

## FACEBOOK TRIBUTES

### *SIR PETER HALL and PAUL ROGERS*

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**SIR PETER HALL. DEAD. AGE 86. TRULY ONE OF THE GIANTS OF THE BRITISH AND WORLD THEATRE AND OPERA.**

In the mid sixties I was in London observing rehearsals of Peter Brooks's controversial production, "US," at the Royal Shakespeare Company. Peter Hall had founded the R.S.C. and was then its guiding head. I did get to see the "*Hamlet*" that Peter Hall directed at Stratford, starring David Warner, as a kind of hippie Hamlet. What I remember so vividly was the opening setting: An enormous black military medieval cannon — fully taking up a third of the stage — with spikes around the opening of its barrel, and aimed out over the audience. The stage was dimly lit, and you knew it was damp because, I swear, the cannon was sweating—and menacing. That **IMAGE** somehow set the tone for a production of outstanding acting.

The Peter Hall production that influenced my playwriting life, however, was the Broadway production of Harold Pinter's, "*The Homecoming*." The play knocked me out—so clear, so specific, so detailed, but veiled with mystery and sex and a menacing poetry. The set, too, knocked me out—a high winding stairway (stage right), disappearing into the flies. The set for the rest of the house was one large room sparsely furnished. Real — but surreal, too. The actors were blocked in a very stylized way, but they so inhabited the characters and the rhythms of language, and made the blocking their own, that it all seemed so natural and real.

The magnificent cast of "The Homecoming," was led by Paul Rogers, playing the father. At the time, I was getting ready to have a cold reading of my play, "*Father Uxbridge Wants To Marry*," at the New Dramatists before it opened Off Broadway. I asked the ND casting director to try to get Paul Rogers to read the role of Morden in

***Uxbridge* (my modern version of the classic *Woyzeck*). She got him. When I asked Mr. Rogers if he had any questions about the *Uxbridge* text, he said: “Just one, darling: Are your dashes and ellipses and pauses like Harolds?” I said sure. And for the first time in my writing life, I began to explore punctuation and pauses in scoring a dramatic text. Mr. Rogers’ reading was memorable—hair raising—thrilling.**

**The last time I saw Paul Rogers, he was walking in Central Park and looking very troubled. He was in rehearsal for his first Broadway musical, “*Here’s Where I Belong*,” a musical version of John Steinbeck’s “*East Of Eden*.” I told him it was sure to be a hit. Alas. It wasn’t to be. In fact, It opened and closed on Broadway in one night. Paul Rogers, of course, got glowing notices for his acting—and for his singing.**

**Much to be said about the R.S.C. in my artistic life. For now R.I.P. Sir Peter Hall for creating and building one of the world’s great theater companies, and RIP Paul Rogers (died 2013—age 96).**

**<https://www.eveningexpress.co.uk/.../royal-shakespeare-compan...founder-sir-peter-hall-dies-aged-86/>**

**<https://www.theguardian.com/.../12/peter-hall-a-life-in-pictu...>**

**<http://www.nytimes.com/.../paul-rogers-wide-ranging-stage-act...>**

**Photos: Sir Peter Hall, Paul Rogers**

