

**A**lton  
**F**ringe  
**T**heatre

# Luther

**John Osborne**

**Wed 28 to Fri 30 Nov, 2018**

**Wessex Arts Theatre  
Alton College**

*Here I stand; God help me; I can do no more*

## CAST

Knight	Tim Guilding
Martin Luther	Louise Dilloway
Hans	Rod Sharp
Lucas	Lesley Willis
Weinand	David Waltham-Hier
Tetzel	Joseph de Peyrecave
Staupitz	Chris Chappell
Cajetan	Simon Brencher
Miltitz	Sarah Castle-Smith
Pope Leo X	Mike Biddiss
Eck	Steve Dunne
Katherine	Sarah Castle-Smith
Augustinians, peasants, and Tetzel supporters	Ian Dussek, Simon Applegarth, Alison de Ledesma, David Waltham- Hier

## CHOIR

Director	Mike Orchard
Soprano	Nico Jackson, Sue Clegg
Alto	Lesley Howe, Fiona Harvey, Caroline Robinson
Tenor	Brian Hardy, James Willis
Bass	Oliver Howe, Mike Orchard

## CREATIVE AND BACKSTAGE

Director	Steve Gerlach
Composer	Mike Orchard
Stage manager	Lesley Willis
Images, animations & sound effects	Chris Lang
Lighting	Mark Smith (Wessex Arts Theatre Technician)
Props	Simon Applegarth, James Willis
Book (rehearsals)	Penny Cushing, Catherine Gerlach
Script editing	Steve Gerlach, Mike Biddiss
Design and typesetting	James Willis
Publicity	Chris Chappell, Lesley Willis
Treasurer	Alison de Ledesma

Each scene is announced by The Knight.

The play spans twenty-four years of Luther's life

### **Act One**

- Scene 1      The Cloister Chapel of the Eremites of the Augustinian Order.  
Erfurt. Thuringia.
- Scene 2      The same location, one year later.
- Scene 3      Two hours later.

### **Act Two**

- Scene 1      The Market Place. Jutebog. Ten years later.
- Scene 2      The Eremite Cloister. Wittenberg. Two months later.
- Scene 3      The Castle Church. Wittenberg. Two months later. It is the  
31<sup>st</sup> of October.

### **Interval**

- Scene 4      The Fugger Palace. Augsburg. A year later.
- Scene 5      The Papal hunting lodge. Magliana. Northern Italy. A year  
later.
- Scene 6      The Elster Gate. Wittenberg. A year later.

### **Act Three**

- Scene 1      The Diet of Worms. A year later.
- Scene 2      Wittenberg. Five years later. The aftermath of the peasants'  
revolt against the Lords and Princes.
- Scene 3      The Eremite Cloister. Wittenberg. Now home to Luther, his  
wife Katherine and their children. Five years later.

### **Acknowledgements**

Many thanks to the following who have contributed to this production

Unfinished-Self image	Artist, Martin Robert Reed
Multi-purpose prop	Designed and constructed by Steve Sargent
Front of House and Bar	Sue Hubbard and friends of the Fringe
Box Office	Wildly Upbeat Printers, 63A High Street, Alton, GU34 1AB
Photography	Ian Dumelow
Performing Rights	By special arrangement with Samuel French Ltd.

## Director's Notes

What an absolute pleasure it has been to work with the 'Fringe' on what is my directorial debut. My grateful thanks to you all for your incredibly hard work and creativity.

Many of you will be aware of the historical figure of Martin Luther though you may not be familiar with Osborne's play. Hardly surprising since it does not get many revivals, and maybe lives in the shadow of Osborne's other work, notably *Look Back in Anger*. However, when it was first performed in 1961 with Albert Finney as Luther, it enjoyed a long run in the West End along with other runs in Paris and New York. The critic Kenneth Tynan wrote at the time *"We are left with a powerful impression of a man who invented the idea of the individual conscience, responsible to no earthly authority, and was racked by his own invention... The language is urgent and sinewy...the prose, especially in Luther's sermons, throbs with a rhetorical zeal..."*. The play won a Tony award for best play in 1964.

