

ROUTLEDGE REVIVALS

# Arden

A Study of His Plays

Albert Hunt



## Arden

John Arden was one of the major playwrights to have emerged during the 1950s, yet his work has arguably been misunderstood. In this book, first published in 1974, Albert Hunt's primary concern is to relate the plays written by John Arden alone, as well as those written in collaboration with Margaretta D'Arcy, both to Arden's whole concept of theatre, and to his social and political attitudes. The book begins with a biographical introduction, followed by a play-by-play study of Arden's work and a survey of the impact of his plays in performance, alongside fascinating images. Celebrating the work and life of the playwright, this timely reissue will be of particular value to students of theatre studies as well as professional actors with an interest in John Arden's plays and theatrical ideologies.

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# *Arden*

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*by*

ALBERT HUNT



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- c SERJEANT MUSGRAVE'S DANCE: production by Minnesota Theater Company at the Tyrone Guthrie Theater, Minneapolis, 1968; Len Cariou (*Serjeant Musgrave*)  
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- 3a THE HAPPY HAVEN: production at the Long Wharf Theater, New Haven, Connecticut, August 1966; Marcie Hubert (*Mrs Phineus*); Kate Wilkinson (*Mrs Letouzel*)  
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- 6 THE HERO RISES UP: original production by John Arden and Margaretta D'Arcy at the Round House, 1968; Henry Woolfe (*Nelson*); Bettina Jonic (*Lady Hamilton*)  
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- 7a THE HERO RISES UP: production by Bill Hays and the Nottingham Playhouse Company at Edinburgh, 1969; Thelma Ruby (*Lady Emma Hamilton*); Robin Parkinson (*Nelson*)  
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- 8a THE ROYAL PARDON: original production by John Arden and Margaretta D'Arcy at the Beaford Arts Centre, 1966; John Arden (*Policeman*)  
(*Photo: John Lane*)

b THE ROYAL PARDON: original production by John Arden and Margaretta D'Arcy at the Beaford Arts Centre  
(Photo: John Lane)

*The photograph of John Arden on the front of the cover is by Roger Mayne and that of Albert Hunt on the back of the cover by David Sheard*

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## *Author's Note*

This book is about the plays of John Arden. But no study of his work would be accurate without full acknowledgement of the part played by his wife, Margaretta D'Arcy.

From the beginning, Margaretta D'Arcy, a former professional actress, has contributed ideas and material and criticism and technical know-how to John Arden's work. In recent years she has increasingly shared in the actual writing.

Stylistically it is clumsy and irritating to keep referring to Arden/D'Arcy, and so, for convenience, I have usually referred to them, when writing of plays on which they have collaborated, as the Ardens. This is not intended to suggest in any way that Margaretta D'Arcy is less than an equal partner in the collaboration.

Of the earlier plays, *The Happy Haven* owed most to Margaretta D'Arcy. Although she did not actually write any of the play, she worked closely with Arden during the writing, and contributed many of the key ideas.

The following plays are, in every sense, collaborations:

*The Business of Good Government*

*The Royal Pardon*

*Ars Longa, Vita Brevis*

*The Hero Rises Up*

*The Island of the Mighty*

*The Ballygombeen Bequest*

Margaretta D'Arcy's influence on Arden's work has not been confined to offering ideas and collaborating on the writing. She has been the driving force behind the experiments in which he has been involved outside the professional

theatre – particularly the Kirbymoorside Festival and, more recently, the work (in Oughterard) which led to *The Ballygombeen Bequest*. Without her, as he himself puts it, he would have been a different, and a lesser, playwright.

## John Arden

- 1930 Born in Barnsley, Yorkshire, on 26 October, son of C. A. Arden and A. E. Layland.  
Educated at Sedbergh School and went on to study architecture at King's College, Cambridge, and Edinburgh College of Art.
- 1955 Production of *All Fall Down* by fellow students at Edinburgh.  
Met Margaretta D'Arcy.
- 1956 Production of radio play *The Life of Man* – this won the BBC Northern Region prize.
- 1957 Production of *The Waters of Babylon* at the Royal Court, 20 October, director Graham Evans.
- 1958 *Soldier, Soldier* written for BBC Television.  
*When is a Door not a Door?* produced at the Embassy Theatre, Swiss Cottage, by the Central School of Drama, 2 June, director Robert Cartland.  
Production of *Live Like Pigs* by English Stage Society at the Royal Court, 30 September, directors George Devine and A. Page.
- 1959 Production of *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance* at the Royal Court, 22 October, director Lindsay Anderson.
- 1960 *Soldier, Soldier* presented on BBC Television, 16 February, director Stuart Burge.  
*The Happy Haven* at the Royal Court, 14 September, director William Gaskill.  
*The Business of Good Government* presented as the Christmas play at the Church of St Michael, Brent Knoll, Somerset, directed by the authors.



