

# THE PITMEN PAINTERS

BY

LEE HALL

INSPIRED BY A BOOK BY

WILLIAM FEAVER



DRAMATISTS  
PLAY SERVICE  
INC.

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by Lee Hall  
inspired by a book by William Feaver

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THE PITMEN PAINTERS was first presented  
at Live Theatre, Newcastle upon Tyne, on September 20, 2007.  
This production was revived at the same venue on April 3, 2008, and transferred to  
the Cottesloe auditorium of the National Theatre, London, in May 2008.

Originally produced in New York City by the Manhattan Theatre Club  
(Lynne Meadow, Artistic Director; Barry Grove, Executive Producer)  
by special arrangement with Bob Boyett on September 14, 2010.

### **SPECIAL NOTE ON IMAGES**

A CD containing images is required for performance. The cost is \$35.00, plus shipping and handling. The nonprofessional fee for the use of the images is \$25.00 per performance.

### **SPECIAL NOTE ON SONG**

An additional fee of \$10.00 per nonprofessional performance is required for use of the song "Gresford, The Miners' Hymn."

The Pitmen Painters received its world premiere at Live Theatre in Newcastle, England, in September 2007. It was directed by Max Roberts; the set and costume design were by Gary McCann; the lighting design was by Douglas Kuhrt; the sound design was by Martin Hodgson; and the stage manager was Elizabeth Moloney. The cast was as follows:

OLIVER KILBOURN .....	Christopher Connel
HARRY WILSON .....	Michael Hodgson
ROBERT LYON .....	Ian Kelly
YOUNG LAD/BEN NICHOLSON .....	Brian Lonsdale
SUSAN PARKS .....	Lisa McGrillis
GEORGE BROWN .....	Deka Walmsley
JIMMY FLOYD .....	David Whitaker
HELEN SUTHERLAND .....	Phillippa Wilson

THE PITMEN PAINTERS was subsequently produced at the National Theatre in London, England, opening on May 19, 2008. The creative team and cast were the same.

THE PITMEN PAINTERS received its Broadway premiere at the Samuel J. Friedman Theater in New York City, on September 30, 2010. The creative team and cast were the same.

## **CHARACTERS**

OLIVER KILBOURN

HARRY WILSON

ROBERT LYON

YOUNG LAD

GEORGE BROWN

JIMMY FLOYD

SUSAN PARKS

HELEN SUTHERLAND

BEN NICHOLSON

## **PLACE**

Ashington, England

London, England

Newcastle, England

Edinburgh, Scotland

## **TIME**

1934 – 1942

# THE PITMEN PAINTERS

## ACT ONE

### Scene 1

*Projections: Screen one — The Pitmen Painters by Lee Hall, with original images by the Ashington Group. Screen two — A series of slides: 1934 / 1.2 million men work in the pits / Average shift: 10 hours / Average take-home pay: 2 pounds and six shillings.*

*George comes onstage and starts to set up chairs for the class. Oliver comes in.*

GEORGE. Oliver.

OLIVER. George. (*Jimmy comes in.*) Alreet, Jimmy.

JIMMY. No, I'm not alreet.

OLIVER. What's the matter?

JIMMY. I've been wading about up to me chest in water all day. I was lucky to get oot — half the shift's still down there, getting pumped oot.

GEORGE. They want to get that seen to.

JIMMY. What do you mean — you're the one who wants to get it seen to. You're the union representative.

GEORGE. Listen, there's a time and a place for everything. In case you hadn't noticed I am currently serving as an official representative of the Workers' Educational Association. So, if it's pit business yer after it'll have to wait till the morning. A tanner. A tanner. (*Enter the young lad.*)

GEORGE. What are ye doing here?

YOUNG LAD. I've come for the class.

GEORGE. Yer joking aren't you — oot ye gan.

YOUNG LAD. What's wrong with me coming. I thought yer wer supposed to be encouraging people to learn things.

GEORGE. Yes, Workers' Educational Association. Not lazy little arseholes. This is a place of serious learning — so bugger off.

YOUNG LAD. Howay man. It's not my fault there's a recession on ya knaa.

GEORGE. There'll be a recession on the back of yer heed in a minute. (*Harry comes in.*)

OLIVER. Harry.

