

Thank you for booking tickets to the Trafalgar Studios' audio-described performance of **Equus**, written by Peter Shaffer and directed by Ned Bennett.

The audio described performance is on Thursday 25 July at 7.30 pm, with a touch tour at 6.15 pm. It takes place in the larger of the two studios, Studio 1. The performance runs for approximately 2 hours and 40 minutes, including an interval. Your describer is Roz Chalmers.

Touch tours are completely free and last about 20 minutes. They give you an opportunity to explore the set and handle some of the props. There will also be an opportunity to meet some of the people who bring the play to the stage. If you're coming to the tour on your own, we can arrange for a member of staff to accompany you. Guide dogs are welcome at Trafalgar Studios and are allowed in the auditorium, if they do not obstruct an aisle. Staff will be happy to take care of your dog during the performance if required. If you are bringing a dog, please could you let the theatre know if you have not already done so. Please call the Access bookings line on 0800 912 6971.

Please join us in the foyer at 6.00 pm in time for the 6.15 pm touch tour.

Please note, the play is not suitable for persons under 16 years of age. It includes nudity, strong language and adult themes, and a short burst of strobe lighting.

If you have any other queries about your visit, please call the Theatre Manager, Martin Scorer or the Deputy Theatre Manager, Christina Horsepool, on 020 7321 5400.

**Equus** is a Theatre Royal Stratford East and English Touring Theatre co-production.

Inspired by a true story, *Equus* explores the complex relationships between devotion, myth and sexuality. When teenager Alan Strang's pathological fascination leads him to blind six horses in a Hampshire stable, psychiatrist Dr Martin Dysart is tasked with uncovering the motive behind the boy's violent act. As Dysart delves into Alan's

world of twisted spirituality, passion and sexuality, he begins to question his own sanity and motivations.

When we enter the auditorium, the stage is open to us. On three sides it's completely enclosed by gauzy dove-grey curtains that hang in soft folds the full height of the space. They sweep to the floor where they become darker as if stained and dirty. Characters enter and leave through the folds of the curtains and are occasionally visible as silhouettes behind them. The floor is pale grey and white speckled lino and the space is clinical and empty except for a brown glass mug. This stands on the floor on the right and has been used as an ashtray. It contains two cigarette butts and the number increases as the performance progresses.

This empty space becomes a variety of locations, by the addition of a simple representative prop. *Equus* is set firmly in the 70s, when it was written, with all the clothes and props dating from this time.

A metal framed bed with a thin white mattress is wheeled in to furnish a hospital room; a small metal trolley holding a bulky 70s style TV in a wooden case is found in a suburban home; a beach is suggested by a four small sandcastles each with a tiny blue triangular pennant stuck in the top.

*Equus* is performed by a cast of 8, most of whom play more than one role. The first character to appear is psychiatrist **Martin Dysart**. Before the start of the performance he wanders in to curl up on the floor in a foetal position in the far-right corner. Eventually he sits up cross-legged, and seems on edge, his hands twitching and occasionally tapping his forehead. He blinks rapidly when under stress. Dysart is in his 50s. He is clean-shaven, his remaining black hair neatly trimmed around his bald pate. Dysart has deepset dark eyes and a piercing gaze from behind steel rimmed spectacles, a strong cleft jaw and an aquiline nose. When the empty space is his consulting room, he is authoritative and unsmiling, seldom without a cigarette, using the mug as an ashtray. Dysart wears a shapeless tan cord jacket over a pale green shirt and dark green tie. His brown trousers are rumpled, and he wears tan brogues.

In the hospital, Dysart is confronted by a magistrate, **Hester Salomon**, a tall slim woman in her 40s. Her glossy dark brown hair is arranged in a complicated bun and her makeup is discreet, but emphasises her cool dark eyes. Her gaze is intense and

challenging. Hester wears wide-legged beige trousers with a brown belt, and a pale blue silk shirt. Her shoes are flat black patent pumps with a discreet gold embellishment. Around her neck is a fine gold chain. She has an effortless elegance, standing with her hands thrusting deep into her pockets.

Hester is visiting Alan for advice about a 17-year-old boy, **Alan Strang**, who has come before her court. Alan has a mop of black curls which frames his pale, square-jawed face. He has delicate features and his eyes are almost black under thick black brows. Alan is slim, but his shoulders and upper arms are well muscled. He is a scruffy, barefoot figure dressed in faded pink jogging pants and a sleeveless once-white vest which hangs loosely from his shoulders. Once in Dysart's care in the hospital, Alan's movements veer from sudden wild physical outbursts to silent withdrawal, curled in a tight ball.

