



**THE ENGLISH THEATRE  
OF HAMBURG**

**presents**

# **GREAT EXPECTATIONS**

**ADAPTED BY PAUL GLASER  
FROM THE NOVEL BY CHARLES DICKENS**

**STUDY GUIDE**

Premiere on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022

Preview performances at reduced prices on 29<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup>, and 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022

Tuesday – Saturday	19:30
Sunday	14:30
Wednesday/Friday	11:30 (Matinee performances weekly alternating)

**THE ENGLISH THEATRE OF HAMBURG**

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**TICKETS**

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The English Theatre will premiere **GREAT EXPECTATIONS** (adapted and directed by Paul Glaser from the novel by Charles Dickens) on 1 September, 2022, with the usual preview performances at reduced prices on 29, 30 and 31 August. Bookings for this much-loved British classic have already started. See the cover of this study guide for dates and times of performances. Teachers who would like to preview the play before bringing a group of students to the theatre should contact [marketing@englishtheatre.de](mailto:marketing@englishtheatre.de)

### About the Paul Glaser

Paul Glaser has long been a sought-after stage director, composer and choreographer. He has directed in Germany, Sweden and in London's West End. Paul trained as a classical dancer at the Royal Swedish Ballet School in Stockholm where he also gained an education in music and drama. During his career he has performed on some of the most reputable stages in Europe, from the Royal Opera House in Stockholm to Theater des Westens in Berlin, and many more. He has also played numerous roles in film and television. As a composer, Paul has written music for Friedrichstadtpalast in Berlin, and has a long list of prominent corporate clients. He wrote and directed his first musical **PEGGY** in 2000 with rave reviews in the press. Since then, he has written and/or composed music for various musicals in Germany, among them **DAS GESPENST VON CANTERVILLE, RAPUNZEL, DAS PHANTOM VON OPA, VOM FISCHER AND SEINER FRAU**, and in London **BAMBI** and **MARY STEWART**. Paul is currently serving as Managing Director of the English Theatre of Hamburg, and is also a docent at the Musical Academy in Milan for Musical Theatre. Before joining the English Theatre of Hamburg on a permanent basis, he worked for the theatre as a freelancer in over 25 productions, functioning at times as Director, Musical Supervisor and Choreographer. He has recently directed numerous productions for the English Theatre of Hamburg, including **THRILL ME, MOONLIGHT AND MAGNOLIAS, APOLOGIA, THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY, THE WOMAN IN BLACK** and **THE 39 STEPS**.

### About the Charles Dickens

Charles Dickens (1812-1870) was a British author who wrote some of the most beloved novels in the English language, including **A CHRISTMAS CAROL, OLIVER TWIST, DAVID COPPERFIELD, A TALE OF TWO CITIES** and **GREAT EXPECTATIONS**. He was one of the most popular and influential writers of the 19th century, praised not only for the literary quality of his works, but also for portraying the era's lower class and helping to bring about social change. He was born in Portsmouth, England, into a poor family whose situation became even worse when his father was sent to prison for debt in 1827. As a result, Dickens had to drop out of school at the age of 15 and work as an office boy for a local newspaper to help support his mother and eight siblings. The job turned out to be the perfect place for launching his writing career. Within two years, he was penning articles for the paper. Later, in London, he edited various magazines in which most of his novels appeared in monthly instalments before being published as books. In 1836, he married Catherine Hogarth, with whom he had ten children. Throughout the marriage there were rumours of his affairs with other women, including a popular actress of the time. Dickens made two lecture tours to the United States, one in 1842 and the other in 1857. He was received warmly and with great acclaim on both occasions. After suffering a stroke, Charles Dickens died at the age of 58. He was put to rest in Poet's Corner at Westminster Abbey along with other literary greats.

