Jerry when they first meet in the pub, "just like old times," and Jerry says, "mmm, been a long time," and then she says, "yes." Now, what's this pause doing there? Well, it's there, because I think what Emma's trying to do with that "yes," is hoping that Jerry will go on, to touch on the thing that they have, and the pause is Jerry thinking: "I'm not ready to go there yet." There's a tension there - there's a hope there that's flying through that space.

**And sometimes there are silences, and silences, I think, are where neither party can see a way forward.** They don't know how to go on from this place. Or, it can be such a moment of enormous recognition about the reality of the situation that they're in, that there's nothing to be said.

**One of the key principles of the philosopher Wittgenstein was: "what may not be said in words,**

**you must pass over in silence."** People have all had this experience - the pause, in the sense that Pinter uses it, is absolutely part of the human experience. It's actually part of the language of the play. It is words flying through space that don't exist as words, they exist as thought. Part of the job of staging Pinter is gradually making those thoughts appear in a complete way that everyone can see. - David Leveaux

## AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

**Harold Pinter, the only child of a Jewish tailor, was born on October 10, 1930, in London's East End.** He grew up in a London ravaged by Nazi bombs in World War II and he recalls getting into street fights with groups of anti-Semitic fascists after the war. Interested only in English language and literature and uninterested in Latin and other required subjects, he dropped out of school at age sixteen. He did, however, read a great deal, chiefly novels rather than plays. He admits having been influenced by the novels of Kafka and Beckett, whom he considered "the best prose writer living." A pacifist, Pinter at the age of eighteen refused to enter the Army. He might have received a long prison sentence; instead, a sympathetic judge fined him only thirty pounds.

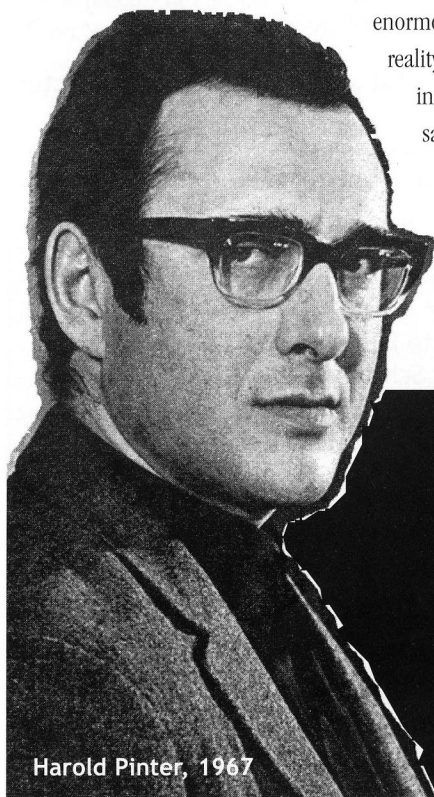
**Pinter started his theatrical career as an actor.** For a decade, beginning in 1949, he performed in repertory companies and toured England and Ireland under the stage name David Baron. While an actor, Pinter, who had been writing poetry since he was thirteen, began to write prose, including a novel, which he considers not good enough to be published. In 1957, he wrote his first play, *The Room*, for a friend, Henry Woolf, a student in the University of Bristol's Drama Department. That year, Pinter also wrote *The Dumb Waiter* and his first full-length play, *The Birthday Party*. His second full-length play, *The Caretaker* (1959), was his first large success in both England and the United States, a success repeated by his next full-length play, *The Homecoming* (1964).

**Most of the time, said Pinter, people are "inexpressive, giving little away, unreliable, elusive, evasive, obstructive, unwilling.** But it's out of these attributes that a language arises. A language... where under what is said, another thing is being said." Not only are there two kinds of language, there are, says Pinter, two kinds of silence: "One when no word is spoken. The other when perhaps a torrent of language is being employed." Speech "is a necessary avoidance, a violent, sly, anguished or mocking smokescreen which keeps the other in its place... it is a constant stratagem to cover nakedness."

Excerpted from *A Treasury of the Theatre, Volume II*, Ed. Gassner and Dukore, Fourth Edition, Simon and Schuster, 1970.

## PINTER'S PRINCIPAL WORKS

The Birthday Party (1957)	Old Times (1970)
The Dumb Waiter (1957)	No Man's Land (1974)
A Slight Ache (1958)	Betrayal (1978)
The Caretaker (1959)	One for the Road (1984)
The Lover (1962)	Mountain Language (1988)
The Homecoming (1964)	Moonlight (1993)
Landscape (1967)	Ashes to Ashes (1996)
Silence (1968)	



Harold Pinter, 1967

# A CONVERSATION WITH LIGHTING DESIGNER DAVID WEINER

**Q: How did you get involved in lighting design?**

A: I actually began as an actor. When I was in high school, I was really into the theatre program. Then I moved to New York and went to NYU to study acting, but after about a year, I realized I didn't really want to be an actor. I still wanted to work in the theater however, and Lighting Design had always interested me, so I switched over.

