



Literary History break with Richard Moore

All the world's a stage: Western Theatre from the Greeks to the present.

From Monday the 1st of March until the morning of Friday the 5th of March 2027



The Green Park Hotel, Clunie Bridge Road, Pitlochry,
Perthshire PH16 5JY

Tel: 01796 473248

www.thegreenpark.co.uk

bookings@thegreenpark.co.uk

All the world's a stage: Western Theatre from the Greeks to the present.

It is well known that the word 'tragedy' derives from the Greek for 'goat-song' and that 'comedy' comes from *komos*, referring to the lively, often bawdy, revels of the Ancient Greeks, often conducted in pantomime procession. But how were the earliest surviving plays performed, what were the rules of production, and who exactly constituted the backers and the audience?

This is the sort of question to be answered in this course which will provide a short but comprehensive look at Western drama from about 500 B.C. to the present. Here you will find not just Greeks and Romans but the Mediaeval mystery and miracle plays and the influential force of the Italian *commedia dell'arte*. You will hear of the rediscovery of the plays of Seneca and the explosion on the scene of the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists. Later come other influences, among them 18th century 'Laughing Comedy', nautical melodrama, the social issues drama of the early 19th century, and the Theatre of Absurd and Theatre of Cruelty of the 20th. We shall also look at the vicissitudes of the acting profession, noting for instance the case of Charles Somerset who had once written popular melodramas for the Surrey, Adelphi and Olympic, was then reduced to producing two-act dramas for twenty-five shillings apiece, and was finally seen standing before the Mansion House with a label round his neck, declaring: 'Ladies and gentlemen, I am starving'.

Happy or sad, there is no end of fascination in western theatre. Take for instance the partly improvised *commedia dell'arte*. Deriving from Roman comedy, this by the 1500's had become far more a matter of localised stock types. Pantaloon, for instance, was a devious, greedy Venetian merchant generally clad in red tight-fitting vest and breeches, slippers, and a skullcap, with an oversized hooked nose and grubby grey goatee. Harlequin was a masked dancer, often in black-face. Columbine, usually Pantaloon's daughter, was (rather oddly) also a serving-girl with charm, wit, a sharp tongue, and higher aspirations. In 1558 she had a lucky escape when Pope Sixtus V issued a new edict forbidding women from appearing on stage. Since *commedia* was not considered legitimate theatre, the character escaped the removal she would otherwise have risked.

It is interesting to note how the acting profession has been viewed over the years. Often opinions were hostile. The latter 17th and early 18th centuries saw a fusillade of

denunciations of stage drama, while in the 19th century 'actress' was often seen as synonymous with 'prostitute'. This caused W.S. Gilbert among others to make it a mission to make the stage respectable. In many ways Gilbert succeeded. The singing actress playing Lady Ella in the first production of *Patience* married an earl.

Despite the opposition, there was from quite early on an acting celebrity culture. This saw performers such as Sarah Siddons, Edmund Keane and (later) Sarah Bernhardt milking their stardom for all it was worth. Sarah Bernhardt slept in a coffin, kept a tame cheetah, and, when performing, insisted that her name be highlighted in a blaze of hundreds of electric lights. During the 1878 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris, she made a stir by going with the balloonist Pierre Giffard and Georges Clairin for a much publicised flight. The downside was that they were blown miles off course by gusty winds and had to return by train. Not all performers were even this fortunate. Dickens' mistress, Nelly Ternan, came from quite a famous acting family. Yet when in 1855 the Ternan family acquired something like a permanent home it was surrounded by brickfields, the basement rooms had only half-lights on to the north-facing pavement and the only alleviation was a flagged wash-room opening into a tiny yard containing an outside loo.

The Ternans were of English and Irish stock, but the continental scene also included many interesting theatrical modes, stars and ventures, some of which will also be covered. One mode was the 17th century French *Grande Tragédie* and another *La Comédie Larmoyante*. Later France would lead the way in the Theatre of the Absurd, and the Theatre of Cruelty. Meanwhile Irish drama had been hitting the English stage big-time. Long before Shaw and Wilde, Boucicault was the great Irish playwright of the 19th century, famous especially for his Sensation Dramas. Not that he made great claims for his art. His response to critical snubs for *The Poor of New York* is : 'I can spin out these rough-and-tumble dramas as a hen lays eggs. It's a degrading occupation, but more money has been made out of guano than out of poetry'.

