EQUUS

BY PETER SHAFFER

DIRECTED BY DEREK BERTELSEN

EQUUS is presented by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc., a Concord Theatricals Company.

AstonRep Theatre Company is partially supported by grants from the following organizations:
CAST

Hester Salomon..................................................................................................................Alexandra Bennett*
Jill Mason.........................................................................................................................Malia Hu
Martin Dysart..................................................................................................................Rian Jairell
Alan Strang.......................................................................................................................Sean William Kelly
Dora Strang.......................................................................................................................Julie Partyka
Horsemans/Nugget...........................................................................................................Jordan Pokorney
Frank Strang.....................................................................................................................Robert Tobin*+
Harry Dalton/Nurse ...........................................................................................................Andrew Whatley
Martin Dysart understudy ...............................................................................................Billy Sullivan

PRODUCTION TEAM

Director/Co-Sound Design/Co-Artistic Director .................................................................Derek Bertelsen*
Stage Manager/Assistant Director .....................................................................................Kamren Smith
Intimacy/Violence Choreographer .....................................................................................Claire Yearman
Movement Director .........................................................................................................Claire Allegra Taylor
Dialect and Vocal Coach ..................................................................................................Bethany Hart
Technical Director/Scenic Design/ Mask Design ...............................................................Jeremiah Barr*
Production Manager/Lighting Design/Co-Sound Design .................................................Samantha Barr*
Costume Design ...............................................................................................................kClare McKellaston
Box Office Manager .........................................................................................................Amy Kasper*
Graphic Designer .............................................................................................................Lea Tobin*
Publicist .............................................................................................................................David Rosenberg
Co-Artistic Director/Casting Director ................................................................................Sara Pavlak McGuire*

*denotes AstonRep company member
+ appears courtesy of Actor’s Equity Association

Time/Place: Early 1970s. The main action of the play takes place at Rokeby Psychiatric Hospital in southern England.

Please note: EQUUS features haze, loud sounds, and contains nudity and depictions of violence.

There will be a 15-minute intermission.
CAST BIOGRAPHIES

Alexandra Bennett (Hester Salomon) is delighted to be a part of Equus. Recent AstonRep shows include The Laramie Project, 1984, the Chicago premiere of The Women of Lockerbie, Wit, Doubt, and Eleemosynary. Other recent Chicago roles include understudying the role of Wilhelmina Fleming in First Folio’s production of Silent Sky. A graduate of the 2011 School at Steppenwolf, she has also appeared as one of the jurors in the recent independent film Six Angry Women, and played the Gravedigger in the film production Hamlet: The Series. Many thanks to everyone on this fantastic team for bringing this story to the Edge stage.

Malia Hu (Jill Mason) is delighted to be making her AstonRep debut. She worked as a media planner in digital advertising before recognizing a need to return to her roots; she is thrilled to do so with this production of Equus. Favorite credits include: Pride & Prejudice, The Heidi Chronicles, Midnight’s Dream, and The Petrified Forest (Northwestern University). Malia holds a B.S. in Theatre from Northwestern University and an M.S. in Management Studies from Kellogg School of Management. Endless love to her family and dear friends.

Rian Jairell (Martin Dysart) is thrilled to be making his debut with AstonRep. Recent Chicago credits include: Gas for Less, Dartmoor Prison (The Goodman Theatre) Cymbeline, Troilus and Cressida, A Flea in her Ear (Chicago Shakespeare Theater), Boeing Boeing, The Mousetrap (MPAC).Regional credits include: It’s Only A Play (Theatre Workshop of Nantucket) Macbeth, You Never Can Tell (Montana Shakespeare in the Parks) Pericles, The Fair Maid of the West, Line of Descent (Riverside Theatre), The Taming of the Shrew, The Rainmaker (Idaho Repertory Theatre). Rian received a Jeff Citation for best supporting actor for his work in The Kentucky Cycle with Infamous Commonwealth Theatre. Film and Television credits include: The Sighting, Using, Dimension, Chicago Fire and The Laramie Project. Rian is currently represented by ATG.

