

# Martin Crimp

<b>Martin Crimp</b>	
	
Crimp (centre) at the Théâtre des Abbesses, Paris	
<b>Born</b>	Martin Andrew Crimp 14 February 1956 Dartford, Kent, England
<b>Occupation</b>	Playwright

**Martin Andrew Crimp** (born 14 February 1956, Dartford, Kent) is a British playwright.

Crimp is sometimes described as a practitioner of the "in-yer-face" school of contemporary British drama, although he rejects the label.<sup>[1]</sup> He is notable for the astringency of his dialogue, a tone of emotional detachment, a bleak view of human relationships – none of his characters experience love or joy – and latterly, a concern for theatrical form and language rather than an interest in narrative.

## Career

The son of John Crimp, a British Rail signalling engineer, and his wife Jennie, Crimp's family moved in 1960 to Streatham where he attended a local primary school before winning a scholarship to Dulwich College. But when his father was transferred to York, he went to the nearby Pocklington School, where he showed an aptitude for languages, music, English literature and theatre. He read English at St Catharine's College, Cambridge 1975–78, where his first play *Clang* was staged by fellow student Roger Michell.<sup>[2]</sup> Before establishing himself as a playwright, he put together *An Anatomy*, a collection of short stories, and also wrote a novel *Still Early Days*. These remain unpublished.

His first six plays were performed at the Orange Tree Theatre in Richmond. As he told Marsha Hanlon in an interview for the Orange Tree appeal brochure in 1991: "When the Orange Tree ran a workshop for local writers [in September 1981], I was invited to take part. The carrot was the chance of a lunchtime production, so I wrote *Living Remains* and the Orange Tree staged it — my first-ever produced play! I was so excited that I didn't think about the space where it was performed [then a room above a pub], but now I realise that the Orange Tree's intimacy and simplicity provided an extra layer of excitement."

Seven of his plays, and his second Ionesco translation have also been presented at the Royal Court Theatre, London, where he became writer-in-residence in 1997. His plays are now frequently performed in Europe. He has also been an assiduous translator of European texts.

Possibly his most highly regarded, and certainly his boldest and most innovative play is *Attempts on Her Life*, first performed at the Royal Court in 1997 and subsequently translated into twenty languages.

In this work, none of the lines are assigned to a particular character, nor does Crimp specify how many actors should perform the piece. In seventeen apparently disconnected scenes, groups of people give mutually contradictory

descriptions of an absent protagonist, a woman talked of as if she were, variously, a terrorist, the daughter of grieving parents, an artist and a new car. This deliberately fragmented work challenges an audience to re-define its notion of what constitutes a "play" and might seem to question whether someone has any existence beyond the models we construct.

## Plays

- *Love Games* (co-written with Howard Curtis, Orange Tree Theatre lunchtime, 9 April – 1 May 1982)
- *Living Remains* (Orange Tree lunchtime, 9–25 July 1982)
- *Four Attempted Acts* (Orange Tree 1984)
- *A Variety of Death-Defying Acts* (Orange Tree 1985)
- *Definitely the Bahamas*, "a group of three plays for consecutive performance" also including *A Kind of Arden* and *The Spanish Girls* (Orange Tree 1987)
- *Dealing with Clair* (Orange Tree 1988)
- *Play with Repeats* (Orange Tree 1989)
- *No One Sees the Video* (Royal Court, Theatre Upstairs 1990)
- *Getting Attention* (Royal Court, Theatre Upstairs 1991)
- *The Treatment* (Royal Court 1993)
- *Attempts on Her Life* (Royal Court 1997; National Theatre, Lyttelton, March 2007) [3]
- *The Country* (Royal Court 2000, revived at the Tabard Theatre May 2008) [4]
- *Face to the Wall* (Royal Court 2002)
- *Cruel and Tender* (Young Vic 2004) [5]
- *Fewer Emergencies* (Royal Court, Theatre Upstairs 2005) [6]
- *The City* (Royal Court, Jerwood Theatre Downstairs 2008) [7]
- *In the Republic of Happiness* (Royal Court Theatre 2012) [8]

## Libretto

- *Into the Little Hill* (2006, composer George Benjamin)
- *Written on Skin* (2012, composer George Benjamin)

## Translations

- *The Misanthrope* (Molière) (Young Vic 1996)
- *The Chairs* (Ionesco) (Theatre Royal Bath 1997)
- *Roberto Zucco* (Bernard-Marie Koltès) (RSC The Other Place, Stratford 1997)
- *The Maids* (Genet) (Young Vic 1999)
- *The Triumph of Love* (Marivaux) (Almeida 1999)
- *The False Servant* (Marivaux) (National Theatre 2004)
- *The Seagull* (Chekhov) (National Theatre 2006)
- *Rhinoceros* (Ionesco) (Royal Court 2007)
- *The Misanthrope*<sup>[9]</sup> (Molière) (Comedy Theatre 2009) *The Misanthrope*<sup>[9]</sup>
- *Pains of Youth* (*Krankheit der Jugend* by Ferdinand Bruckner) (National Theatre 2009)
- *Big and Small* (*Gross und klein* by Botho Strauß), a 2011 Sydney Theatre Company production, co-commissioned by the Barbican Centre, London 2012 Festival, Théâtre de la Ville, Paris, Vienna Festival and Ruhrfestspiele Recklinghausen; Cate Blanchett as Lotte.

## References

- [1] Harriet Devine *Looking Back* 2006
  - [2] Aleks Sierz *The Theatre of Martin Crimp*, Methuen, 2006
  - [3] <http://www.thestage.co.uk/reviews/review.php/16235/attempts-on-her-life>
  - [4] <http://www.thestage.co.uk/reviews/review.php/20855/the-country>
  - [5] <http://www.thestage.co.uk/reviews/review.php/2181>
  - [6] <http://www.britishtheatreguide.info/reviews/feweremergencies-rev.htm>
  - [7] <http://www.thestage.co.uk/reviews/review.php/20563/the-city>
  - [8] <http://www.royalcourttheatre.com/whats-on/in-the-republic-of-happiness>
  - [9] <http://www.themisanthropelondon.com>
- *Theatre Record* and its annual indexes
  - Sierz, Aleks *The Theatre of Martin Crimp*, Methuen (2007) ISBN 0-413-77588-7.
  - Devine, Harriet *Looking Back*, Faber (2006) ISBN 0-413-77588-7 .
  - Edgar, David *Each Scene for Itself*, London Review of Books 4 March 1999

## External links

- Literary Encyclopedia page on Martin Crimp (<http://www.litencyc.com/php/speople.php?rec=true&UID=5860>)