**Why is this the world's longest-running play?**

A Tuesday matinee is probably not the best place to start: 100 or so devotees in a theatre that seats 550. The first thing you notice is a wooden sign in the foyer: "This performance is number 24,993 of Agatha Christie's The Mousetrap, the world's longest-running play." Many of the audience have themselves photographed with it, claiming their place in theatrical history.

There are eight members of the cast, each signed up for a 47-week stint. More than 400 actors have appeared in it over the years. Richard Attenborough was the original Detective Sergeant Trotter, and his wife, Sheila Sim, the first Mollie Ralston – owner of Monkswell Manor guesthouse, which inevitably gets snowed in. But apart from Attenborough and Sim, few players have been headliners. The Mousetrap is not a star vehicle; the play and its author are the stars.

The drama became the longest-running show in British theatre history as early as April 1958 (plays back then didn't run for as long as they do now). From that point on, it began to develop its own momentum. They liken it to Madame Tussauds and the Changing of the Guard – something you have to catch if you visit London. But the audience is not, as conventional wisdom suggests, made up mainly of foreign tourists. The majority are from other parts of the UK; for them, The Mousetrap is part of the London experience. It's like some quasi-religious ritual, with the audience as much a part of proceedings as the cast.

Geoff Bullen, the current director, accepts it is a rite of passage, but insists it works as theatre, too. "The play is substantial and the characters not just cardboard cut-outs," he says. "It's wonderfully structured – up there with A Midsummer Night's Dream." And theatre critics see it more as a midwinter afternoon's nightmare. "The St Martin's theatre is one of the most attractive playhouses in the West End," they wrote last year, "and it is tragic that it has been filled with such tedious tosh for so long." Telegraph readers, the play's natural constituency, rounded on him.

The 60-week tour has been arranged to coincide with the anniversary, but it's a one-off: St Martin's likes to protect its property, expecting theatregoers to come to London to see it. This also explains why there has never been a film.

The play is a curious mixture of 1950s drawing-room comedy and murder mystery. The key is not to send it up. You have to concentrate on the reality of the situation. Everyone is trapped in this guesthouse – they have no means of contacting the outside world, and the murderer is among them. No one is quite what they seem. They all have secrets. You have to encourage the characters to play the real backstory and then cover it up, which is a challenge.

It works because it's in period and it's done absolutely straight. It's not knowing or camp. But given that most people go to see it as a phenomenon rather than as a play, surely there's an awareness of its historical baggage?

Recently “The Times”, in a leader headlined "Mystery of The Mousetrap", anticipated the day when the show would finally close. But will that day ever come?

**Театр XXI века**

2019 год — год театра того времени, в котором мы живем. А время, кажется, запутало театр окончательно своими двойными стандартами, переоценкой ценностей, ложью и борьбой со всем вышесказанным. Однако мы задумались не про сегодня, а про то, каким театр будет. Скажем, в конце ХХI века. Кто в нем будет играть — роботы или животные с высоким IQ? А где играть будут спектакли, если они сохранятся в привычном понимании этого слова?

 Со времен античных затей, когда драматурги писали свои трагедии и комедии, а артисты громко их произносили на публику, мало что изменилось. Тем не менее, тенденции к переменам есть. Первая из них — классическая итальянская сценическая коробка исчезнет совсем, и для каждого спектакля автор будет искать принципиально новое соотношение между залом и подмостками. Второе — автором спектакля совсем не обязательно будет режиссер с соответствующим образованием. Тех, кто сегодня говорит: «Я знаю, как ставить спектакль», будет все больше и больше.

Уже сегодня во многих театрах артист, который умеет создавать образ, быть непохожим на себя, уступает место человеку, который сам яркий персонаж. Насыщенный знаниями человек публике дает больше, чем артист.

Техника, технологии будут развиваться в двух крайностях. Первая — все больше будет расти объем, количество экранов, все превратится в кино с яркими цветами, все будет осязаемо. А с другой стороны, театр придет к цитированию вечной материи: земли, огня, воды, льда и т.д. Того, что определяет и составляет нашу жизнь.

Театр существует только здесь и сейчас. Каким будет XXI век, таким будет и театр. Если время будет бездарным — театр, скорее всего, будет ярким. Если время будет ярким — театр, очевидно, будет глубоким. Техника значения не имеет. Техника актера, внутренняя, также зависит от времени. В талантливое время она будет линейная. В бездарное — изощренная.

Развитие театра в будущем напрямую связано с сохранением в нем живого чувства. Пока этот организм будет пронизан чувством, театр будет жить. Если чувство уйдет, то умрет и театр. Несет это чувство в театре прежде всего артист. Он — струна чувств. Даже если этот артист не человек, как, например, в спектаклях Хайнера Геббельса, где режиссер вдыхает жизнь в неживое.

Новые технологии будут все больше проникать в театральное искусство: они уже стали неотъемлемой частью жизни. Но использование технологий и мультимедиа можно сравнить с одеждой, внешними атрибутами, которые меняются от эпохи к эпохе. Это не фундаментальные вещи, а мода. Основа же — живое чувство.

[**A Bad Play Ends**](https://allpoetry.com/poem/13078908-A-Bad-Play-Ends-by-Silkies-and-Corn)

By the time the silence creeps  
By the time the broom sweeps  
The two curtains have kissed  
The tainted glass has been missed  
And up above the darkest mist  
Foam white clouds are forming  
The sun above them shining  
The stars around it glowing  
The firmament covers it all  
  
Oh, but what’s below cannot be forgotten  
The actors played their roles  
The audience had their say, and broke their glistening hearts  
And now that it’s all over  
All can depart  
May their memory deceive  
Change tomatoes to flowers

[](https://allpoetry.com/Leo_Thomas)

[**There's An Artist Within Each of Us...**](https://allpoetry.com/poem/13928290-Theres-An-Artist-Within-Each-of-Us...-by-Leo-Thomas)

While life is not nearly just,  
I do believe there is an artist  
within each of us.  
We, clueless students of all kinds of artistry,  
must learn to thrust the creative part of us  
out loud to our fellow humanity.  
  
We must thrust color onto blank canvas,  
to utter the impassioned lines,  
to play the sound we carry around in our heads,  
to create the radical designs,  
to sing so loud, above the crowd,   
to be heard by all mankind.  
  
We can, we must,  
trust ourselves enough,  
to discover the artist within each of us.  
Without color, without music,  
without drama, without poetry, without art,  
humanity is bust.  
  
No one wants to live  
on a boring, brown, round sphere.  
It is we who must give vibrance to the dust!

**An Actor**

Someone ('tis hardly new) has oddly said  
The color of a trumpet's blare is red;  
And Joseph Emmett thinks the crimson shame  
On woman's cheek a trumpet-note of fame.  
The more the red storm rises round her nose  
The more her eyes averted seek her toes,  
He fancies all the louder he can hear  
The tube resounding in his spacious ear,  
And, all his varied talents to exert,  
Darkens his dullness to display his dirt.  
And when the gallery's indecent crowd,  
And gentlemen below, with hisses loud,  
In hot contention (these his art to crown,  
And those his naked nastiness to drown)  
Make such a din that cheeks erewhile aflame  
Grow white and in their fear forget their shame,  
With impudence imperial, sublime,  
Unmoved, the patient actor bides his time,  
Till storm and counter-storm are both allayed,  
Like donkeys, each by t'other one outbrayed.  
When all the place is silent as a mouse  
One slow, suggestive gesture clears the house!

by [Ambrose Bierce](https://keytopoetry.com/ambrose-bierce/).