

BACKSTORY



BY ALAN BENNETT

THE HISTORY BOYS



Your behind-the-scenes look at TimeLine productions

YESTERDAY'S STORIES.
TODAY'S TOPICS.

TimeLine
Theatre Company

a message



Dear Friends,

TimeLine is thrilled to conclude its 12th season with the Chicago premiere of Alan Bennett's *The History Boys*. This play took London by storm in 2004, and it turned into an international sensation, picking up more than 30 major awards. Since announcing *The History Boys* more than a year ago, we have received more inquiries, responses, e-mails and phone calls about this play than for any of our previous 37 productions. So, after a year of anticipation, I'm happy to finally bring this insightful and hilarious play to Chicago and to TimeLine's stage.

Bennett's play gets to the heart of TimeLine's mission of exploring history. While none of his characters are based on actual figures and the plot points aren't necessarily moments of historical import, his play asks us to consider our role in history—what we have to gain by examining the past and how we personally and collectively connect

to it. Is it merely to collect facts and be able to speak with an air of authority at opportune times—to be a part of the intellectual elite? Or is there a more profound and vital necessity for us to understand the past in order to better cope with the present?

These are the questions upon which TimeLine was founded and the ones we grapple with every time we select a play and present it to you.

Bennett also exhibits contrasting philosophies of how and why we study history, the generational and ideological clashes between teaching methods and the obligatory testing and benchmarks that rule places of learning.

And then there's sex. In *The History Boys*, perhaps the greatest engine driving teenage boys' psyches—their sexual awakening—is juxtaposed with the closeted (or not) desires of teachers who see what has passed them by through the eyes of their pupils.

Along the way Bennett has dotted his script with enough quotations of poetry and literary references to give even the best educated among us a

mental workout for a couple of hours.

Yet, fear not, those of you who (like me) snoozed through history classes in school and couldn't recite A.E. Housman or Thomas Hardy off the top of your head even if paid handsomely. At its core, *The History Boys* is a deeply personal play. It's less about distant figures from history and more about how we learn about ourselves through their stories: How we grow up, fall in love with wrong things or wrong people, lose our way but figure it all out later in life, have an "a-ha" moment when least expected, are inspired by a mentor who changes our life's course and find beauty and insight by looking back at where we've been.

To present this dynamic and complex play, TimeLine has assembled a stellar team comprised of accomplished veterans as well as some new faces in the Chicago theater community, talented young actors we expect you'll be seeing for many years to come.

One of the hallmarks of TimeLine is the ability to reconfigure the theater to best fit the needs of each show. For *The History Boys*, we are proud to show the

At its core, *The History Boys* is a deeply personal play. It's less about distant figures from history and more about how we learn about ourselves through their stories.

theater in a new light. Gone is the normal separation delineating the lobby from the theater. Director Nick Bowling and his design team have created a comprehensive world that uses every inch of space.

Perhaps most exciting for you as an audience member, we also are thrilled to unveil new audience seating sections and seats, dramatically improving our ability to reconfigure the space and provide audience comfort. This project has been a long time in the making, and it couldn't have happened without all of you who loyally purchase tickets and subscriptions and make financial contributions to support TimeLine's work. It is your support that has allowed us to grow and to finish 11 consecutive seasons with a balanced budget—a streak we're eager to keep going, with your help!

It is my greatest honor and privilege to be artistic

director of TimeLine and, especially in times like these, I am grateful that you support provocative work like *The History Boys*. With each passing week we read sobering news about theaters around the country facing tough decisions and cutting programming and staff and, in some cases, closing their doors. Such news gives us pause, and it bolsters our connection with you and our commitment to TimeLine's mission.

Recently, as we discussed potential plays for the 2009-10 season, the company grappled with many questions, including: How will we deal with the financial challenges all organizations are facing? What plays should we—can we—produce? While TimeLine always has exhibited consistent growth and operated from a position of fiscal strength, we certainly aren't escaping this downturn unaffected. But with a deep commitment to our mission,

a comprehensive business plan and the steadfast support of people like you, who want to see TimeLine thrive, we have planned an ambitious season filled with the provocative theater you've come to expect from us.