Sean William Kelly (Alan Strang) is so excited to make his debut with AstonRep on such an amazing show. In Chicago he has worked with RedTwist Theatre, Oak Park Festival Theatre, The New Colony, Pride Films and Plays, Artemisia, Spartan Theatre, and The New American Folk Theatre. Regionally he has worked with The Hedgehog Ensemble on Pandemic, which he also helped devise, at Studio Theatre Tierra Del Sol, and with Lakeside Shakespeare. In New York he appeared in The Last Session as a part of the New York Thespians Festival. Sean is a company member of Quicksilver Shakespeare and was a part of their inaugural production of Mercury Hamlet. Love to JK, BK, & TG.

Julie Partyka (Dora Strang) is thrilled to work with AstonRep for the first time in Equus. Chicago credits include Mrs. Boyle in The Mousetrap (Metropolis Performing Arts Center); Corryn in Gidion’s Knot (Jeff Recommended), Cunningham in Last Days of Judas Iscariot, Kate in All My Sons and Ouisa in Six Degrees of Separation (Eclectic Theatre); Chelsea in On Gold Pond and Ruth in Later Lives (Oil Lamp Theater). Julie has had the pleasure of working with
other Chicagoland theatres that include Buffalo Theatre Ensemble, Lifeline Theatre, Timeline Theatre and Eclipse Theatre. She received her Master's degree from Northwestern University. So grateful to Derek and Sara for the opportunity and the rest of the cast for their commitment and creativity. And always, thanks to her husband and her two boys - who may only be pretending - to miss their mom when she is “at work.”

Jordan Pokorney (Horsemman/Nugget) makes his AstonRep debut. He is delighted to return to the Edge Theater, where he previously played Dad and others in the world premiere of Ryan Martin’s The Incredible 6000 Foot Ladder to Heaven as part of the 2019 Chicago Musical Theatre Festival. Directing: The Elephant Man, Salomé, This is the Rill Speaking (Columbia College Chicago) and You Can’t Take It With You (Brave Community Theatre). Assistant directing: A Little Night Music (BoHo Theatre), Nice Girl (Raven Theatre), and Peer Gynt (Columbia College Chicago). Composing: The Just (The Den Theatre). Jordan holds a BFA in Directing from Columbia College Chicago.

Robert Tobin (Frank Strang) with AstonRep: The Lonesome West, Time Stands Still, Les Liaisons Dangereuses, The Lieutenant of Inishmore, Wit, God of Carnage, Doubt, Closer, Rusty Pipe. Other select Chicago credits include The Heart is A Lonely Hunter (Steppenwolf), Comedy of Errors (Chicago Shakespeare), Cymbeline (First Folio), King John (Shakespeare Project of Chicago), Cyrano De Bergerac, Love’s Labour’s Lost (Oak Park Festival Theatre), Shadowlands, The Man From Nebraska (Redtwist). Select regional credits include work with the Utah, Colorado, Hawaii, and Montana Shakespeare Festivals, and Macbeth (The MET Theatre in Los Angeles). Robert has also choreographed and taught stage violence extensively. As a writer, he has had a number of plays produced in Los Angeles, Colorado, and Chicago. Thanks to Lea, Equus people, and all my AstonRep mates.

Andrew Whatley (Harry Dalton / Nurse) is absolutely geeked to end a thirteen-year hiatus from the stage by working on his first show with AstonRep. He has previously appeared in shows with The Hypocrites (Marat/Sade, The Firebugs, and Blood Wedding), Eclipse (Women and Water), City Lit (The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde), and Red Wolf (The Red Address - Jeff award nomination for actor in a supporting role.) Andrew is a native of Auburn, AL, and holds degrees from Auburn and Northwestern Universities.