### About the play

**GREAT EXPECTATIONS**, adapted for the stage by Paul Glaser, is based on the novel of the same title by Charles Dickens. The book was first published in serial form between December 1860 and August 1861,



and is widely considered Dickens' greatest literary achievement. At its core, **GREAT EXPECTATIONS** is a Bildungsroman, a German term often applied to a novel which portrays a youth's education and initiation into adult life. In this case, the youth is Pip, a poor village boy in Victorian England who struggles to rise above his humble origins and become an English gentleman.

In this adaptation for the stage, you will accompany the young Pip on his journey from adolescence to early manhood. Along the way, you will encounter a host of vivid characters who play an important role in shaping Pip's future. Among them are Pip's abusive older sister and her kindly blacksmith husband who have raised the orphaned Pip; a murderous convict who threatens Pip's life; the beautiful but cold Estella with whom Pip falls in love; the heartbroken and bitter Miss Havisham who, once jilted at the altar by her husband-to-be, still wears her wedding dress and veil; and a mysterious benefactor whose true identity turns out to be a profound shock for Pip. Major themes in the play are class, ambition and self-improvement. As Pip struggles to fulfil his dreams, he is faced with a moral dilemma: Is gaining a higher position and wealth in society more important than family, love and being a good person?

## SUMMARY

### Act 1

Setting: Victorian England. Various locations in Kent and London.

Pip is a poor village boy living with his older sister called Mrs. Joe and her blacksmith husband Joe Gargery. As the play opens, Pip is sitting alone in the church cemetery near the tombstones of his deceased parents. Suddenly, a fearful man with a large iron on his leg appears and grabs Pip. The man is Abel Magwick, a convict who has escaped from a prison ship docked nearby. He demands that Pip bring him some food and a file for removing the iron from his leg. If Pip doesn't obey him, Magwick threatens to find the boy and cut his throat. Scared to death, Pip rushes off to comply with the convict's demands.

Once home, Pip is reprimanded by Mrs. Joe for his absence. She reminds him of his debt to her for all the trouble she has had raising him. She then puts him to work helping her prepare for Christmas dinner tomorrow.

That night, Pip steals some food from Mrs. Joe's kitchen and a file from Joe's forge. With the items in hand, he returns to the convict. Despite Pip's help, however, some officers from the village capture Magwick and return him to the prison ship bound for the penal colony in Australia. Luckily for Pip, Magwick tells the officers that he stole the food and file from Joe's blacksmith's shop. Otherwise, Pip could have been arrested for aiding a

criminal. The next day, Pip's pompous Uncle Pumblechook and Mrs. Hubble are guests for Christmas dinner. All of the adults (with the exception of Joe) belittle Pip, calling him a worthless, ungrateful boy who will never amount to anything. Whenever they are especially mean to Pip, Joe serves the boy a little more food to show Pip he is on his side. Joe, unlike Mrs. Joe, has always been kind and loving toward Pip.

A few days later, Pumblechook takes Pip to Satis House, home of the wealthy Miss Havisham. She has requested that the boy visit her on a regular basis to play with her young ward Estella. Miss Havisham is the strangest person Pip has ever met. She still wears the wedding dress and veil she wore years ago when she was jilted at the altar by her fiancé. Since then, she has not seen the light of day and suffers from a broken heart, she tells Pip. On the dining table Pip sees the remains of her wedding cake, now rotten and encircled with cobwebs. The girl Estella refuses to play with Pip because he is common and coarse. She treats him coldly and with disdain, making him painfully aware of his lower-class status and lack of sophistication in contrast to her. She also teases Pip with her beauty and asks him if he wants to kiss her. Miss Havisham seems to enjoy watching her ward toy with Pip's emotions. In spite of Estella's cruel treatment of him, Pip finds himself falling in love with her and aspires to win her favor by becoming a proper English gentle-



man and improving his social and financial situation. Pip hopes that Miss Havisham will help him achieve his ambitions and that she will eventually allow him to marry Estella.

