

Rose
Bruford
College

A Rose Bruford College production

Before (again)

by Steven Dykes

based on *I Have Been Here Before* by JB Priestley

bruford.ac.uk

#rbcATA



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based on *I Have Been Here Before* by JB Priestley

Director **Steven Dykes**
Set & Costume Designer **Sarah Duguid**
Lighting Designer **Jason Ahn**
Sound Designer **Seisha Butler**

Video Designer **Joshua Radford**
Video Designer **Sam Carver**
Assistant Director **Fletcher Meriweather**

Setting: The Shipley Inn, the Coast of Maine
Time: Now

Playwright's note

Before (again) is a radical reworking of JB Priestley's 1937 play *I Have Been Here Before*.

In Priestley's original the residents of a rural inn in Yorkshire are overwhelmed by a powerful sense of déjà vu, while an esoteric professor tries to ward off the repetition of a personal disaster. The work is classed as one of the author's 'time' plays, in which he explored the concept of Eternal Recurrence, inspired by the ideas of PD Ouspensky. We have taken this narrative as the stimulus for our production, which integrates live and recorded performance to bring the latest theatre technology to Priestley's dream-world. The Yorkshire Moors become the rocky Maine Coast and the traumatic aftermath of war, which Priestley sets in the inter-war years, for us is the legacy of the conflict in Iraq.

This idea of repetition... is not the full and absolute truth, but it is the nearest possible approximation of the truth... What is the use of a man knowing about recurrence if he is not conscious of it and if he himself does not change?... Knowledge about the repetition of lives will add nothing for a man... if he does not strive to change himself in order to escape this repetition. But if he changes something essential in himself, that is, if he attains something, this cannot be lost.

PD Ouspensky, quoting the mystic George Gurdjieff, *In Search of the Miraculous* (1950)

JB (John Boynton) Priestley was born in Bradford in 1894. Wounded several times on the Western Front in The Great War, he went on to study Modern History at Cambridge University and began his professional writing career as a theatre reviewer before his breakthrough novel, *The Good Companions*, was published in 1929. A highly successful playwright, his work includes *Dangerous Corner* (1932), *Time and the Conways* (1937) and *An Inspector Calls* (1947). During the Second World War it is estimated that 40 per cent of the adult population in Britain tuned into his Sunday evening broadcasts on BBC Radio. A committed socialist and prolific journalist, Priestley continued working until his death at ninety in 1984.

In the preface to *I Have Been Here Before*, Priestley's acknowledges his debt to Ouspensky's "astonishing" ideas, but notes "it does not follow because I make use of them that I necessarily accept them." A sentiment I would like to echo.

Steven Dykes, May 2022

Cast



Production Team

Production Manager **Ruby Scott**
Technical Manager **Billy Coates**
Stage Manager **Emily Dale**
Deputy Stage Manager **Jack Elston**
Assistant Stage Managers **Oscar Jolly**, **Amelia Seymour**
Head of Lighting/Programmer **Sam Jones**
Head of Video **Sam Blackmore**
Video Programmer **Toby Riding**

Production Electrician **Harvey Williams**
Costume Supervisor **Sanah Sacranie**
Costume Assistants **Sophie Laing**, **Fae Harding**
Scenic Artist **Holly Gardiner Fraser**
Scenic Construction **Graham Ironman**
Company Voice **James Aitken**
Company Movement **Phao Wheatley**

[Click on the headshots or names to access student profiles.](#)

A special thanks to Sound Stage Services for supplying the video hire for this show season