

PROSCENIUM

Speaking in Tongues

By Andrew Bovell

Speaking in Tongues

Wednesday 5 to Saturday 8 June 2024
Compass Theatre, Ickenham

Speaking in Tongues

Cast

Leon (Sonja's husband)	Aaron Rice
Sonja (Leon's wife)	Mary-Anne Anaradoh
Jane (Pete's wife, Nick's neighbour)	Sam Mistry
Pete (Jane's husband, Nick's neighbour)	Phil Stewart
Valerie (John's wife, Sarah's therapist)	Shirley Wootten
Sarah (Valerie's client, Neil's ex-girlfriend)	Geraldine Lynch
Nick (Jane and Pete's neighbour)	Nishchal Patel
Neil (Sarah's ex-boyfriend)	Simon McGovern
John (Valerie's husband)	Mark Sutherland

Creative Team

Directed by	Janet Harrison
Stage Managers	Roger Knight, Zena Wigram
Assistant Stage Manager / Rehearsal Prompt	Crystal Anthony
Lighting Design / Lighting Operation	Helene Smith
Sound Compilation / Recording	Mark Sutherland
Sound Operation	Paul Davies

With thanks to Rickmansworth Players, East Lane Theatre,
Richard Kessel, Paul Kessel and Keith Cochrane.

Part One

Two Bars. The city.

Two Rooms. Cheap. Spartan. Faded.

SONJA and LEON's place and JANE and PETE's place. Later that night.

A Bar. A few days later.

A Bar. The same night.

LEON and SONJA's house. A few days later.

JANE and PETE's house.

SONJA and LEON's place. JANE and PETE's place.

Interval

Part Two

NEIL is writing a letter to a past lover.

SARAH is speaking to her therapist.

VALERIE is calling her husband from a phone box on an isolated road.

NICK is sitting in a police interview room.

Part Three

VALERIE and JOHN's house.

VALERIE's office.

Director's Note

Speaking in Tongues captured my attention on first reading. I discovered it over 20 years ago and thought about directing it but put it aside for another time. It was several years before I was drawn once again to delve into its pages.

Andrew Bovell's unique structuring of both text and plot have always intrigued me. The themes explored are engaging, unsettling and challenging. His dialogue and staging invite comparison between individuals and couples; contrast attitudes towards love, infidelity, honesty. It is a play that could be staged in a myriad of ways.

I hope that our production will absorb, entertain, pose questions and challenge our audiences.

Janet Harrison

Andrew Bovell

Andrew Bovell is an Australian writer for theatre, film and television.

Bovell was born on 23 November 1962 in Kalgoorlie, Western Australia and completed his secondary school education in Perth. He graduated from the University of Western Australia with a BA and followed that with a Diploma in Dramatic Arts at the Victorian College of Arts, in Melbourne.

His AWGIE (Australian Writers Guild) award-winning play, *Speaking in Tongues* (1996) has been seen throughout Australia as well as in Europe and the US and Bovell adapted it for the screen as *Lantana* (2001). Both the play and screenplay have been published by Currency Press along with *After Dinner* (1988), *Holy Day* (2001), *Scenes from a Separation* (written with Hannie Rayson) (1995) and *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* (1998), written with Patricia Cornelius, Melissa Reeves, Christos Tsiolkas and Irene Vela. *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* was adapted to film as *Blessed*.

In 2010, a production of *When the Rain Stops Falling* opened in New York. *The New York Times* reviewed the play describing it as "a fitfully moving but diagrammatic play about the long legacy of unnatural acts" and commenting that "the relationships eventually emerge with an emotional clarity that the play's elliptical structure works against".

Bovell's film credits include *Lantana* (2001) and *Blessed* (2009) as mentioned above. Bovell also co-wrote the screenplay for *Strictly Ballroom* (1992) with Baz Luhrmann and Craig Pearce and *Head On* (1998) with Mira Robertson and Ana Kokkinos. His other film credits include *Edge of Darkness* (2010) starring Mel Gibson, *The Book of Revelation* (2006) and *Iris* (2016). He wrote the thriller film *A Most Wanted Man*, directed by Anton Corbijn, based on the novel *A Most Wanted Man* by John le Carré.

Speaking in Tongues was first performed in August 1996 in a production by Griffin Theatre Company at The Stables, Sydney, Australia. The play was first performed in the UK at Hampstead Theatre, London, in June 2000, and was revived at the Duke of York's Theatre in the West End in September 2009.