**Q: What interested you specifically?**

A: Lighting is really magical, it's intangible - you can't hold it. You can't really even show it to anybody until you're there, in the space; nevertheless, it can really transform the way we perceive a piece of theatre. It changes the way we perceive everything in our daily lives as well.

**Q: For example?**

A: If you work all day in an office with horrible fluorescent lighting, and you frequently leave feeling miserable, it could be the lights. Conversely, if you work in an office with beautiful daylight, you might be more productive. It will definitely affect you and your emotional state; it's been proven.

**Q: How does that idea apply to the stage in your work?**

A: Well, in the theater it's a little different. The lighting helps tell the story in a clearer way using those kinds of qualities. It tells us where to look, it tells us when to look, and it tells us a lot about the emotional state of things.

**Q: Can you tell us about your design process? After you read a script, what's the first step you take in your design ideas?**

A: You certainly started in the right place - the text. I think that the best theatre artists, whether they're actors, directors or designers, do their best work when they are honest to the text. The text is the law. The first thing to do is understand the play, digest the play and talk about the play with the director - and not really about the lighting particularly. The designer's first responsibility is to understand the director's take on the play. Then you can start talking about the lighting, which might be a little tricky, depending on the director. Some directors are really visual and are used to discussing lighting effects, and some are not. You have to find a language that makes sense to the director you are working with.

**Q: What were the first conversations about *Betrayal* like? What kind of things did you and David Leveaux talk about as you sat down to digest the play together?**

A: The main aspect of *Betrayal* that David and I first talked about was the degree

of calculation with which Pinter uses every single word that he puts on the page. The underlying meaning is so clear, even though it isn't literally in what they are saying. It is clearly articulated the way he's written it. As a designer, you don't want to mess with that, you really just want to let the actors play the scene as cleanly as possible, without putting any artifice onto it. David and I talked about that a lot. Keeping the artifice out of this production and maintaining a certain honesty can require an extraordinary amount of restraint on everybody's part.



**Q: So, how do you plan to do that?**

A: Well, theatre is a process, so I can't tell you all the answers now, come talk to me in a month; but we certainly have some strong ideas about how we're going to accomplish what we want. One thing that we have focused on is that the lighting really needs to communicate the emotional flavor of the scene. The way we've talked about doing that is through temperature. It should really just be about pushing and

pulling the temperature of the space, depending on the mood of the scene. It goes back to what I was saying earlier about fluorescent light and daylight. Fluorescent light is edgy or uncomfortable and kind of chilly and brittle. Daylight feels like heat and comfort. It's a matter of degree, of temperature.

**Q: As a lighting designer, do you really need to know the story of the play, moment to moment?**

A: Oh, yes, very much so. Actually, my experience studying as an actor informs my work as a lighting designer tremendously. I'm able to decipher the action of the play with an actor's tools.

**Q: What is the story that you're helping the director tell?**

A: If people can walk away from this play understanding a little bit more about relationships and human nature, I think that we will have accomplished our intent.

## CHARACTER SKETCHES

- Juliette Binoche - Emma
- Liev Schreiber - Jerry
- John Slattery - Robert
- Mark Lotito - Waiter

I think there is something kind of mentally creative about every character in the play. They're not engaged in a kind of erotic "dance of death" towards the end of their relationship. They're actually, fundamentally trying to find a way to love openly and honestly and without causing hurt, because in the end they do cause hurt, but they cause hurt with the best of possible motives. Every character has a kind of creative outlook, an absolutely, extraordinarily honest outlook, despite, if you like, the essential, necessary dishonesty of the situation that they're in. That's a fascinating tension in the play. - David Leveaux

# ABOUT THE THEATRE



## DAVID LEVEAUX TALKS ABOUT HIS CHOSEN ART FORM



**I think one of the characteristics of great theater is that it's about gradually making the invisible become visible right in front of your eyes.** Things that are invisible, things that are unspoken, things that actually we're not showing directly, that we're not literally demonstrating, come up before our eyes, and we see them. We just see it. You could have a scene where two people are not quite telling each other something that is in their hearts, and then little by little they betray what's in their hearts. They reveal it, and in that way the invisible that's around them is effecting everything in the way they're speaking and behaving. It becomes visible. An example: imagine a boy and girl on their first date, chatting away about sports, talking about art, language, whatever the two of them share to talk about. But all the time, there is this huge, invisible thing. In the back of their minds they are thinking, "I really like this person." He's thinking, "I wonder if I could kiss her," and she's thinking, "I wonder if he's going to kiss me." And the thing is, they're not talking about kissing, they're talking about schoolwork, or what they did that day. And then, there's a kind of moment when they come a little bit closer and then there's a silence, because they've actually run out of things to say. But in that silence, she knows, he knows, they know there could be a kiss here, and they know exactly what they're thinking about, and they know exactly that the other one is thinking the same thing that they're thinking. But the dilemma is, if either said anything about it, the other might deny it. Then they are both thinking, "is this a pause we are going to come away from and change the subject to talk about something else, or is it going to end in a kiss?" The kiss is where the invisible becomes visible.