YOUNG LAD. Mr. Wilson.

GEORGE. I didn't think ye were coming.

HARRY. I wasn't gani but I had to get out of the house, man. The wife is driving me mental.

YOUNG LAD. They've let is inti other classes.

GEORGE. I don't care what anyone else does. This is a proper educational institution for pitmen.

YOUNG LAD. Ye let him in, he's not a miner.

GEORGE. Aye well he's a mechanic.

YOUNG LAD. No, he isn't, he works in a dentist.

GEORGE. Alright, well he's a dental mechanic.

OLIVER. Leave the bairn alone, George.

YOUNG LAD. Howay man, Uncle George, I'll just sit at the side and keep quiet.

GEORGE. Alright, on a trial basis only. That'll be a tanner, then.

YOUNG LAD. A tanner!

GEORGE. Self-improvement doesn't come cheap ye knaa.

YOUNG LAD. I haven't got a tanner man I'm on the dole, aren't I.

HARRY. Here, son. Here's a shilling. That's for me and the bairn.

YOUNG LAD. Thanks, Mr. Wilson.

GEORGE. You shouldn't encourage him.

HARRY. I divvin't see why he should be penalised for the cyclical nature of capitalism. (*Oliver and Jimmy give their money too and George writes it in the book.*) And, I still say we should be deing Economics.

GEORGE. Give it a rest, Harry. (*Lyon comes in.*)

LYON. Hello?

GEORGE. Yes. Can I help you?

LYON. I'm so sorry, is this Art Appreciation?

GEORGE. I beg yer pardon.

LYON. Art. Appreciation. I've come up from Newcastle.

GEORGE. Newcastle!?

LYON. To teach the lesson.

GEORGE. Ah, you're Professor Lyon. Yes of course, why didn't you just say so? Come in — Come on. We were expecting you rather earlier.

LYON. I'm terribly sorry. The train was frightfully late. It's taken me over two hours to get here.

GEORGE. Well just try to get here on time in future. We're very punctual, we are miners.

LYON. I really am terribly sorry.

GEORGE. All right, alright, there's no need to make a song and dance about it — well Professor Lyon it looks like we're all here — so let's get crackin'.

LYON. Yes, absolutely. But I should explain I'm not Professor Lyon.

GEORGE. Are you sure?

LYON. Well of course I'm sure.

GEORGE. You're not Professor Lyon?

LYON. No.

GEORGE. Well, who the hell are you?

LYON. Well, no, that's just it, you see, I am Mr. Lyon actually. But I'm not an actual professor.

GEORGE. So you're not from the university.

LYON. No.

GEORGE. Where the bloody hell are you from?

LYON. Well, I teach at King's College.

GEORGE. Not the university.

LYON. Well, no. We're affiliated to Durham — but there's no actual professorship.

GEORGE. I'll have to get onto Regional Office about this.

OLIVER. But ye de de art, divvin't ye?

LYON. I beg your pardon?

OLIVER. Ye de de art, divvin't ye?

LYON. I'm so terribly sorry I didn't quite catch that.

OLIVER. Ye de de Art. De ye not?

HARRY. Do you teach art?

LYON. Oh yes, absolutely, yes.

GEORGE. So you have got the requisite qualifications then.

LYON. Of course. I'm a master of painting. I was at the Royal



College; with Henry Moore, actually?

GEORGE. Henry who?

LYON. Moore. We were both on a travel scholarship together in Rome, in fact.

GEORGE. Look I'm divvin't care where you've been gallivanting as a student lad. I'm only interested that yer qualified for the job. We set very high standards. We are pitmen. Except him. He's a dentist.

HARRY. Dental mechanic.

GEORGE. And him who's unemployed. But he's barely tolerated.

LYON. Well, I've been teaching Art History in one way or another now for fifteen years.

GEORGE. Well, look I suppose we'll have to give you a go — but you realise I'm going to report this.

LYON. I'll be doing my level best.

HARRY. What's that?

LYON. My projector.

GEORGE. Projector. Nebody mentioned electrical equipment to me. We'd've had to book the Mechanics Hall for that kind of malarkey.