Andrew Bovell - Speaking

“I am still surprised that I am a writer. I never had any great expectation about what would happen in my life. I always have a curiosity about what it means to be a human, and for some reason, I am good at empathizing...every time you write, you must risk something. Active writing needs active courage, not just the way you see the world, but to risk the condemnation of an audience...I am a private person, but when I am writing I am investing a depth of sensibility”.

“The art of creating characters is about creating somebody who yearns for something, or someone questioning the nature of life. As a storyteller, I put obstacles in their paths because that is life”.

“I was sitting in the theatre, and I heard people laughing that got more uproarious as my play [*After Dinner*] moved. One person even fell on the aisle, and that made me think that I can do this through my writing...you know that your work has an impact on people”.

The Asian Age, November 19th 2019

“I find a greater sense of freedom writing for the stage. Most of the work I do as a writer now involves writing for the screen, but I continue to return to the stage. This is where I learnt my craft as a writer. I love discovering a character and the way they speak and think in the form of a play and without the tight formal restrictions that film and TV writing can require. This is where I write most of my original work and feel that I can take more risks.”

“There's a line I often use. You spend half your life trying to escape your family and if you ever do you spend the rest of it trying to find your way back.”

Broadway World, August 8th 2022

“The [lines in *Speaking in Tongues*] are structured very carefully and very precisely, like a piece of music, and when it works it almost sounds like music...it has an energy and momentum and it can be a really stunning way to open a play before it settles back into more traditional storytelling form...I love playing with coincidence and time”.

Speaking in Tongues owes its odd structure to its start back in Sydney in 1996, where Bovell was commissioned to add a third piece to two unrelated short plays to create a single evening's entertainment. “Rather than have three separate plays, I just had a glimpse at the possibility that these three could be

connected in some way," he said. "The idea of unexpected connection has been a theme in a lot of my work. So, rather than three independent works, I found a way to bring all the characters into the same world."

Globe and Mail, November 4th 2012

Andrew Bovell on Speaking in Tongues

"[*Speaking in Tongues*] had a number of starting points: the glimpse of a woman's shoe discarded at the side of the road, a man writing a letter to an ex-lover, a series of messages left on an answering machine, a middle-aged man breaking down and weeping, a pair of brown brogues left at the edge of the water, and so on. From each image or moment witnessed a story began to unfold, and slowly connections between them began to emerge. Each of these stories seemed to be about love and loss, with the possibility of something untoward having taken place. In the play a series of mysteries emerge, each of which acts as a catalyst for the witness to reflect back on their own life. As these stories are told and retold, the play becomes like a series of concentric circles reverberating out from the centre...the classic stone dropped into a still pond."

"People say it's filmic, but I've never seen a film like *Speaking in Tongues*. I think it's very theatrical and it uses what the theatre does really well, the manipulation of time, repetition, juxtaposition, lateral and backward movement of narrative. In terms of genre...well, it's a drama but it is drawing on some noir elements and elements of mystery...the motel rooms, the bars, infidelity, a missing woman, a detective trying to find the answers, but it's also about some pretty poignant and ordinary moments."

"...It definitely examines the idea of trust in a number of different situations. But I didn't set out to write a play that did that. That's what I discovered in writing it. Whilst the characters are struggling to communicate with those with whom they are intimate, they are discovering these moments of honesty with people who are strangers to them."

*(from an interview with Elaine Peake
in the programme for the 2009 production of
Speaking in Tongues, Duke of York's Theatre, London)*



HANSARD

by Simon Williams



Performances:

Wed 24th, Thurs 25th, Fri 26th
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Matinees: Sat 27th & Sun 28th @ 3.00pm

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Our Next Production

Pack of Lies

By Hugh Whitemore

Bob and Barbara Jackson, and their daughter Julie, are friendly with their neighbours, the Krogers. All is well until Scotland Yard chooses the Jackson's Ruislip house as a base to observe a couple of suspected Soviet spies.

Hugh Whitemore's intriguing play, presented by Proscenium, is based on the Portland Spy Ring case of the early 1960s, and asks whether we should trust demanding government officials, our neighbours, or even our parents?

Directed by Crystal Anthony

Wednesday 6 to Saturday 9 November 2024, 7.45 pm

Compass Theatre, Ickenham

Box Office : 01895 250 615

About Proscenium

Proscenium was founded in 1924. Since then, the aim of this experienced group has been to present classic and contemporary plays to as wide an audience as possible. Since 1990, performances have taken place at the Harrow Arts Centre and, more recently, at the Compass Theatre, Ickenham.

The company meets three times a week in Harrow for rehearsals, so that up to four plays are presented in each season. Social, fund-raising activities and play readings take place throughout the year.

Secretary : Marion Chamberlain

Chair : Mike Williams

Contact us at www.proscenium.org.uk