Billy Sullivan (Martin Dysart understudy) is a new face to AstonRep. He has appeared on stages all across Chicago. Productions include; Boeing Boeing (906 Theatre), Musical of the Living Dead (2010 original cast with Cowardly Scarecrow), Cheers 1773 (The Public House Theatre), Huzzah (with See Every Monster) and Chapter Two (understudy at Windy City Playhouse). As an ensemble member with The Cupid Players he appeared in their hit revue, Cupid Has A Heart On every year of its (14 year) run! As a solo performer he has worked with The Living Room and Limunnality Productions. He has also written and performed two solo projects; Thoughts from the Easel Board and Who’s the Dumb? Thanks to Sara, Derek, cast and crew. Special thanks to family and friends here and back east.
Derek Bertelsen (Director) serves as Co-Artistic Director for AstonRep Theatre Company. Equus marks his 10th show with AstonRep as director, where previous credits include The Laramie Project, The Crowd You're In With, Wit, Doubt, The Lieutenant of Inishmore, and Next Fall. He also serves as Artistic Director for The Comrades where credits include Mary-Kate Olsen Is In Love, Prelude To A Kiss, and the world premiere of Roast. Other Chicagoland directing credits include Pride Films & Plays, GreatWorks, BrightSide Theatre, and Wilmette Arts Center, and Arc Theatre. Assistant directing credits include Steppenwolf and Goodman. Regionally, he’s directed at Shawnee Summer Theatre, Festival 56, and five seasons at Timber Lake Playhouse. He’d like to thank the Equus family for their hard work and dedication to this production. Love to Nelson.

kClare McKellaston (Costume Designer) is a Chicago-based Costume Designer, construction artist, and educator. MTW: The Hunchback of Notre Dame, Wardrobe for Summer Season 2019. Tours: Pemberley Production’s The Woman in Black (Associate Costume Designer). Regional: Steppenwolf’s How to Be a Rock Critic (Wardrobe), The Second City’s 100th Mainstage Revue: Who Do We Think We Are? and We’re All in This Room Together. Fashion: International Casual Furnishings Association Gala. As an educator, she serves as Adjunct Faculty and Costume Shop Manager at Dominican University, where she has recently designed Waiting for Godot, Mother Courage and her Children, and The Addams Family Musical. www.kClare.com

Samantha Barr (Lighting Designer/Production Manager) is the managing director and production manager for AstonRep as well as production coordinator at Dominican University and an artistic affiliate with Babes With Blades Theater Co. When not with AstonRep, Babes or Dominican Samantha is found freelancing as a production manager and lighting designer or riding the EL around her beloved city.

Jeremiah Barr (Scenic Design/Mask Design) is very pleased to be apart of the Equus team. Some of Jeremiah past scenic design credits include, The Crowd You're In With (AstonRep), The Tempest (Midsummer Flight). Evil Dead: The Musical (Black Button Eyes), and Gross Indecency (Promethean Theater Ensemble). Jeremiah has worked with many awesome theater companies including Promethean Theater Ensemble, Babes with Blades, City Lit, Congo Square, Black Button Eyes and Interrobang Theater Project to name a few. Jeremiah is founding member of AstonRep where he serves as associate artistic director. A big shout out to the cast and crew of Equus and especially Samantha and Edgar.

Kamren Smith (Asst. Director/Stage Manager) is thrilled to be joining the AstonRep team for the first time! Some of his most recent credits include Elevator Girl (Vanguard Arts Collective), Gift of the Mogwai (InGen Productions), and Warrior Class (The Comrades). Since moving to Chicago in 2014, Kamren has had the opportunity to collaborate with Adventure Stage Chicago, Akvavit Theatre, Forth Story Productions, Haven Theatre, InGen Productions, The Ruffians, Timeline Theatre, and is a company member with The Comrades. Much love and many thanks to his support system and the cast and crew of Equus!

Claire Allegra Taylor (Movement Director) is the Development and Marketing Director of eco-theatre company The Kaleidoscapes, of which she is also a founding member. She holds a BA in Relational Communication and a BFA in Acting from The Theatre School at DePaul University, is certified as a teacher of the Meisner technique by Larry Silverberg, and
PRODUCTION TEAM BIOGRAPHIES cont.

is an Advanced Actor Combatant in the Society of American Fight Directors. Claire is an actor, and has appeared onstage with Remy Bumppo Theatre Company, The Wyoming Theatre Festival, and a year-long national tour as a company member of the National Players, among others. She is also an active dressage horseback rider. Find out more at www.claireallegrataylor.net

Claire Yearman (Intimacy & Violence Choreographer) is happy to be working with AstonRep again! Claire works as an actor, fight director & intimacy choreographer. She is a Certified Teacher with the Society of American Fight Directors and is the Great Lakes Regional Representative for the organization. She is also a member of Intimacy Directors International. She has an MFA in Acting from Western Illinois University and is a company member of Interrobang Theatre Project. Some theatres she’s worked with include: AstonRep, Interrobang Theatre Project, WildClaw Theatre, Buffalo Theatre Ensemble, Williams Street Rep, Oil Lamp Theatre, and Red Tape Theatre.

