

The American Drama Group Europe presents:

TNT Theatre Britain

## One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

Adapted from the novel by Ken Kesey.

Directed by Paul Stebbings

Original music by Paul Flush

The novel has been described as the finest literature to come out of America during the 1960's. Written at the start of that decade it explores and defines many of the themes that were to radically change America, and therefore the world. The Psychiatric Hospital becomes a metaphor for America and the industrial "Combine" who control the state. The asylum is ruled by Nurse Ratched with an iron fist and a patronising smile. At her disposal are an awesome array of instruments of control, including medical drugs, mindless music, electric shock therapy and emotional blackmail. Into this closed and ordered world where the refuse of society are locked away comes a rebel: McMurphy. He is an outsider, a petty criminal, gambler and womaniser. He may or may not be mentally disturbed but he is certainly disturbing. In Nurse Ratched he meets his match. They struggle for control of the inmates, McMurphy offers them freedom and personal responsibility as well as sensuality and sheer fun. The Nurse is determined that none of those things should degrade her ward. Ultimately she triumphs because the "Combine" is too powerful for one man to confront and destroy. It is McMurphy who is destroyed, as much by his own weaknesses as by the strength of others. He emerges in the book as a modern tragic hero, flawed and doomed but noble. And he releases the Chief, a deranged and terrified giant faking muteness who achieves self-realisation and escapes into another America, the Land of the Brave and Free.

The play follows the book rather than the film and uses the perspective of the Chief rather than solely McMurphy. The production combines physical theatre, specially composed music, comedy and tragedy to present this American Classic on the stage.

The production does not simplify the original but try and rescue its rich poetry and tragic complexity from the simplifications of the famous Hollywood version. (However excellent the film may be as cinema!) The play is directed by Paul Stebbings, who's recent work for the Company include *Romeo and Juliet*, *THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY* and *DON QUIJOTE*. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* was first presented by TNT in 2002 and was warmly received by audiences and critics across Europe.