We want TimeLine to continue to be a place where you come to see innovative, moving theater and also join in a dialogue about how each of us has a role in history. One new way to be a part of the conversation is with our recently launched blog, "Behind the 'Line." We hope you'll visit it often and find it a valuable resource that deepens your knowledge and understanding of each play.

I am delighted to welcome you to Alan Bennett's *The History Boys*, and I look forward to sharing a thrilling (and prosperous) 2009-10 season with you.

Best,

Alan Bennett was born May 9, 1934, in Leeds, Yorkshire. He attended Leeds Modern School. In 1957 he graduated from Exeter College, Oxford University with a first-class degree in medieval history. He made his stage debut in *Beyond the Fringe* at the 1959 Edinburgh Festival. He was a junior lecturer in history at Magdalen College, Oxford from 1960-1962.

Bennett's career includes acting, writing and directing as well as television and radio broadcasting. Like his favored poet, Philip Larkin, Bennett is bespectacled, unassuming and avuncular—and interested in what lies beneath the surface appearances in the lives of ordinary people.

His writing career, which encompasses film, television and stage, began when he collaborated with Peter Cook, Dudley Moore and Jonathan Miller, to write the satirical review *Beyond the Fringe*, which debuted at the Edinburgh Festival in 1959 and had a successful run in London's West End.

Although Bennett has regularly performed as an actor, he is best known for his writing. He wrote for numerous television

programs, often adapting successful stage work for television broadcasts. His television writing includes: *Me! I'm Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (1978) and *An Englishman Abroad* (1983). He wrote two series of monologues: *Talking Heads* and *Talking Heads II* (1987 and 1998, respectively).

His plays include *Forty Years On* (1968), *Getting On* (1971), *Habeas Corpus* (1973), *The Old Country* (1977), *Enjoy* (1980), *Kafka's Dick* (1986), *A Visit from Miss Prothero* (1987), *Single Spies* (1988), *The Wind in the Willows* (1990), an adaptation of Kenneth Grahame's children's book (Bennett also voiced Mr. Mole for a 1996 animated version of the story), and *The Lady in the Van* (1999).

Prior to *The History Boys*, Bennett was perhaps best known in the United States for his play *The Madness of George III*, which he adapted into the Oscar-nominated screenplay for *The Madness of King George*

“I have no nostalgia for my Oxford days at all and am happy never to have to sit an examination again.”

— Alan Bennett, in his preface to the published script of *The History Boys*



Alan Bennett, circa 2005. (Photo by Hugo Glendinning)

(1994). In 1995, he hosted a series on Westminster Abbey for the BBC. In addition to his television and film work, he has written essays and autobiographical sketches published in the volumes, *Untold Stories* (2007) and *Writing Home* (2003). His most recent work is *The Uncommon Reader* (2007) a novella in which Queen Elizabeth II is aided by a kitchen boy, Norman, in a late-discovered passion for reading.

The History Boys premiered at the National Theatre's Lyttelton Theatre in London in May 2004 and played to sold-out audiences for an extended run. It toured to Hong Kong, New Zealand and Sydney, Australia in 2006. The play premiered on Broadway in April 2006. The play has received more than 30 major awards, including Britain's Olivier Award for Best New Play in 2005 and six Tony Awards, including Best Play in 2006.



Theater poster featuring members of the original cast of Alan Bennett's *The History Boys*.

A slippery thing

the history

The history in *The History Boys* is a slippery thing. Set in the 1980s, it is a play about history although not necessarily about a specific historical event. The subject is eminently suited to the medium of theater. A play, like history, lives for a moment and then is gone, only to be remembered in the minds of the witnesses and their accounts. *The History Boys* has sudden shifts in time and verb tense: A boy who may be 17 in one scene

suddenly seems to be a man of 30 remembering his past.