Bethany Hart (Dialect Coach) is thrilled you’re here in the community being created together tonight through AstonRep. Originally from Washington state, she’s a recent addition to the Chicago theater scene. Bethany has directed for the educational outreach program at Illinois State University, and has most recently assisted with both directing and text coaching at the Illinois Shakespeare Festival, Washington State University and Little Things Productions, dialects at Heartland Theatre and Vanderbilt University, and artistically with The Comrades, Muse of Fire, Cock&Bull Theatre and HartLife NFP. This year, Bethany led an all-female production and artistic team (Humble Humble Co) in mounting an original world premiere production, an endeavor so rewarding that a remount of For the Record by MaryClare Zimmerman is just around the corner.

Sara Pavlak McGuire (Co-Artistic Director / Casting Director) works primarily as an actor in Chicago. In addition to all of her credits with AstonRep, she has also worked with Windy City Playhouse, Remy Bumppo Theatre, Oak Park Festival, Filament Theatre, Hubris Productions, Spartan Theatre, among others. She is a two time Jeff Award nominee and she received the award for her work as Agnes in Agnes of God with Hubris Productions. Sara has assistant directed/produced several AstonRep productions: The Lyons, Wit, The Laramie Project, The Lieutenant of Inishmore and is thrilled to be directing the spring production of the 19/20 season: When We Were Young and Unafraid. Sara holds an MFA in acting from Western Illinois University. She lives in the South Loop with her husband Tim. She is represented by Big Mouth Talent.

SPECIAL THANKS

Dominican University
Kristina Mourlot and Goose the horse
Raue Center For The Arts
The seed for *Equus* was planted sometime around 1971. Peter Shaffer was driving with a friend through the English countryside and mentioned the abundance of stables. His friend shared a story he’d heard at a recent dinner party about a disturbed young man who’d blinded 26 horses with a spike. “He knew only [that] horrible detail, and his complete mention of [the event] could barely have lasted a minute. But it was enough to arouse in me an intense fascination,” Shaffer later wrote.

Inspired by that story, Peter Shaffer’s *Equus* exploded onto the scene in 1973 and went on to become a worldwide hit. Winning the Tony Award for Best Play, the original production (and more recent revivals) have attracted some of the biggest names in show business.

Much like a true crime podcast or a binge-worthy Netflix series, *Equus* tells us what happened from the start and asks the simple question “why do people do the things they do?” I’m fascinated with how Shaffer’s script shatters our understanding of our primal drives. One of the central conceits of the play is that if someone exhibits what might be described as abnormal behavior, are they to be listened to or controlled? To this end Dysart falls under the R.D. Laing school of anti-psychiatry; these questions were widely discussed when the play was first produced. Although psychiatric techniques and practices have changed since the show premiered 46 years ago, *Equus* remains a fascinating and resonant play.

As we head into our 12th season, we at AstonRep Theater Company are excited to showcase the talents of our artists in our new home here at the Edge Theater.

Thank you for joining us.

Derek Bertelsen
Co-Artistic Director & Director for *Equus*

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**DONORS**

*AstonRep Theatre Company* would like to acknowledge the following for their generosity. Whether the contribution is donations or their valuable time, we are grateful for their support…

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AstonRep Theatre Company is an ensemble of artists committed to creating exciting, intimate theatrical experiences that go beyond the front door to challenge the audience and spark discussion where the show is not the end of their experience: it is just the beginning.

**COMPANY MEMBERS**
Sara Pavlak McGuire, Co-Artistic Director/Casting Director
Derek Bertelsen, Co-Artistic Director
Jeremiah Barr, Technical Director/Associate Artistic Director
Samantha Barr, Managing Director/Production Manager
Amy Kasper, Marketing Director/Box Office Manager
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**when we were young and unafraid**
by Sarah Treem

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