JIMMY. There's ne electricity in here, son.

LYON. But how am I going to show the slides?

GEORGE. Aye well you should have thought about that before —

HARRY. Right, let's cancel the whole thing.

JIMMY. Can you not just describe things.

YOUNG LAD. Why doesn't he just plug it in next door — at the Boy Scouts.

GEORGE. You can't do that.

YOUNG LAD. They've got an extension. The brass band won't mind. Here. (*The Young Lad plugs in the extension.*)

LYON. Thank you very much.

GEORGE. Wait a minute — for a start we'd have to get written permission and then there'd be the question of paying for the electricity. I'll turn a blind eye this time.

LYON. Perfect. Thank you. I thought we'd just start with a basic introduction. You know run through a few of the Great Masters before moving on to the more contemporary issues. (*Jimmy puts the lights out. The lamp comes on. George is in the way.*) Let's see. Yes, a Titian.

JIMMY. Bless you.

LYON. Ah yes, now here we have a very fine example of what I

wanted to explore during these sessions. The fundamental tension between the innovation of the artist and tradition within which they are working.

HARRY. (*Aside.*) I telt ye we should've done economics.

LYON. Here you see we find this same artist working at the height of the Church's patronage, but as you can see at the very same time his obsession with Pagan Mythology — which is one of the grand themes of the Renaissance — [*Pronounced "Renissance."*]

JIMMY. The what?

LYON. The Renaissance.

JIMMY. The renissance?

LYON. Yes.

JIMMY. The renissance?

LYON. Well the High, the High Renaissance.

JIMMY. What?

LYON. Oh, alrighty. The Renaissance. Anybody? (*Nobody explains.*) Raphael? (*Nothing.*) Leonardo? (*Blank faces.*) Leonardo da Vinci?

JIMMY. Is he a painter?

HARRY. Of course he's a painter. Leonardo da Vinci — he's the most famous painter there is, man.

JIMMY. Did he do that one of the cat?

GEORGE. No of course he didn't do the one of the cat.

LYON. No. Leonardo is perhaps the epitome of the entire period.

JIMMY. I thought you said he was a painter.

LYON. Yes. He is a painter.

JIMMY. Well you've just said he was an epitome?

LYON. No. The high point — the creative flowering of the entire Renaissance.

HARRY. Ah! The Renaissance. Lads he means the Renaissance! (*They all laugh.*)

LYON. Yes, the Renaissance —

HARRY. Yes. Of course. It was after the Middle Ages, wasn't it. (*He changes the slide to show the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.*)

LYON. Yes indeed, perhaps the crowning achievement of the entire period would be Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel.

JIMMY. Is that the one in Yorkshire?

LYON. Where? No. Yorkshire!? No, this is Rome. You are familiar with these images aren't you? *The Last Judgment? The Creation of Adam.*

GEORGE. We haven't really seen much art like. That's why we

# THE PITMEN PAINTERS

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5M, 2W (doubling)

THE PITMEN PAINTERS is based on the triumphant true story of a group of British miners who discover a new way to express themselves and unexpectedly become art-world sensations. An arresting and witty salute to the power of individual expression and the collective spirit, THE PITMEN PAINTERS takes you on an unforgettable journey from the depths of the mine to the heights of fame.

*"... a feel-good — make that a feel-great — hit ... inspirational ... heartbreakingly funny ... the art discussions between the technically naive painters and their tutor are so intellectually engaging and such rollicking good fun. Who should make art? What makes art? What does art make of its maker? Who owns art? And how much should art cost, anyway? The conversation that comes out when these guys sit down and try to figure it all out is an art in itself."*

—Variety

*"... heartfelt, moving and deeply politicized ... endlessly fascinating to anyone with an interest in the role of the arts in education, or the intersection between folk art and establishment art ... created with love."*

—The Chicago Tribune

*"Written partly in response to cuts in arts endowments and education, [the play] belongs to a fine old British tradition of establishment-challenging theater. And there's no denying that Mr. Hall makes a valiant case for art as a fruitful stimulant to sleepy minds ... excitingly ambiguous, in-the-moment theater, as rich and intriguing as Art (as we are told here) is meant to be."*

—The New York Times

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