**Now, when you apply that to the theatre, of**

**course there are even more remarkable things that are invisible that are within our intuitions, within our dreams.** Sometimes, we think we're the only one that has that particular intuition, that particular fear, that particular dream, and then you learn, as you see it on the stage and it becomes visible for you, that you're among a lot of other people who recognize it as well. This is a marvelous moment, because, first of all, it tells us that there is more to our lives than the surfaces of things, which is really the function of the theater. Secondly, as part of that, experiencing that recognition with a lot of other people makes you, for that moment, less alone. That's what it's there for.

**Theatre gives us a way to explore the mysteries that underpin our lives, because we know that there's something more to it that what is on the surface.** We just know. I mean, most people at one time or another, get lost in all these questions. "How am I here? Why am I here? How am I to live? What does it mean to be human?" And the theatre just keeps going back and asking the same questions, but they are such huge questions, that every time you go back you might find some tiny clue, some moment in the theatre when you think, "oh, I see. That's who we are. That's why I feel this way." It can make you free. But theatre is not there to tell you how to live. Once you can make a connection to the characters, the decisions they make and how it turns out for them, it's entirely up to you as to what you want to do with that information. Rather, the theatre should give you the power of creativity that you can't have unless you have the ability to question. If you don't have that, if you don't have that tool, then you will never, ever be able to taste an answer of any kind. You must have that power and you must grant the right to the exhilaration of that power, because there is no

knowledge without excitement, there just isn't. Why ask? When you do ask, look what you can find.

**Cinema tends to inundate you with images from the world.** The thing about the theatre is that it's by definition limited, because you can't have a scene change every one and a half-seconds. The theatre depends on being incomplete, because the thing that makes it complete is the person that witnesses it. Peter Brook's production of *The Tempest*, for instance, began with a man on stage and he had a bamboo tube, which had stones in it. He was just turning it back and forth, and as he did, the stones would rush down one side and then the other, and before you knew it, you were imagining a storm, the whole thing, the sea, the boat, the sails. What is special about that moment? It is special, because every member of the audience is completing that image in their imagination, and at that point, it becomes more alive, more real than it could ever be if you tried to represent it directly, as you would in a film.

**Actually, the truth is, that as a theatre artist there is no question that you can answer without the participation of an audience that doesn't end up as being really rather trivial.** The answer that you're looking for is far greater and more surprising when the audience brings it than if you do it. It's a fatal kind of vanity that you can have a comprehensive, as it were, collection of answers that you're going to speak to this audience about from the stage, because there's nothing that you could do that could possibly be greater, more complex or more surprising than what the audience will bring to that play.

### CONTRIBUTORS

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#### Jeremy Lewit

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## [www.roundabouttheatre.org](http://www.roundabouttheatre.org)

Be sure to check out Roundabout's website for more information on this production, the rest of our season and all of Roundabout's activities.

# WHEN YOU GET TO THE THEATRE

## Ticket Policy

As a student participant in Page To Stage or Theatre Access, you will receive a discounted ticket to the show from your teacher on the day of the performance. You will notice that the ticket indicates the section, row and number of your assigned seat. When you show your ticket to the usher inside the theatre, he or she will show you where your seat is located. These tickets are not transferable and you must sit in the seat assigned to you.

## Facilities and Resources

At the American Airlines Theatre, restrooms are located on several floors, so ask an usher to direct you to the nearest one.

All the theatre patrons are provided with a program that includes information about the people who put the production together. In the "Who's Who" section, for example, you can read about the actors' roles in other plays and films; perhaps some you have already seen.

## Audience Etiquette

As you watch the show please remember that the biggest difference between live theatre and a film is that the actors can see you and hear you and your behavior can affect their performance. They appreciate your applause and laughter, but can be easily distracted by people talking or getting up in the middle of the show. So please save your comments or need to use the rest room for intermission. Also, there is no food permitted in the theatre, no picture taking or recording of any kind, and if you have a beeper, alarm watch or anything else that might make noise, please turn it off before the show begins.

{ Thank You For  
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{ Enjoy The Show! }

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