There was of course a more serious side to Irish drama, often including reference to famine, political oppression, and on-going land wars. But much of the rest was deliberately quaint and whimsical. As for America, this was the source of the famous (now notorious) minstrel shows and 'coon' dramas, which also gained popularity in Victorian Britain. In *Utopia Limited* W.S. Gilbert parodies both 'coon drama' and the British political system. He does this by having the Anglicised King of Utopia leading a council meeting made up of English establishment figures playing the tambourine, fiddle and bones.

There are many other rich strands in theatrical history, not least Pantomime which could be both a graceful mute dance-drama and (eventually) a lavish family entertainment. Increasingly it became very elaborate. Ingenious and beautiful transformation scenes in late Victorian pantomime often lasted for up to twenty minutes. Hundreds of extras filled the cast, including children known as ‘sardines’ who came from the East End slums to earn a penny or two playing spiders, butterflies, flowers and ladybirds. As for Harlequin, he mutated several times. Some critics think that his name derives from ‘Hairy Cain’ – the first murderer – but in the course you will learn of several alternative possibilities.

All the above is fairly generalised. But to give a structure to the course we will, during it, look at a few seminal or archetypal plays. The main ones are *Medea* (Euripides), *King Lear* (Shakespeare), *She Stoops to Conquer* (Goldsmith), *Rhinoceros* (Ionesco), *Translations* (Brian Friel), *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Tennessee Williams) and *Waiting for Godot* (Becket). Lest female writers be overlooked, we shall also consider some 18th century female playwrights such as Hannah Cowley (*The Belle’s Stratagem*) and the modern writer Caryl Churchill who penned the interesting play *Top Girls*. Obviously there is enough here for weeks of study but like Rutland (motto : multum in parvo’) we shall cram a lot into a little, ending up with a cornucopia of theatrical delights.

Course Plays :

Medea : Euripides

King Lear : Shakespeare

The Belle’s Stratagem : Hannah Cowley

She Stoops to Conquer : Oliver Goldsmith

The Bald Prima Donna and *Rhinoceros* : Eugene Ionesco

Translations : Brian Friel

A Streetcar Named Desire : Tennessee Williams

Waiting for Godot : Samuel Becket

The Room : Harold Pinter

Top Girls : Caryl Churchill

(Most of the plays can be found in individual editions. *The Belle’s Stratagem* is to be found in *18th Century Women Dramatists* (Oxford World Classics))

PLEASE TRY TO BRING A COPY OF 'THE ROOM' TO THE COURSE AS I WOULD LIKE US TO READ IT AS A PLAYREADING DURING THE SESSIONS.

Other Works of Interest which will be mentioned on the course but not studied in depth (No need to read them, though you can if you wish) :

The Rope by Plautus

Every Man in His Humour and Volpone by Ben Jonson

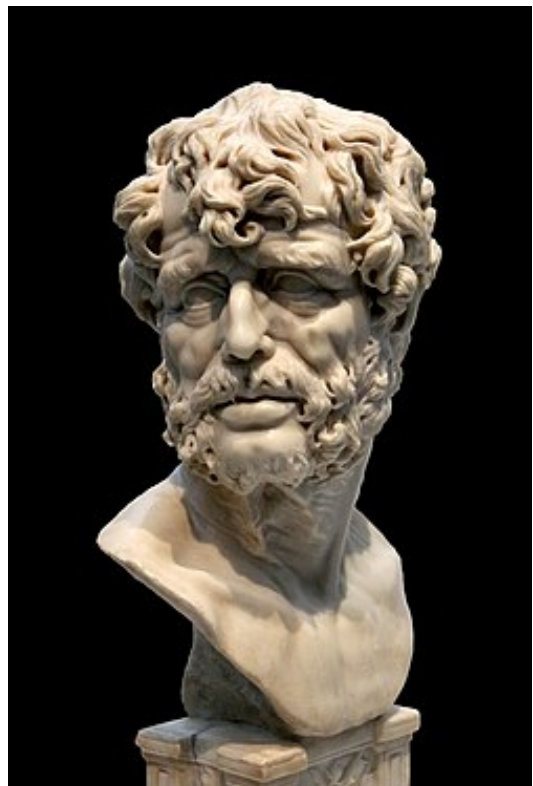
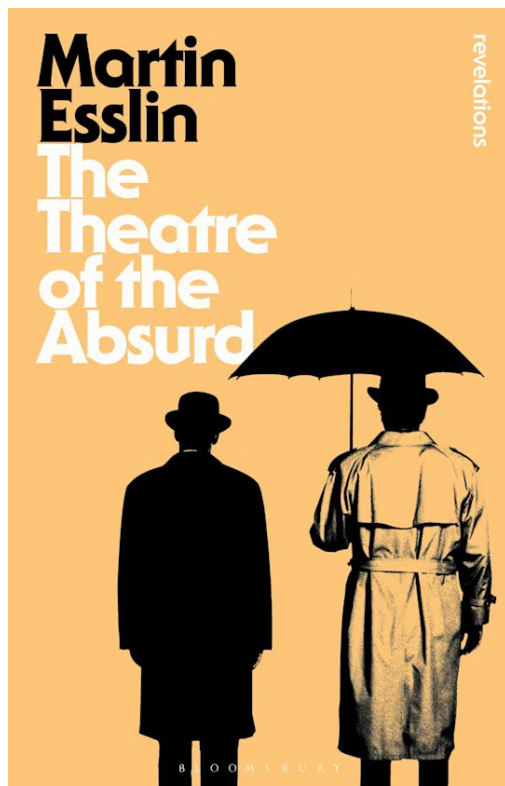
The Factory Lad by Douglas Jerrold (an example of a social issues play published in Victorian Theatricals by Sara Hudson).