Alan's parents are **Dora** and **Frank**. Dora is a short, motherly figure in her early 40s. Once a teacher, she is now a full-time housewife. Dora's black, with straight black hair stiffly lacquered and flicked up around her face. She wears coral-pink lipstick and her face is sweet, but anxious. Her clothes are conventional: a pleated skirt in a light blue check hangs to just below her knees and is worn with a beige cardigan over a blue and peach floral blouse. She wears brown low-heeled court shoes. She is never without a large gold watch and a gold crucifix on a thin gold chain. In the presence of her husband, Dora sometimes appears a little flustered.

**Frank** is very tall and slim. An upright, rigid figure, his large hands hang loosely by his sides. Frank's short, sandy hair is in a fringe around his head and he has a small neatly trimmed moustache. He is neatly dressed in sand-coloured trousers and a slate-blue cardigan which he wears tightly buttoned over his small-collared shirt and tightly knotted brown and beige plaid tie. His outdoor wear is a pale grey windcheater and a grey tweed cap which he removes once inside and clutches tightly.

A **male nurse** works alongside Dysart in the hospital, a young man in his 30s with a shaved head. He wears an immaculate white uniform of short sleeved tunic and trousers with white shoes and has an air of brisk professional competence as he moves hospital beds and trolleys.

Alan spends a lot of time at the local stables where he meets **Jill**. She is of a similar age. Her long dark hair flows in waves down her back and she has a friendly smile

and sparkling dark eyes. Jill wears flared jeans, a jumper striped in red, yellow and blue, and sneakers. She's lively and playful with a blithe confidence.

**Harry Dalton**, the owner of the stables, makes a brief appearance. He is a scruffy figure in grubby trousers and boots and a battered old brown leather and tan cord jacket with the sheepskin collar turned up. A brown cap is pulled down low over his brow.

Horses feature prominently in this performance. They're all played by members of the company. Chief among them is **Nugget**, Alan Strang's favourite. He's played by a young black actor with a lean, muscular physique and black hair that fades from a crown of black curls to faint stubble at the nape of his neck. His face is sculpted, fierce and proud.

The actor wears dark grey, close fitting boxer shorts with a wide black body-builder's belt that moulds to the contours of his belly and supports his back. His torso, limbs and feet are bare. As Nugget, he moves with equine elegance: the muscles in his strong back and shoulders twitch and ripple, his powerful hind quarters move rhythmically with each stepping movement, and his neck stretches as he responds to the sensations around him. His arms jut stiffly towards the ground, his hands bunched to represent hooves. This physicality is mirrored by other actors when they're playing horses. When they all appear, they're dressed in sleeveless dark-grey tee-shirts and shorts.

There's another significant horse, **Trojan**, played by another of the men, the tall white actor who also plays the nurse. He also wears the dark grey, close fitting boxer shorts, and the supportive black body-builder's belt, his torso, limbs and feet bare. Trojan is ridden by a young man wearing a long navy riding coat and high shiny riding boots. The actor playing Trojan holds a narrow strip of black leather in his mouth to represent a horse's bit and bridle.

The lighting in *Equus* often pours over the entire space in gold or stark white and dramatic reds and blues. It can also leave shadows, with a glow from one side. At times, lighting effects are accompanied by an increased level of the soundscape that underscores the dialogue.

### **Cast and production credits**

The psychiatrist, Martin Dysart is played by Zubin Varla

The magistrate, Hester Salomon by Natalie Radmail-Quirke

Alan Strang is played by Ethan Kai

His parents, Frank and Dora Strang are played by Robert Finch and Doreene Blackstock

The stable girl, Jill Mason by Norah Lopez Holden

The horse, Nugget, and the Young Horseman are played by Ira Mandela Siobhan

Harry Dalton, the stable owner is played by Keith Gilmore, who also plays the Nurse and the horse Trojan.

The Designer is Georgia Lowe

Lighting Designer, Jessica Hung Han Yun

Composer and Sound Designer, Giles Thomas

Movement Director, Shelley Maxwell

The Director is Ned Bennett

This information has been written and recorded by Roz Chalmers for eyewitness.