

Andrew Collier Management Ltd  
presents

**Bette Bourne**  
as  
**Quentin Crisp**  
in

# **RESIDENT ALIEN**

by **Tim Fountain**



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**Winner, Obie Award for Performance 2001**  
**Winner, Obie Award for Design 2001**  
**Winner, Herald Angel Award for Performance 2001**

**Production summary:**

*Resident Alien*, based on Quentin Crisp's life and writings, is set in Crisp's legendary one-roomed filthy New York apartment. While waiting for the arrival of yet more visitors to his East Village home, 91-year-old Crisp reflects on life, the century he has lived through and subjects as diverse as Princess Diana, Oprah Winfrey and oral sex. *Resident Alien* was written with Quentin's full co-operation and with exclusive use of his New York Diaries. It provides a fascinating insight into the wit and wisdom of the original English "stately homo".

**Production availability:**

*Resident Alien* is currently booking for 2005 and 2006. It requires a stage area of at least 7m width and 10m depth, and works equally well in proscenium arch theatres, thrust auditoria and studio spaces (no suspension required). The production travels with a company of three personnel, and can be provided fully self-contained. The running time is 90 minutes plus interval.



**Production history:**

*Resident Alien* was written by Tim Fountain and premiered at London's Bush Theatre with Bette Bourne in the starring role in November 1999.

The production transferred to New York Theatre Workshop in January 2001 where it played a sell-out three month season and won two Obie Awards (performance and design).

The show was revived for the Edinburgh Festival in 2001, where it won the Herald Angel award for performance, prior to a second London run in Christmas that year and a three month UK tour in the Spring of 2002.

*Resident Alien* toured to Australia for the Sydney Mardi Gras (Seymour Centre) and Adelaide Festival (Adelaide Festival Theatre), selling-out both cities in 2002. *Resident Alien* has also toured to Boston (Boston Center for the Arts, 2002) and Seattle (On The Boards, 2001).

***“Resident Alien elevates a minor cultural icon to the pantheon of immortals”***

The Boston Globe

***“Bette Bourne is one of the most compelling figures I have ever seen on a stage.”***

Financial Times

***“Bourne is superb: funny, touching, unsentimental, sometimes even profound.”***

The Times (London)

***“At the end of the show the audience doesn't want to let Bourne leave. They are afraid Quentin Crisp will die again.”***

The Scotsman

***“Resident Alien is a compilation of wit, wisdom and reminiscence... a superb study of a style that represses sentiment.”***

The New York Times

***“Bourne's interpretation extends beyond mimicry and resurrects Crisp with compassion, vitality and truth.”***

Sydney Morning Herald

## Biographies



### Quentin Crisp on Quentin Crisp

Quentin Crisp was reluctantly born on Christmas Day in 1908. To his dismay he found himself to be the son of middle-class, middle-brow, middling parents who lived in Sutton, a suburb of London, England. After an

uneventful childhood he was sent, between the ages of 14 and 18, to a school in Derbyshire which was like a cross between a monastery and a prison. There he learned nothing that could ever be useful in adulthood except how to bear injustice. His ignorance of everything but this and his ambiguous appearance made a career impossible in anything except the arts. He therefore became an illustrator and designer of book covers. When he could no longer bear constantly being given the sack he tried freelancing but this was no more successful. At length, almost by chance, he stood in for a friend who was an art-school model and, finding that effort didn't cause him to collapse, he took up posing as a career.

With this way of life he struggled on for thirty-five years. In the mid 1960s, on a British radio channel to which no one listens, he uttered a few words that led to him being invited to write his autobiography, *The Naked Civil Servant*. The synopsis of this caused the man who had commissioned it to faint away dead, but another firm, Jonathan Cape, agreed to publish it in 1968. This was an offer Mr Crisp could not refuse because he was paid in advance. Having been unsuccessfully a teacher of tap dancing, an occasional writer and a minor televisionary, in the winter of his life, Crisp described himself on his tax forms as a retired waif.

He died in 1999 just as this show reached the stage.