However, after months of coming to Satis House, Miss Havisham crushes Pip's dreams. She asks him to bring Joe along with him the next time he visits her. Poor Joe is so uncomfortable in Miss Havisham's presence that he can neither look at or speak to her directly. He instead answers her questions by speaking to Pip in his usual rustic manner. When Pip notices Estella laughing at them in the background, he is profoundly ashamed of Joe and their humble origins. At this meeting, Miss Havisham arranges with Joe for Pip to return home permanently and work in Joe's forge as an apprentice.

Shortly thereafter, Mrs. Joe is attacked by an unknown assailant, which renders her an invalid. Pip's young friend Biddy moves in to care for Mrs. Joe and the household. Unlike Estella, Biddy is kindhearted and an orphan from the lower class like Pip.

After four years of working in Joe's forge, a London lawyer by the name of Jaggers visits Pip to inform him that he has been given a large fortune by an anonymous benefactor. In order to receive the fortune in periodic installments, Pip must come to London right away and begin his education as a gentleman. He also has to promise never to inquire about the benefactor's identity. Now a young man, Pip leaves for London. He assumes that Miss Havisham is the mysterious person who is making his dreams come true, and that this means she will someday permit him to marry Estella. In London, Pip is met by Jagger's law clerk Wemmick, who will be handling Pip's financial needs. Wemmick warns Pip of the physical dangers and moral pitfalls in a big city like London. He also introduces Pip to Herbert Pocket with whom Pip will be sharing an apartment. The two young men soon become fast friends. From Herbert, who is a relative of Miss Havisham's, Pip learns the reason for Estella's cruel behavior toward him. She was brought up by the jilted Miss Havisham to wreck revenge on members of the male sex. Nevertheless, Pip remains infatuated with the beautiful girl. Pip is educated by the tutor Matthew Pocket, Herbert's father. Herbert also contributes to Pip's development by giving him tips on how to behave like a gentleman. Pip gets on well with all of his new acquaintances with the exception of the wealthy Bentley

Drummler, a brutish young man who attends the tutoring lessons with Pip and whom Pip grows to despise. Around this time, Pip receives word that Mrs. Joe has passed away. Although shocked by the news, he admits never feeling much tenderness for his sister due to her abusive behavior toward him. Several years go by during which Pip and Herbert lead a carefree life in London. Pip eventually has to be reprimanded by both Jaggers and Wemmick for spending too much money and running up too many debts. Then, one night, Pip receives a surprise visit from an aging Magwick, the convict Pip helped with food and fire years ago. Magwick tells Pip that he has become a rich man in the meantime and that, out of gratitude for Pip's kindness in the past, became the secret benefactor financing the young man's education as a gentleman. Pip is stunned.

## Act 2

Pip learns from Magwick that he made his fortune in Australia after escaping from prison there. He has returned illegally to England to see and admire the young gentleman he has been supporting. Pip also learns that a man by the name of Compeyson, Magwick's former partner in crime, has been following him with the intent to do him harm. Herbert is familiar with Compeyson's background, and tells Pip that he is the man who jilted Miss Havisham on her wedding day. Pip feels morally obligated to help Magwick get out of the country before either Compeyson or the police find him. Herbert agrees to assist in the effort. But before they can manage to plan the escape, Jaggers informs Pip that Miss Havisham would like to talk to him at Satis House. Upon arriving at Miss Havisham's, Estella informs Pip that she is going to marry Bentley Drummler, the abrasive young man with whom Pip took tutoring lessons. Pip is heartbroken that she would choose someone so unworthy of her instead of him. Noticing Pip's devastation, Miss Havisham apologizes to him for her role in Estella's choice of husband and for Estella's behavior toward him in the past. In tears, she fervently begs Pip to forgive her. So profound is her grief and distraction, that she walks too close to the fireplace and her wedding dress is set ablaze. Pip quickly throws his coat over her and snuffs out the flames. Miss Havisham survives the accident but remains an invalid until she dies a few weeks later.



