

# TRAVELING LIGHT

## STUDY GUIDE

This guide is meant to help generate discussions surrounding the real-life issues and themes surrounding Theatre Pro Rata's production of *Traveling Light*, by Lindsay Harris Friel. The production runs from July 9th - 28th, at the Layman's Cemetery, 2945 Cedar Avenue South, in Minneapolis. If you have any questions after reading the guide, feel free to contact us at [info@theatreprorata.org](mailto:info@theatreprorata.org).

# BRIAN EPSTEIN

(1934 - 1967)

Brian Samuel Epstein was a British music entrepreneur, and the manager of The Beatles. He also managed several other musical artists such as Gerry & The Pacemakers, Billy J. Kramer and the Dakotas, Cilla Black and The Remo Four. His management company was named NEMS Enterprises, after his family's music stores, called NEMS (North End Music Stores).

Epstein paid for The Beatles to record a demo in Decca's studios, which Epstein later persuaded George Martin to listen to, as Decca was not interested in signing the band. Epstein was then offered a contract by Martin on behalf of EMI's small Parlophone label, even though they had previously been rejected by almost every other British record company. Martin later explained that Epstein's enthusiasm and his confidence that The Beatles would one day become internationally famous convinced him to sign them.

Epstein died of an accidental drug overdose at his home in London in August 1967. The Beatles' early success has been attributed to Epstein's management and sense of style. Paul McCartney said of Epstein: "If anyone was the Fifth Beatle, it was Brian."



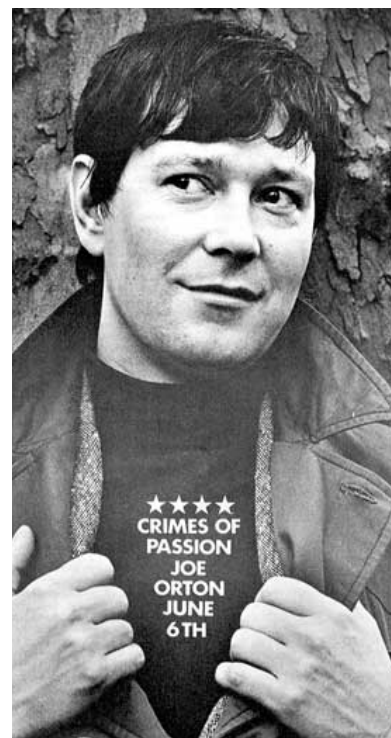
# JOE ORTON

(1933 - 1967)

John Kingsley ("Joe") Orton was an English playwright. In a short but prolific career lasting from 1964 until his death, he shocked, outraged and amused audiences with his scandalous black comedies. "Ortonesque" became a recognized term for "outrageously macabre".

On August 9th, 1967, Halliwell bludgeoned Orton to death with nine hammer blows to the head, and then committed suicide with an overdose of 22 Nembutal tablets. Investigators determined that Halliwell died first, because Orton's body was still warm.

The November 22nd, 1970 edition of *The Sunday Times* reported that four days before the murder, Orton went to the Chelsea Potter pub in the King's Road. He met friend Peter Nolan who later gave evidence at the inquest that Orton told him that he had another boyfriend and wanted to end his relationship with Halliwell but didn't know how to go about it.



*Biographies lifted from Wikipedia.org -- check'em out; they're surprisingly comprehensive!*

# SEXUAL OFFENCES ACT OF 1967

The Sexual Offences Act of 1967 is an Act of Parliament in the United Kingdom. It partially decriminalized homosexual acts in private between two men, both of whom must have attained the age of 21. Although controversial at the time, the legislation has been widely criticized as having maintained long standing legal inequalities between homosexual and heterosexual behavior. Critics note that it established an unequal age of consent and made strict impositions of ‘privacy’ that would leave many male homosexual acts still open to prosecution. Peter Tatchell in his 1992 book *Europe in The Pink* claims that the legislation actually facilitated an increase in prosecutions against homosexual men.

The Wolfenden committee was set up to investigate homosexuality and prostitution in the late 1950s, and included on its panel a Judge, psychiatrist, an academic and various theologians. They came to the conclusion (with one dissenter) that criminal law could not credibly intervene in the private sexual affairs of consenting adults in the privacy of their homes. The position was summarized by the committee as follows: “unless a deliberate attempt be made by society through the agency of the law to equate the sphere of crime with that of sin, there must remain a realm of private that is in brief, not the law’s business” (Wolfenden Report, 1957).

There was no political impetus after the publication of the Wolfenden report to legislate on this matter; however, by 1967 the Labour Government of the time showed support for Arran’s mode of liberal thought. It was widely viewed that criminal law should not further penalise homosexual men for their fixed disposition, already the object of ridicule and derision. The comments of Roy Jenkins, Home Secretary at the time, captured the government’s attitude: “those who suffer from this disability carry a great weight of shame all their lives” (quoted during parliamentary debate by *The Times* on July 4th, 1967).

The Bill received royal assent on July 28th, 1967 after an intense late night debate in the House of Commons.

Lord Arran, in an attempt to minimise criticisms that the legislation would lead to further public debate and visibility of issues relating to homosexual civil rights made the following qualification to this ‘historic’ milestone: “I ask those [homosexuals] to show their thanks by comporting themselves quietly and with dignity... any form of ostentatious behavior now or in the future or any form of public flaunting would be utterly distasteful... [And] make the sponsors of this bill regret that they had done what they had done” (quoted during Royal Assent of the bill by *The Times* newspaper on July 28th, 1967). The legal consequence of the legislation is often described as partial decriminalization of male homosexuality as the act introduced a strict exemption from prosecution (distinct from a full decriminalization) the implication of this being that outside this exemption, homosexuality continued to be a punishable offence in and of itself.

## OTHER THEMES TO LOOK FOR

- Fetish culture (paranoia, inability to control, possibly universal)
- Protection of sacred space, both physical (a graveyard) and cultural (“innocent” youth)
- Desire (romantic, celebrity, employment, etc.)
- Doubt vs. “faith” (certainty)

# BEFORE YOU SEE THE SHOW

Here are some other resources we recommend you check out. Some are strictly dramaturgical/biographical in nature, others are Epstein's and Orton's actual work and should help you understand them as artists. Thanks for skimming the guide, and we look forward to seeing you at the show!

## **Books**

The Complete Plays: The Ruffian on the Stair, Entertaining Mr. Sloan, The Good and Faithful Servant, Loot, The Erpingham Camp, Funeral Games, What the Butler Saw  
by Joe Orton (c. 1994)

Prick Up Your Ears: The Biography of Joe Orton  
by John Lahr (c. 2000)

A Cellarful of Noise  
by Brian Epstein and Martin Lewis (c. 1964)

In My Life: The Brian Epstein Story  
by Debbie Geller and Anthony Wall (c. 2002)

The Orton Diaries  
by Joe Orton (c. 1986)

## **Music**

Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band  
by The Beatles (c. 1967)

## **Film**

The Unseen Beatles  
by Warner Bros. (c 2007)

Help!  
directed by Richard Lester (c. 1965)

A Hard Day's Night  
directed by Richard Lester (c. 1964)

Prick Up Your Ears  
directed by Stephen Frears (c. 1987)

Entertaining Mr. Sloane  
directed by Douglas Hickox (c. 1970)