In addition to the use of memory and personal account—the tools of history—in the structure of the play, *The History Boys* also thematically deals with how history is taught and how it is used. The three instructors provide a striking difference in approach: Lintott's facts, Hector's poetry and humanism and Irwin's practical (or even cynical) expedience.

TIMELINE: The 1980s

- **1979-1990** Margaret Thatcher serves as prime minister of England for the Tory (Conservative) Party; she is the first woman elected to this post.
- **1980** John Lennon is murdered.
- **1980** The Rubik's Cube becomes wildly popular.
- **1981** Rupert Murdoch buys the London newspapers *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*.
- **1981** Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer are married.
- **1981** There are assassination attempts on President Ronald Reagan and Pope John Paul II.
- **1982** Argentina invades the Falkland Islands; in April, Thatcher sends troops to reclaim the islands and, by June, they are successful.
- **1982** The movies *E.T.* and *This Is Spinal Tap* are released, Michael Frayn's play *Noises Off* opens, and Michael Jackson's "Thriller" album comes out.
- **1983** President Reagan announces the U.S. defense plan known as "Star Wars."
- **1984** The National Union of Mineworkers starts a year-long coal strike in England; Thatcher, though, has stockpiled coal, and the miners (many live in northern England) are ultimately forced to return to work without concessions.
- **1984** The Irish Republican Army plants two bombs at the Grand Hotel in Brighton, England, during the Conservative Party Meeting; no one is injured.

the schools

The British education system is very different than the United States'.

There are public schools—the equivalent of our private schools—where students are selectively admitted and pay for their education. The names of the most elite schools, like Eton, Harrow and Rugby, may be familiar to Americans. These schools originally developed as a place the gentry could send their children to be educated; some are boarding schools, some accept day pupils.

The other type of school is the grammar school. They were founded by and supported by the nearest church “for the education of the poor.” Many are still attached to a specific church. After the Reformation these churches all would have been Anglican.



Unlike the United States, there has never been a separation of church and state in the education system, and students may have classes in religion. In general, grammar schools now are financially supported by the government (although some may have endowments raised by past pupils). By the 1980s, the time period in which the play is set, most schools had accepted state funding

and were open to all levels of students without payment, and as such followed a national curriculum. The schools also have reputations, and those with successful alumnae are viewed more favorably.

The school in *The History Boys* is a grammar school.

The students in the play are in the Sixth Form, which is two years of additional schooling for students preparing to go on to university.

Upon completion of their education, at age 16, students take examinations in multiple subjects. Students in the Sixth Form are expected to score well on these exams, called the

General Certificate of Secondary Education, or GCSE. Sixth Form students spend two years studying for their General Certificate Advance Level examinations, commonly called A-levels. Like the GCSEs, the A-level exams are in specific disciplines such as math,

physics, history, general studies, critical thinking and languages. A minimum of three A-levels is required by most universities, but most students take more. Universities give students a place based on their scores and the subjects they have chosen.



Oxbridge

Oxbridge is the collective term used to refer to Oxford and Cambridge, the oldest and most elite of England's universities. The institutions are structured differently than American universities: each is a group of affiliated colleges with their own histories, traditions and founders. A college may be known for its strength in certain subjects, but the colleges are not discipline specific, and students may take courses across the university. In addition to their high A-level scores, students seeking admittance to Oxford or Cambridge take a special admission examination and are interviewed by members of the specific college to which they are applying.

- **1984** An all-star group of musicians record together as “Band Aid” to raise money for famine relief in Africa.
- **1985** The British Antarctic Survey discovers a hole in the ozone.
- **1985** Mikhail Gorbachev is elected general secretary of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union; he quickly calls for greater openness both within the Soviet Union and the world community as well as new economic policies under the terms *glasnost* and *perestroika*.
- **1986** The space shuttle Challenger explodes, killing the seven crew members.
- **1986** The Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident occurs in the Ukraine; it still is considered the worst nuclear power plant accident in history.
- **1987** *Talking Heads*, a series of monologues by Alan Bennett, airs on the BBC.
- **1987** “Black Monday” occurs; on October 19, the Dow Jones Average drops 22.6 percent.
- **1988** Thatcher proposes a Community Charge, a fixed individual tax to fund local government, which is tremendously unpopular; she ultimately will be ousted by her party and John Major will become prime minister.
- **1988** Stephen Hawking, the British theoretical physicist, publishes *A Brief History of Time*.
- **1988** Pan Am Flight 103 explodes over Lockerbie, Scotland, destroyed by a bomb; 270 people die, 259 on the plane and 11 on the ground.