- 1961 Germany's first chance to sample Arden's work – *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance* published by Rowohlt Verlag. *Wet Fish* presented on BBC Television, 3 September, director Peter Dews.
- 1962 First performance in the German language of *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance* at Basle Stadttheater, Switzerland, 27 February, director Adolf Spalinger.  
*The Life of Man* broadcast by Norddeutscher Rundfunk.  
 First performance in Germany of *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance* at Das Jung Theater, Hamburg, 13 September, director Viktor Warsitz.  
*Serjeant Musgrave's Dance* on BBC Television.
- 1963 Production of *The Workhouse Donkey* at the Festival Theatre, Chichester, 8 July, producer Stuart Burge.  
*Ironhand* produced at the Bristol Old Vic, November, director Val May.  
 Irish première of *The Happy Haven* at Gate Theatre, Dublin, 2 December, director John Beary.
- 1964 *Armstrong's Last Goodnight* produced at the Glasgow Citizens' Theatre, 5 May, director Denis Carey.  
 Production of *Ars Longa, Vita Brevis*, director Peter Brook.
- 1965 *The Workhouse Donkey* produced at Göttingen, 20 February.  
 German première of *Ars Longa, Vita Brevis* at Munich, 27 March.  
 German translation of *Ars Longa* published in *Theater Heute*, May.  
 German translation of *The Workhouse Donkey* published in *Theater Heute*, June.  
 Production of *Left-Handed Liberty* at the Mermaid Theatre, 14 June, director David Williams.  
*Armstrong's Last Goodnight* produced at the Chichester Festival Theatre, July, directors John Dexter and William Gaskill.

*Armstrong* at the Old Vic with Albert Finney, 12 October.

*Serjeant Musgrave's Dance* produced by the English Stage Company at the Royal Court, 9 December, director Jane Howell.

1966 January – *Live Like Pigs* in rep. at the Glasgow Citizens' Theatre.

*Serjeant Musgrave's Dance* in rep. at the Royal Court from 31 January.

*Serjeant Musgrave* performed in Belgium and Holland. March – *Armstrong's Last Goodnight* performed by the National Theatre at the Chichester Festival and at the Citizens' Theatre, Glasgow.

Production of *Friday's Hiding* at the Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh, 29 March, directors Sheila Ronald and Tom Fleming.

*Armstrong's Last Goodnight* produced at Bochum, Germany, 17 April, director Hans Schalla.

May – German translation of *Armstrong* published in *Theater Heute*.

8 August – *The Happy Haven* given American première at the Long Wharf Theater, New Haven.

*The Royal Pardon* performed at the Beaford Arts Centre, Devon, 1 September, directed by the authors.

October – Arden commissioned to write *The Island of the Mighty* for the Canon Studio Theatre.

German première of *Live Like Pigs* at Stuttgart, 4 November, director Peter Palitzsch.

December – German translation of *Live Like Pigs* published in *Theater Heute*.

1967 *Armstrong's Last Goodnight* produced in Basle, 24 February, director Ernst Kuhr.

*The Workhouse Donkey* presented at the Nottingham Playhouse, 25 October, director John Neville.

- Live Like Pigs* produced in Kiel, 14 November, director Helmet Gerg.
- German première of *The Happy Haven* at Nuremberg, 9 December, director Konrad Höller.
- Christmas – *The Royal Pardon* presented by the Unicorn Theatre Club at the New Arts Theatre.
- 1968 *Harold Muggins is a Martyr* produced at the Unity Theatre.
- The True History of Squire Jonathan and his Unfortunate Treasure* staged as a lunchtime performance by Interaction Theatrescope at the Ambiance Theatre, 17 June, director Ed Berman.
- September – *The Happy Haven* produced in Holland.
- Institute of Contemporary Arts presentation of *The Hero Rises Up* at the Round House, 6 November, directed by the authors.
- December – *The Royal Pardon* at the Arts Theatre.
- 1969 *The Hero Rises Up* presented by the Nottingham Playhouse Company at the Edinburgh Festival, 8 September.
- 1970 First performance on BBC Radio of *The Bagman*.
- 1971 June – *The Hero Rises Up* in rep. at the Northcott Theatre, Exeter.
- 1972 First production of *The Ballygombeen Bequest*.
- December – First production of *The Island of the Mighty* at the Aldwych Theatre; production disowned by John Arden and Margaretta D'Arcy.