

## THE PITMEN PAINTERS by LEE HALL

Reading                    Tuesday 4th September - 8pm in the studio  
Audition                   Sunday 23rd September - 2pm in the theatre  
Production dates        14th - 23rd February 2019  
Rehearsals start        Wednesday 12th December 2018 in the studio  
Director                    Julie Cumbo 01737 219191 or 07981436980  
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### SYNOPSIS

This is quite a new play which was first presented in Newcastle upon Tyne in 2007, after which it moved to the National Theatre where it won the Best New Play award in 2008. Taking place in Ashington, Northumberland, between 1934 and 1947, it is based on real events and people. As members of the Workers' Educational Association, known as the W.E.A. and still in existence, a group of miners arranged to have lessons after work in Art Appreciation. When it became clear to their teacher, however, that the men had never seen any art, he decided to encourage them to paint and so they did: it turns out that the men are very good at it!

The play is funny but moving and inspirational, addressing ideas about community, class divisions, art and the right to have access to culture and the best things in life. The men are straight-talking and delightfully argumentative, their joshing banter providing a hilarious backdrop to the harshness of their lives.

Robert Lyon, Helen Sutherland and Ben Nichoson will all speak RP. All the miners, as well as the Young Lad and Susan, need to have Geordie accents but please don't let this put you off auditioning. Perhaps show willing by trying to give the accent a go but we can work on it, with outside help on offer, when the play is cast.

There is a programme on Youtube about the men and there is some old footage of interviews with some of them: you might find this useful and interesting. Find it: Youtube ITV Perspectives The Pitmen Painters.

## THE PARTS

George Brown - 40s-60s. He's the oldest and the leader, the representative for both the union and the W.E.A. He is a stickler for the rules and is gruff, argumentative, blunt and officious, with a stout sense of propriety. He's the Young Lad's uncle. Top of P.4 to "He's a dentist" at top of P.8. (With Robert Lyon and one line from Harry.)

Oliver Kilbourn - 30s-40s. He becomes the most famous and successful of the pitmen painters though, being a dedicated and loyal miner, he never gave up going down the pit. He is thoughtful, self-aware, open and humble: becoming an artist transforms him. Top of P.88 - bottom of P.90. (With Ben Nicholson.) AND Top of P.62 - end of scene on P.64. (With Helen Sutherland.)

Jimmy Floyd - 40s-60s. He's a hard-working, decent man, curious and a bit timid, always surprised by life. He's often the source of comic relief because he is so naive about art. Mid-P.46 to top P.48 - "for nowt." (With Helen Sutherland and, briefly, Harry and Lyon.)

Young Lad - 20s. He is eager, full of youthful enthusiasm and keen to find work in the mines. Unable to do so, he becomes angry and decides to join up in order to solve his problems. George is his uncle. Top P.99 - end of scene on P.100. (With George, Harry and Oliver.)

Harry Wilson - 40s-60s. He's a dental mechanic, having been a pitman but unable to go back down the mines after being gassed in the First World War, the horrors of which have seriously affected him. He is disillusioned, irascible and an atheist, becoming zealous and passionate when he focuses on his communism, quoting Marx in a knee-jerk way. P.121 - his monologue.

Robert Lyon - 40s-50s. He's the master of painting at the Royal College and inspires the pitmen. He's unintentionally self-involved and knows himself to be "a failure" as a painter, producing only mediocre work. Top of P.4 to "He's a dentist" at the top of P.8. (With George Brown.)

Susan Parks - 20s. Earnest young art student, working as a life model to pay her way. She's very matter of fact and doesn't share the men's prudishness about posing in the nude. There's ostensibly a very brief nude scene but she'll be covered with a drape and able in reality to wear a swimming costume. Bottom P.37 to "tell them to knock" on P.39. (With Young Lad, George, Harry, Oliver and Lyon.)

Helen Sutherland - 45-50. A wealthy, cultured, influential patron of the arts. She is very well-spoken and well-meaning and helped to bring the pitmen painters to public notice before transferring her interest elsewhere. Top of P.62 - end of scene on P.64. (With Oliver Kilbourn.)

Ben Nicholson - 30 - 40. He has just one nice scene. He was a young British artist, just coming to prominence at this time. Interested in abstract art and cubism, he helped found the St Ives colony. He became known for his wood reliefs in all white. His second wife was the sculptress Barbara Hepworth. Top pf P.88 - bottom of P.90. (With Oliver Kilbourn.)