Images of Oxford University (clockwise from above): Christ Church; Radcliffe Camera; detail of architecture. Photos by Maren Robinson.



Margaret Thatcher's Britain the politics

Margaret Thatcher was elected prime minister in 1979, the first woman to hold this post.

Even before her election she was a polarizing figure in British politics. As secretary of state for education and science, she eliminated free milk in schools as part of a budget cut; for this, she was branded by *The Sun* as “Maggie Thatcher, milk snatcher.” She, though, preferred the “Iron Lady,” the nickname given to her by the Soviet newspaper *The Red Star* after a 1976 speech on the policies of the Soviet Union.

Thatcher is best known for the war in the Falkland Islands, the National Union of Mineworkers’ Strike, her close Cold War relationship with the United States and being ousted by her own party in 1990.

On April 2, 1982, Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands. Thatcher sent the British Navy to the islands; 11 weeks later Argentina surrendered. National outrage at the invasion and satisfaction at the successful conclusion of the war would contribute to her landslide reelection in 1983.

In 1984, the National Union of Mineworkers started

“I’m extraordinarily patient, provided I get my own way.”

— *Margaret Thatcher*



Margaret Thatcher.

what would become a yearlong strike. Thatcher was committed to reducing union power and stockpiled coal before the strike. Consequently, electric power was not disrupted during the strike, and the miners ultimately were forced to return to work without gaining any concessions.

Thatcher’s fall from power was the result of the 1988 Community Charge, a tax levied to fund local governments. Essentially a tiered poll tax (a fixed tax on a per-individual basis), it took effect in 1990. The tax was highly unpopular, and the Conservative Party feared certain defeat in the next election if Thatcher

remained its leader. She resigned Nov. 22, 1990.

Thatcher took a particular interest in the British university system. In 1980 funding was slashed and many academics were asked to resign. The 1988 Education Reform Act put further pressure on universities, which Thatcher had accused of “pushing out poison.” Thatcher’s secretary of state for education and science, Keith Joseph, had argued in his 1985 “White Paper” on higher education the need to “bring higher-education institutions closer to the world of business.” Two provisions of this centralization of educational policy were that schools wanting government funding had to commit to the introduction of a national curriculum and the publication of “league tables,” a comparison of school examination results.

Thatcherism, as her policies came to be known, was defined by a strong but small central government, a weakened role for regional

government, weakened trade unions, promotion of private enterprise, privatization of government-owned companies, dismantling of welfare programs and strong nationalism. She viewed her policies as an overdue correction of the Labour and Social Democratic plans that had expanded government.

Thatcherism also was marked by a strong sense of ideology as the driving factor in her policy decisions. This ideology was one she shared on almost every point with President Ronald Reagan, with whom she shared an incredibly close working relationship. The term also refers to her autocratic governing style.

- **1989** 96 are killed at the football match between Liverpool FC and Nottingham Forest FC in Sheffield when Liverpool supporters are crushed into a retaining fence; the tragedy, known as the Hillsborough Disaster, occurs just before the start of the semifinal game for the Football Association Challenge Cup (commonly called the FA Cup) as fans rush to get into the stadium.
- **1989** The Berlin Wall falls.
- **1989** Student protestors in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, China, are massacred.

Special Events and Resources

the conversation

At TimeLine we look forward to the chance to engage our audience in conversations inspired by our productions. We hope you will participate in our special events and check out the array of additional resources and online communities available during the run of *The History Boys*.

Sunday Scholars Series

After the show on **Sunday, May 10** is our Sunday Scholars Series, a one-hour panel discussion featuring experts talking about the themes and issues of the play. Moderated by TimeLine Board member Peter H. Kuntz, **admission to this event is free.** Visit our Web site at timelinetheatre.com to learn more.