Ubu Roi by Alfred Jarry (An early Absurdist work of 1896)

The Grand Duke by W.S. Gilbert (Also dating from 1896)

*The Balcony by Jean Genet (links with *The Grand Duke* in seeing the social establishment as a House of Cards)*

The Crucible by Arthur Miller (an example of a play treating contemporary issues through the medium of the historical past)



Literary History break with Richard Moore

All the world's a stage: Western Theatre from the Greeks to the present.

Monday the 1st of March

So as to make the most of your day, feel free to arrive any time from mid-morning onwards. Complimentary tea, coffee, and biscuits will be available in the main lounges - please just help yourself.

6.00pm.

The first organised activity will be a sherry reception held in **room nine on the first floor of the main building**. This will give you the chance to meet your hosts from the Green Park, your tutor Richard Moore, as well as your fellow guests.

6.30pm - 8.00pm.

A four course dinner will be served in the dining-room, followed by coffee, tea, and shortbread in the lounges.

Tuesday the 2nd of March

8.00am - 9.45am.

A full Scottish breakfast will be served in the dining room.

From 10.00am - morning session

[Literary History session with Richard](#)

Break for a buffet lunch in the dining room 12.30 - 1.30pm.

From 2.00pm - afternoon session

[Literary History session with Richard](#)

From 6.00pm.

A pre-dinner Sherry reception in the main lounge.

From 6.00pm - 8.00pm.

A four course dinner will be served in the dining room, followed by coffee and shortbread in the main lounge.

Wednesday the 3rd of March

8.00am - 9.45am.

A full Scottish breakfast will be served in the dining-room.

From 10.00am - morning session

[Literary History session with Richard](#)

Break for a buffet lunch in the dining room 12.30 - 1.30pm.

From 2.00pm - afternoon session

[Literary History session with Richard](#)

From 6.00pm.

A pre-dinner sherry reception will be held in the main lounge.

From 6.00pm - 8.00pm.

A four course dinner will be served in the dining room, followed by coffee and shortbread in the main lounge.

Thursday the 4th of March

8.00am - 9.45am.

A full Scottish breakfast will be served in the dining-room.

From 10.00am - morning session

[Literary History session with Richard](#)

Break for a buffet lunch in the dining room 12.30 - 1.30pm.

From 2.00pm - afternoon session

[Literary History session with Richard](#)

6.00pm.

An informal bucks-fizz reception will be hosted by Richard in the **main lounge**. Everyone will have downed tools by now, and this is an excellent opportunity to unwind and enjoy the company of Richard and your compatriots.

From 6.00pm - 8.00pm.

A four course dinner will be served in the dining room, followed by coffee and shortbread in the main lounge.