Why choose to do this play? 2017 saw the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Luther's reformist declaration in his 95 Thesis. Radio Four

broadcast the play as part of the commemoration. Driving back to Alton from Weston Super Mare, I heard the play. Immediately the piece came to life through the spoken word, the language powerful, direct, uncompromising. For me, these seemed the essential ingredients of a great play. As a student of theology and church



history, the 'reformation' was familiar, but in Osborne's work there was Luther the man with all his angst, anger and joy. It had to be done! Weeks later, a walk on Weston beach provided a moment of inspiration for the inclusion of music in the production, and so a connection with the Froxfield Choir emerged. I had seen them perform Karl Jenkins' *The Armed Man* and was impressed by their bold decision to include a Muezzin reciting the *Call to Prayer*. It was a memorable experience. Following contact with the choir, Mike Orchard took on the role of composer and choir master. Mike's music beautifully

complements the action, I am especially grateful to him and members of the Froxfield choir.

My grateful thanks to the following. Artist Martin Robert Reed for his permission to use his work *Unfinished-Self* which has become the 'face' of this production. Professor Mike Biddiss for his invaluable help in editing the play. Lesley Willis for unfailing support as stage manager. Tim Guilding for his knowledge and sound judgment. Cath, thank you for your support and making Luther a welcome guest at home for the last twelve months.

I would like to dedicate my work in this production to my Dad Laurence, loving father, proud Welshman, opera lover and an inspiration to those who knew him. He passed away at the end of October last year. It was on one of the return journeys from Weston after visiting Mam that I heard the radio play.

*'Goodnight, sleep tight.  
Goodnight God bless.  
Good night, nos da, I'll try  
my best.'*

*(From the song 'William's Last Words'. Lyrics by Richey Edwards and Nicky Wire of the Manic Street Preachers)*

Steve Gerlach

## Luther by John Osborne

The play examines the 'mind' of Luther, a great scholar who, with others, is a catalyst for tumultuous changes within Europe. The Reformation would divide countries, governments, the church, towns, villages and families.

Osborne sees in Luther great strength and great weakness. Determination, single-mindedness, a belief that HE is right. Contrastingly, his stubbornness could be his downfall.

Osborne's Luther is a deeply torn individual, beset with doubt about his relationship with God, obsessive in his observance of confession and penance. He is afraid of himself. The play also explores the question, who has authority? Is it those who proclaim to know the truth? But what is the basis of truth? For Luther, truth is found in the Bible, and it can be interpreted by anyone, not just the Popes. Luther promotes the individual's personal relationship with God, the relationship is direct through the word of God and doesn't need to be mediated through priests or purchasing indulgences. Individual conscience is key.

Osborne allows the character of The Knight to attack authority which subjugates the ordinary person. He attacks the hypocrisy of those in power and supports those who fight for freedom but are often crushed.

There are parallels between the play's portrayal of Luther as a man against the world and the world we are in now.

Luther's fight against the church was aided greatly by using the emerging media of his day, the printing press, and writing in the German language he was able to reach ordinary Germans, bypassing the elites writing in Latin.

How often do we see the legitimate rights of ordinary people smashed by the powerful? We are witnessing tensions across Europe (the rise of right-wing politics) and a division (Brexit). Yet we also see that sometimes those who claim to champion the rights of ordinary people show themselves to be weak and flawed. Is Luther guilty of



turning his back on the German peasants when they looked to him for inspiration?

The play is not a narrative piece, scenes are sequential chronologically but the dialogue does not pick up from previous scenes. Commentators describe it as Brechtian in style – The Epic theatre – where the audience are challenged to immerse themselves in questions asked. The actors whilst being utterly convincing in their roles also have to be aware that they should be facilitating the audience to think about who is right/wrong.

As in most Fringe productions there is minimum set, with one significant multi-purpose prop. Images and lighting are used to enhance mood and meaning. Costume is contemporary and there is specially commissioned music. Plus a gender-blind cast.