Company Member Discussion

The heart of TimeLine is our Company members, who shape the artistic vision and choose programming for the organization. On **Sunday, May 31**, join them for a free post-show discussion about how *The History Boys* came to TimeLine’s stage.

Post-Show Discussions

On **Thursdays, April 30, May 7 and 14; Sundays, May 17 and 24; and Wednesday, June 3**, stay for free post-show discussions moderated by a TimeLine Company member and featuring members of the production staff and cast.

Dramaturgy

A **study guide** and much more is available online at timelinetheatre.com.

Blog and more!

Visit our new blog, “**Behind the ‘Line,**” for behind-the-scenes insight and conversation with TimeLine artists, Company members, staff and others. The blog can be found via links at our Web site.



And now you can become a fan on Facebook (public profile: **TimeLine Theatre Company**) and follow us on Twitter (**@timelinetheatre**) for all the latest news!

Larkin, Owen, Sassoon, Housman and more the poets

The *History Boys* is full of quotations and references to poets, plays, historical events and films. These are a few of the major poets and poems mentioned in the play. Find other poets and much more in our full study guide, available at Timeline's Web site: timelinetheatre.com/the_history_boys/HistoryBoys_StudyGuide.pdf.

PHILIP LARKIN
(1922 – 1985)

"I think writing about unhappiness is probably the source of my popularity, if I have any — after all, most people are unhappy, don't you think?"

*Never such innocence,
Never before or since,
As changed itself to past
Without a word — the men
Leaving the gardens tidy,
The thousands of marriages
Lasting a little while longer:
Never such innocence again.*

— from "MCMXIV"

Like Bennett, Philip Larkin was born in northern England. He attended St. John's College, Oxford, and graduated with first-class honors in English Language and Literature. He wrote poetry at Oxford and throughout his life. He was a librarian at several universities before becoming the librarian at the University of Hull. He also wrote reviews of jazz for various periodicals. His poetry is known for its formal structure, but his subjects are real, accessible, sometimes unpleasant and raw.

WILFRED OWEN (1893-1918)

*If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie; Dulce et Decorum est
Pro patria mori.*

— From "Dulce et Decorum Est" (The Latin is from an ode by Horace; it translates as "It is sweet and right to die for one's country")



Wilfred Owen.

After failing to be admitted to the University of London, Wilfred Owen taught English at the Berlitz school in Bordeaux, France. There he saw the magnitude of the build up to World War I. He returned to England and enlisted in September 1915. His regiment was posted to France in January 1917, and at one point it was ordered to hold a flooded trench in no man's land; they were bombarded for 50 hours before they received reinforcements. Injured in a shell explosion, he was diagnosed as having neurasthenia, or "shell shock," and evacuated to Craiglockhart War Hospital in Edinburgh, Scotland. While there, he wrote much of his poetry and was mentored by Siegfried Sassoon, a more well-known poet, who offered to look at his poetry. Owen returned to his regiment in 1918. He was killed Nov. 4, while attempting to lead his troops across the Sambre Canal at Ors in northern France, seven days prior to the armistice that ended the war.

SIEGFRIED SASSOON (1886 – 1967)

*I knew a simple soldier boy
Who grinned at life in empty joy,
Slept soundly through the lonesome dark,
And whistled early with the lark.*

*In winter trenches, cowed and glum,
With crumps and lice and lack of rum,
He put a bullet through his brain.
No one spoke of him again.*

*You smug-faced crowds with kindling eye
Who cheer when soldier lads march by,
Sneak home and pray you'll never know
The hell where youth and laughter go.*

— "Suicide in the Trenches"