Literary History break with Richard Moore

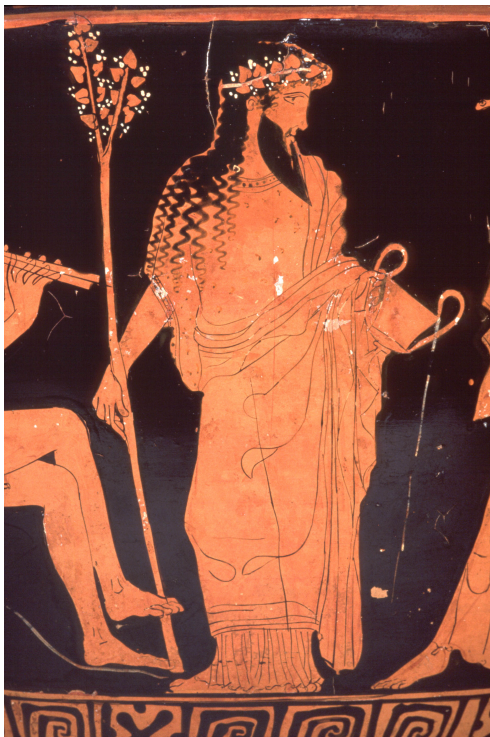
All the world's a stage: Western Theatre from the Greeks to the present.

Friday the 5th of March

8.00am - 10.00am.

A full Scottish breakfast will be served in the dining room.

**The McMenemie Family and everyone at the Green Park
hope that you will have enjoyed your stay with us,
and that you have a safe journey home.**



The cost of the 2027 four night Literary History
break is £644.00 per person.



Personal History Richard Moore

r.moore313@btinternet.com

M.A. Degree in English Literature
(Cambridge University)

Research Diploma in English
Literature, History and Society
(Cantab.) - Distinction.

P.G.C.E. (Distinction) - Southampton
University.

Doctorate in Victorian Fiction and
Theatre - University of Wales.
(Special Award for work on W.S.
Gilbert and The Theatre of the
1890's.)



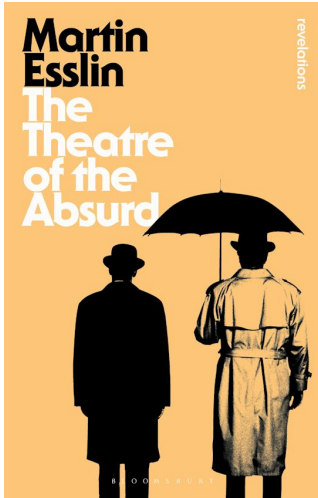
Richard is a lecturer and creative writer, the author of over eighty plays and a number of musical works. He gained his first degree at the University of Cambridge and taught in schools for many years. In 1989 he gained his Ph.D. taking as his subject Christianity and Paganism in Victorian Fiction. He then went on to work as a Deputy Head and Head of English at Queen Ethelburga's College, near York, before moving in 2000 into University teaching.

From January 2000 until 2017 Richard was been a part-time lecturer at Newcastle and Sunderland Universities. He has also run various courses for adults, particularly at Higham Hall in the Lake District. His particular academic interests are American Drama, the works of Shakespeare and Jane Austen, Irish Literature, Victorian Music Theatre and the 20th century Theatre of the Absurd. Currently he is writing a play about the North Berwick Witches!

He has had two book published and a third - one of a series about Late Victorian Playwrights - is currently with his publishers for proof-reading prior to printing.

In addition to literature and music, Richard is particularly keen on Nature Conservation and Ecology work. His relaxations are exploring the byways of history and the endless reading of Golden Age detective novels.

Please tick which of the break/s you are interested in:



Jane Austen and her world
Tuesday the 12th of January until the morning of Saturday the 16th of January 2027

All the world's a stage
Monday the 1st of March until the morning of Friday the 5th of March 2027



NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

POSTCODE _____ **TEL. NUMBER** _____

TYPE OF ROOM / ROOMS REQUIRED

TWIN _____ **DOUBLE** _____ **SINGLE** _____

Please check to see if you have a space and accommodation available on the above.

Signed _____ date _____

The 2027 four night Literary History breaks cost £644.00

This amount includes the entire package as described in this programme, and there is no supplementary charge for single accommodation.

If you wish to travel to Pitlochry by coach or rail, we will arrange for complimentary transport between Pitlochry Station and the Green Park, for both your day of arrival and your day of departure.

Guests wanting to stay any nights before or after the Literary Break, would be charged at the low season rate of £150.00 per person per night for dinner bed and breakfast.