Back in London, Pip and Herbert decide it's best to help Magwick flee to the Continent. During the escape, Magwick is captured by the police and severely injured. All of his assets are seized by the authorities, thus ending the financial support that Pip has been receiving from him. Pip is now in debt with scarcely any money.

Pip visits the dying Magwick in prison as often as he can. He learns from Jaggers that Estella is Magwick's daughter and passes on this information to the man shortly before he dies. Magwick apparently had a brief affair with Jagger's housekeeper years ago which resulted in the birth of a child, but he was never told of the child's existence. Jaggers later arranged for the child to become Miss Havisham's ward.

After all the stress and trauma that Pip has suffered, he falls seriously ill. The loving Joe comes to London and cares for him until he is well and strong again. Joe also pays off all of Pip's debts.

Pip now deeply regrets being embarrassed by Joe's lack of refinement and is ashamed for not valuing more the best friend he has ever had. He vows to make it all up to Joe in the future.

Pip realizes that he has become a snob in his pursuit of education, wealth and social position. After Joe returns home, he and Biddy get married. On their wedding day Pip tells them that he will be joining his friend Herbert in a business venture abroad. Before he leaves, however, he encounters his Uncle Pumblechook at a nearby inn. Years ago, Pumblechook shamelessly took credit for Pip's good fortune even though he had nothing to do with it. Now that Pip has been brought low, he claims that this is exactly what he always expected of the ungrateful boy.

Pip decides to visit Satis House one last time. There he meets Estella, who has inherited the estate from Miss Havisham. Pip has heard that Estella has suffered greatly in her marriage to the abusive Bentley Drummle. He notices that there is a sadness about her, but that she is no longer proud and cold. She is softer, friendlier. Estella tells Pip that she has thought about him often over the years. He replies that she has always held a place in his heart. She is sorry for her behavior in the past and hopes Pip can forgive her. In spite of everything that has happened between them, they agree to be friends.

**End**

## Study Questions

1. Why does Pip live with his older sister and her husband Joe?
2. What is Joe's profession?
3. What class does Pip belong to?
4. What is Mrs. Joe's and Uncle Pumblechook's attitude toward Pip?
5. What is Joe's attitude toward Pip?
6. What does the convict Magwitch order Pip to bring him at the beginning of the play?
7. Why does Pip's Uncle Pumblechook take him to the home of Miss Havisham?
8. What is Miss Havisham wearing when Pip meets her?
9. Why does she hate members of the male sex?
10. How does Estella treat Pip?
11. What does Pip hope that Miss Havisham will help him achieve?
12. Who informs Pip that he has a mysterious benefactor?
13. With whom does Pip share an apartment in London?
14. Who turns out to be Pip's secret benefactor?
15. Whom does Estella marry?
16. Who turns out to be Estella's father?
17. Who cares for Pip when he falls ill?
18. What do Pip and Estella agree to do at the end of the play?

## For Discussion or written work

1. Describe Pip's home life as a boy and how it would cause him to want something better for himself.
2. What character in the play do you like the most? The least? Why?
3. Do you think Pip has become a better person by the end of the play? Explain.
4. What is universal about Pip's story?

## Answer Keys

1. Because his parents have passed away. 2. He is a blacksmith. 3. The lower class. 4. They regard him as a worthless, ungrateful boy. 5. He is kind and loving toward Pip. 6. Some food and a file for removing the iron on his leg. 7. To play with her young ward Estella. 8. Her wedding dress and veil. 9. Because she was ill-treated by her fiancé on their wedding day. 10. Coldly and with disdain. 11. His dream of becoming a gentleman and marrying Estella. 12. The London lawyer Mr Jaggers. 13. Herbert. 14. Magwitch. 15. Bentley Drummle. 16. Magwitch. 17. Joe. 18. To be friends.