Siegfried Sassoon was the son of a wealthy Jewish father and an Anglo-Catholic mother. He studied law and history at Clare College, Cambridge, but dropped out and spent his time hunting and writing poetry before entering military service during World War I. He earned the nickname "Mad Jack" from his regiment for his near-suicidal exploits, which were in part prompted by the death of his brother, Hamo, and his fellow officer David Thomas. In his anger at the progress of the war, he went public with his protest against it and the politicians in power. His friend and fellow poet Robert Graves convinced military superiors he was suffering from "shell shock," and he was sent to Craiglockhart War Hospital instead of a court martial. Sassoon was older and an established poet and of a higher social class than Owen, whom he mentored and introduced to other poets at the hospital. He survived the war and spent many years reflecting on it in his writing. His later poetry was religious and he ultimately converted to Roman Catholicism. These poems are in sharp contrast to the angry, satiric criticism found in his war pieces.



Siegfried Sassoon.

A.E. HOUSMAN
(1859 – 1936)

*There, like the wind through
woods in riot,*

*Through him the gale of
life blew high;*

*The tree of man was never
quiet:*

*Then 'twas the Roman,
now 'tis I.*

*The gale, it plies the saplings
double,*

*It blows so hard, 'twill soon
be gone:*

*To-day the Roman and his
trouble*

Are ashes under Uricon.

— "Poem XXXI" from
A Shropshire Lad

Alfred Edward Housman is known as one of the best poets of the British countryside. He was educated at St. John's College, Oxford, and ultimately became a professor of Latin, first at University College, London, then at Cambridge. His style combines his knowledge of the classical ode and the English ballad tradition. His first volume of poetry, *A Shropshire Lad*, made him well known before World War I started. Though his poems often focus on the landscape, they are often written in the various voices of young men and their concerns and frustrations as they wander in that landscape.

TimeLine Artistic Director PJ Powers (PJP) interviews actor Donald Brearley (DB), who makes his TimeLine debut in the pivotal role of Hector in *The History Boys*.

(PJP) Throughout your impressive career you've worked with a wide range of theater companies around Chicago. How did you first break in to the Chicago theater scene and what's kept you here?

(DB) I graduated mid-year in 1976 and along with other University of Illinois graduates remounted a production of Michael Weller's *Moonchildren*. It was produced by cast members Stuart Oken and Jason Brett and their company Apollo Productions, which eventually built the Apollo Theatre. It was directed here, as in Urbana, by Robert Falls.

Two years later, having gotten my union card, the growth of my resume slowed. By the time it had filled out, New York was a tougher move to make. My best opportunities were here with the Body Politic Theatre and so here's where I stayed.

(PJP) Tell me your first impression of *The History Boys*.

(DB) I was working at Writers' Theatre with Remy Bumpo artistic associate Nick Sandys, and he was touting its literacy and



theatricality. I'd been a huge fan of playwright Alan Bennett's *Kafka's Dick* and was struck by one of the common themes: bonds between individuals across time forged through the medium of culture.

(PJP) Looking back on your high school days, do you identify with any of the students in the play?

(DB) That's not so easy (it's a way back, you know), but probably Scripps. Because, in spite of my desire to perform, I took myself and the world fairly seriously. These students, by and large, are much more confident personally and precocious intellectually than I was.

(PJP) In all of TimeLine's 12 seasons and 38 productions, I can't think of any

role that people have inquired about more than Hector. I've had countless inquiries about who is playing the part. How does it feel to step into a role that carries so much attention?

(DB) Fine, until asked the question! The underlying question seems to be: What makes you think *you* can play the role? I think if you and director Nick Bowling had been looking for Richard Griffiths (who originated the role and earned a Tony Award), I would feel much more pressure.

I've gotten reasonably accustomed to my own envy of other actors and appreciate that it exists in others, too. I know, too, that TimeLine has a lot of expectations for this production, but they are being borne

by the whole team. And I'm sure Mr. Griffiths was more impressed by the opportunity to enjoy participating as Hector in the play than by worry that Mr. Bennett's creation needed more talent than he could supply.

(PJP) There's been an outpouring of affection for Hector. People gush about loving the character, yet he does many things that are not admirable. What's your response to that?