Steve Gerlach

## Timeline

- 1483 Born into a mining family in Eisleben in Eastern Germany
- 1501 Becomes a student at Erfurt.
- 1505 January. Graduates with M.A.  
May. Begins studies in law (in order to please his father)  
July. Frightened by a thunderstorm, Luther vows to St. Anne to become a monk if she saves him. Later that month he enters the Augustinian cloister at Erfurt without telling his family.
- 1507 Celebrates his first Mass
- 1508-9 He lectures in Theology at the Monastery of Wittenberg. Staupitz, Vicar General of the order, notices his brilliant grasp of theology.
- 1511 Luther is championed by Staupitz, who has him transferred to the University.
- 1512-13 Luther is beset with doubts, and becomes increasingly troubled about the possibility of salvation as taught by the Church. His struggles with this problem lead him to conclude that salvation comes through faith alone.
- 1517 Luther preaches against Indulgences (remission of sins for cash). On 31<sup>st</sup> October he nailed to the door of Wittenberg Castle Church his 95 Theses against Indulgences.
- 1518 Luther writes to the Pope a defence of his views following accusations of heresy. Luther is summoned to a meeting with the Papal Legate, Cajetan.
- 1520 The Pope condemns Luther by issuing the Bull, *Exsurge Domine* and gives him 60 days to retract. Luther publicly burns the Bull.
- 1521 Luther, having refused to retract, is excommunicated. However, the Emperor Charles does not immediately carry out the order but calls Luther to the Imperial Diet at Worms, on the promise of safe conduct.
- 1522 Luther in hiding in Wittenberg. Growing public support for him encourages him to resume activity, and he publishes his German translation of the New Testament and further controversial writings. Some of his teachings are seized upon by the politically and economically discontented masses. They believe Luther is encouraging them to revolt against the Lords and Princes.
- 1525 The peasants of Swabia draw up their demands for freedom and the preaching of the gospel everywhere. Luther is at first sympathetic, but when armed revolt begins, he takes the side of the Lords and Princes and calls for the peasants to be slaughtered. Luther believed that scripture taught that the nobility and other authorities were sanctioned by God.
- 1525 Luther marries an ex-nun, Katherine von Bora
- 1526 Their first son is born. Later followed by two other sons and two daughters.
- 1526-46 Luther remains active, translating the Old Testament, composing hymns, writing many pamphlets (his work aided greatly by the printing press), arguing with other reformers and travelling widely to maintain the reforms he had started.
- 1546 He dies at Eisleben, where he was born.

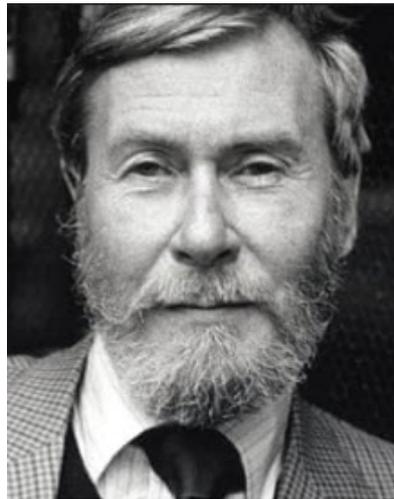
## John Osborne

*But he fizzed like a hot spark in a trail of gunpowder going off in us.*

That line from Act 3 scene 2, spoken by the Knight, refers to Martin Luther, but could easily apply to the Knight's creator - John Osborne. British theatre in 1956, only eleven years after the Second World War and two years since the end of rationing, tended to consist of a steady stream of musicals (both American and home grown) and rather light comedies, more often than not, set in middle class drawing rooms.

However, under the directorship of George Devine, The English Stage Company was beginning to gain a reputation for producing shows that were considerably more challenging at their home in the Royal Court. It was here that Tony Richardson staged the first production of *Look Back in Anger* by an almost unknown actor and playwright and it was to mark a turning point in both Osborne's career and British theatre as a whole.

Initially, the critics were, at best, luke-warm, with only Kenneth Tynan of The Observer and Harold Hobson of The Sunday Times showing any enthusiasm for the play's style, described as "Social Realism". It would be hard to imagine any of



Noel Coward's or Terence Rattigan's plays featuring an ironing board and so Osborne's work was dubbed a "kitchen sink drama". When Olivier, who had dismissed the piece, was persuaded to revisit it with Arthur Miller, he was struck by the American's reaction to it and promptly asked Osborne to write a play for him, resulting in *The Entertainer*.

*Look Back in Anger* proved to be a huge box office success, transferring to the West End, touring to Broadway and Moscow,

turned into a film starring Richard Burton and winning Osborne the Evening Standard Award for most promising playwright of 1956. Osborne, along with John Arden, Arnold Wesker and Bernard Kops, became known as "The Angry Young Men" and he went on to write fifteen other plays as well as adapting Ibsen, Wilde and Strinberg and crafting the screenplays for *Tom Jones* and *The Charge of the Light Brigade*.

Osborne's private life was "colourful" to say the least; he was married five times and he was clearly a difficult man to work with. Nevertheless, he was never afraid to take aim at our largest institutions, church, state, empire and, especially, the class system; themes evident in *Luther*. It is arguable that, without him, we may not have had Pinter, Hare, Bond or Brenton and, on a smaller scale, "Anger" could be said to have had the same cataclysmic effect on our theatre as Luther did on the Catholic Church.

Tim Guilding.

## Biographies

### **Mike Orchard, Composer and Music Director**

Mike Orchard was born and grew up on the Isle of Wight. He studied music at Goldsmiths College London which was, in the nineteen seventies, one of the very few places that thought an electric guitar was a real instrument. He spent his twenties trying to be a rock and roll star. Then he got a day job in the music business. He has written music for short films, and video games as well for instrumental ensembles and choirs. This score is his first for the theatre. It is dedicated to the memory of Frances Lowe.

### **Froxfield Choir**

The singers in this production are (with the exception of one Fringe mole) members of Froxfield Choir which was formed in 1976 and is based in the village of Froxfield, near Petersfield.

We have around 40 members and our repertoire extends from the great choral works, such as Handel's *Messiah*, Bach's *Magnificat in D major* and David Fanshawe's *African Sanctus*, to lesser-known pieces. In addition to our two or three major concerts each year, we lead at least one Evensong service, and also lead the singing at the Privett Carol service.

We enjoy working hard and having fun in our Thursday evening rehearsals as much as we enjoy the exhilaration of performing in our concerts. We have a growing reputation as one of the best amateur choirs in the area, led by our professional

Music Director Michael Servant who joined us in 2016.

We are always happy to welcome new members; for further details please see our website: [froxfordchoir.co.uk](http://froxfordchoir.co.uk)

### **Martin Robert Reed**

Artist and creator of *Unfinished-Self*, which has become the 'face' of this production.

"Born Cardiff 1966. A late starter into the world of art, at forty-six, I sold my construction business and embarked on a BA (Hons) fine art degree course at Carmarthen School of Art. My ideas took shape and the Unfinished-self was developed as a concept. It challenges current ideas surrounding self-portraiture. Humans are more than the sum of physical appearance. We have intelligence, emotion, aspirations, imaginations and much more. I want my portraits to reveal something other than physical identity. The Unfinished-self is a concept that attempts to encapsulate the breadth, depth and width of human experience and our individual human journeys. For me, we remain eternally unfinished. Unfinished-self portraits have been collected nationally and internationally and are represented by Saatchi Art and LeDame Gallery London. Subsequently, I have completed a PGCE and a MA in fine art. Currently my painting practice continues to move at pace toward abstraction and investigates human sensation in landscape with a particulate focus on the Gower Peninsular."

[martinrobertreed.com](http://martinrobertreed.com)

## Alton Fringe Theatre

For almost 30 years *The Fringe* has been delivering its characteristically small-scale, intimate, and often challenging productions to discerning audiences here in Alton.

Much like a Quaker meeting, productions emerge when someone feels inspired to direct. This has resulted in a huge variety, from full plays by Shakespeare (most recently *King Lear*), Schiller (twice), Ostrovsky, Shaw, Beckett, Euripides (masked), to programmes of readings from Jane Austen to Charles Darwin. In 2008 our production of Oscar Wilde's *Salome* received an independent four star review at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

If you would like to receive occasional emails about future productions please send a request to [LesleyRWillis@gmail.com](mailto:LesleyRWillis@gmail.com)

For further information see [www.altonfringe.com](http://www.altonfringe.com)



## Luther in Rehearsal