(DB) Well, perhaps it's a response to both Hector's love for his students and his need for love himself. Also, wit goes a long way; look at *Richard III*, for heaven's sake! At least Hector doesn't try to make the audience accomplices. I, myself, question Bennett's intention here. He does fairly blast Hector's self-justifications through Mrs. Lintott, but puts the sternest condemnation in the mouth of the Headmaster, a character whose credibility Bennett undercuts at every opportunity.

(PJP) You actually have a resume that seems like it was created from Hector's bookshelf—Shaw, Shakespeare, Stoppard. How did your work on those plays prep you to step into Hector's literary mind?

(DB) It might be well to say the "literary heart" of Hector, too. Those writers, first of all, create characters who are poets themselves, in that they are grappling with personal experiences or views of life and the world, and they need to express their struggles in words. Many playwrights do this, and the ones who stay with us are the ones whose characters express themselves "memorably."

But another aspect of these characters is as passionate defenders of truth, whether they are fighting to keep it hidden, as Claudius is in *Hamlet*, or slavishly serving the idol of his own suffering, as is Donner in Stoppard's *Artist Descending a Staircase*. And all of these characters express their struggles aware of the sufferings of others. They acknowledge a "literature" they have tried to learn from, whether it's Claudius communing with the grief of his new subjects or being unable to make the church doctrines of redemption effective in his situation, or Richard II's identification with beggars "bearing their own misfortunes on the backs of such as have before endured the like."

I think this identification with the sufferings of his literary saints is not only a key to Hector's character, but also his view of the purpose of literature, and probably also for me, the purpose of drama.

There's a second way these writers have been important for me. The agility and strength of mind required, first to understand what their characters mean, and then to trace that meaning back to the soul's desire to express it, has challenged every actor who gets to work on them. And the study required of the usage of words and the necessity of understanding historical context—to then understand the character's response to his condition—is exactly what Hector seeks to impart and is the closest I've come to obtaining a literary education.

Finally there is the benefit of "basking in reflected glory." Hector's own attachment to the writers he teaches is like the satisfaction an actor gets from playing a good role. Both get to experience the pride and pleasure of impersonating the originator of these enduring expressions of the soul.



Clockwise from top left (all left to right): Performers Rebecca Finnegan, Bethany Thomas, Brandon Dahlquist and Danielle Brothers; Bob and Vanda Henderson, Toby Mack and Board member Marti DeGraaf; Robert Alpaugh, Kassie Davis and Bruce Beatus; TimeLine Artistic Director PJ Powers with Step Into Time Co-Chair Debbie Siegel; Colleen Loughlin and Board member John M. Sirek; Step Into Time Co-Chair Bobbie Schultz, Darlene and Roland Dehne and Vernon Schultz; and Dick and Sandy Manteuffel with Jim and Sue Colletti.

TimeLine's *Step Into Time: Wintergarten Varieté* benefit on Friday, March 27, 2009, raised a record-breaking \$75,000 in net proceeds to benefit the company. The event, held at Germania Place in Chicago's Gold Coast, was attended by nearly 200 supporters.

"We had a fantastic night of celebration," said TimeLine Artistic Director PJ Powers. "True to our mission, we transported our guests back into time and immersed them in the glitz and glamour of the cabarets of Berlin in the 1920s. And we were delighted and gratified to see that even in tough economic times, we received tremendous support to keep our work and our organization thriving."

Guests were entertained by piano and accordion music as they arrived, and later enjoyed a performance of songs inspired by Berlin cabaret.

The centerpiece of the evening was the premiere of a new video about TimeLine, featuring an inspiring compilation of artists, board members, staff and supporters talking about what the company's mission and programs mean to them.

Complete details about the evening, including a link to the video, are available at TimeLine's Web site: timelinetheatre.com/step_into_time_2009/recap.htm

Supporters of *Step Into Time: Wintergarten Varieté* included Humana, Inc., McCormick Foundation and Bank Financial. In-kind supporters included CAVCOMM Corporation, Drinks Over Dearborn and Goose Island. Our thanks to all!

Upcoming Donor Events

DONOR BREAKFAST

May 31, 2009

Guests are invited to join Artistic Director PJ Powers and Managing Director Elizabeth Auman as they discuss their vision for TimeLine Theatre. Pastries, juice and coffee will be served. Invitations are extended exclusively to donors giving \$500 or more.

Dates and programming are subject to change. Visit timelinetheatre.com for updated information, or call Lindsey Becker at (773) 281-8463 x26.

BACKSTORY: THE CREDITS

Dramaturgy @ Historical Research by Maren Robinson

Written by Maren Robinson, PJ Powers & Lara Goetsch

Edited by Karen A. Callaway & Lara Goetsch

Photography and Graphic Design by Lara Goetsch

The History Boys Photo by Ryan Robinson

Backstory is published four times each season.

Pictured on front cover (from left): Books to study; actors Behzad Dabu, Govind Kumar, Michael Peters and Rob Fenton with director Nick Bowling; actor Donald Brearley; actors Alex Weisman, Joel Gross and Will Allan; and actor Behzad Dabu.

Pictured on back cover (from left): Actor Ann Wakefield with a sketch by costume designer Lindsey Pate; director Nick Bowling and assistant director Bridget Dehl; actors Terry Hamilton and Andrew Carter; actor Govind Kumar; actor Brad Bukauskas; and actors Rob Fenton and Michael Peters.

Our Mission:

TimeLine Theatre presents stories **inspired by history** that connect with today's social and political issues.

Our collaborative artistic team produces provocative theatre that engages, educates, entertains and enlightens.



April 25 - June 21, 2009

previews 4/22 - 4/24

by **ALAN BENNETT**
 directed by **NICK BOWLING**

TimeLine presents the local premiere of this worldwide theatrical sensation. The recipient of more than 30 major awards, including Tony and Olivier awards for Best New Play, *The History Boys* follows a rambunctious group of clever young men as they pursue higher learning, games, sexual identity and a place at university under the guidance of three wildly different teachers and a headmaster obsessed with results. Set during the 1980s in northern England, it is a hilarious and provocative play about the anarchy of adolescence and the purpose of education — specifically, how history should be taught.

The Cast

Donald Brearley*: *Hector*
 Will Allan: *Scripps*
 Brad Bukauskas: *Timms*
 Andrew Carter: *Irwin*
 Behzad Dabu: *Akthar*

Rob Fenton: *Lockwood*
 Joel Gross: *Dakin*
 Terry Hamilton: *Headmaster*
 Govind Kumar: *Crowther*
 Michael Peters: *Rudge*
 Ann Wakefield: *Mrs. Lintott*
 Alex Weisman: *Posner*

* Member of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers.

The Production Team

Brian Sidney Bembridge, U.S.A.: *Scenic Designer*
 Lindsey Pate: *Costume Designer*
 Keith Parham: *Lighting Designer*
 Andrew Hansen: *Original Music @ Sound Designer*
 Mike Tutaj: *Projections Designer*
 Julia Eberhardt: *Properties Designer*
 Maren Robinson: *Dramaturg*
 Jo Ann Flores-Deter: *Stage Manager*
 James Ogden: *Production Manager*

Those designers and scenic artists identified by U.S.A. are members of United Scenic Artists, IATSE Local 829, AFL-CIO.

APRIL 2009

SU	M	T	W	TH	F	SA
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

MAY 2009

SU	M	T	W	TH	F	SA
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

JUNE 2009

SU	M	T	W	TH	F	SA
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21						

- Regular Performance
- Preview Performance
- Opening Night *Sold Out*
- Post-Show Discussion with cast & production crew *Free*
- Sunday Scholars a one-hour post-show panel discussion with experts on the themes and issues of the play *Free*
- Company Member Discussion a conversation with TimeLine's Company members *Free*

SHOW TIMES

PREVIEWS 8 PM
 OPENING NIGHT 7 PM
 WEDNESDAYS & THURSDAYS 7:30 PM
 FRIDAYS 8 PM
 SATURDAYS 4 PM & 8 PM
 SUNDAYS 2 PM