### Bette Bourne (Performer)

Bette Bourne has acted in most of the leading theatres in Britain. He has worked in Repertory, the West End and the Old Vic alongside noted actors Sir Ian McKellen, Dame Sybil Thorndike and Simon Callow, and with such directors as Trevor Nunn, Maria Aitken, Philip Prowse, Mike Bradwell and Adrian Noble. Over the past decade he has been lauded for his work with Neil Bartlett both as the castrato-diva star of *Sarrasine* and as Lord Henry Wooton in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. In 1995 he won the Manchester Evening News Award for his performance as Lady Bracknell in *The Importance of Being Earnest* (a credit he shares in common with Quentin Crisp). Most recently he has appeared in *Vortex* at the Donmar Warehouse (for which he won the Clarence Derwent Award), *Pericles* at the Lyric Hammersmith, *Skin of Our Teeth* at the Young Vic and as the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet* at Shakespeare's Globe. Bette is also famous for his celebrated queer comedy ensemble *Bloodlips*, with whom he won two OBIES. He received his third OBIE for *Resident Alien* at the New York Theatre Workshop.



### Tim Fountain (Writer & Director)

Tim's writing credits include *Harold's Day* (BAC), *Once in a Blue Moon* (Coventry Belgrade Studio), *Tchaikovsky in the Park* (Bridewell Theatre), *The Last Bus From Bradford* (London), *Resident Alien* (London, New York, Worldwide Tour; BBC Radio 3), *Julie Burchill is Away* (Soho Theatre and Edinburgh), *How To Lose Friends and Alienate People* (Soho Theatre) and *Quentin Crisp*, a biography. His television credits include *Arriverdervi Barnsley* (Channel 4), *Bob and Margaret* (Channel 4, Nelvana, Comedy Central, USA) and *The Significant Death of Quentin Crisp*, a documentary for Channel 4 UK.

A notable director, Tim's credits include *Harold's Day* and *These Childish Things* at Hull Truck Theatre, *Antigone* (Birmingham Rep Studio), *Once in a Blue Moon* (Coventry Belgrade Studio), *Last Bus from Bradford* (Chelsea Centre), *Grandmotherfucker* (Edinburgh) and *Puppetry of the Penis* (London, New York, International Tours).

### Andrew Collier (Producer)

Andrew Collier's recent producing credits include *Resident Alien* (London, UK and International Tours), *Julie Burchill is Away* (London), *666* (London, Edinburgh and European Tour). As Managing Director and co-founder of Fat Bloke Productions he produced over forty productions at the Edinburgh Festival between 1995 and 2002 including numerous Perrier Award winners and nominees, as well as West End seasons of *Noble and Silver* and *Simply Barbra* together with many UK tours. He also works as a consultant producer, and is currently retained by London's Barbican Centre.

## Press reaction

A press pack with full reviews is available upon request. Please be aware that this is a large file (2.5Mb) and is not suitable for email over a dial-up connection.

### A remarkable piece of theatre

Evening Standard (London)

“Words are my staple diet,” the Englishman in New York, Quentin Crisp, once declared and, in the splendid hands of actor Bette Bourne, the words accumulate to form a feast... Partly drawn from Crisp’s *New York Diaries*, Fountain’s script is well structured and finely honed. It is much more than a free-wheeling assemblage of amusing quotes and one-liners, due in no small way to Bourne’s impeccable timing and intelligent command... *Resident Alien* is entertaining and abundantly amusing but fortunately it doesn’t play strictly for laughs or merely dispense funny quotes and sardonic throwaway lines. The direction sees to that, giving the words room to breathe and resisting the urge to fill silences with chatter... Bourne’s interpretation extends beyond mimicry and resurrects Crisp with compassion, vitality and truth - no mean feat in the Seymour Centre’s far from intimate Everest Theatre, a difficult space for an ensemble let alone a solo performer to establish audience rapport. If you expect the play will offer plenty of caustic observations, acerbic shots about fame and celebrity and pearls of Crisp wisdom, you’ll be right. But if you think you’ve got the “stately homo” pegged, *Resident Alien* may open your eyes and your heart.

Sydney Morning Herald

### A tour de force performance.

Time Out (London)

In *Resident Alien*, an astonishing one-man show about his life masterfully written and directed by Tim Fountain, star Bette Bourne has given his subject unexpected dimension and warmth. The result is a Superman of soul... Tottering about, he is part Stoic, part frail butterfly, and a thoroughly mesmerizing philosopher king dispensing wisdom on culture, love, and dignity. *Resident Alien* elevates a minor cultural icon to the pantheon of immortals.

The Boston Globe

Bette Bourne turns performance into life as lovingly as Crisp always turned life into performance. **The whole experience feels less like a trip to the theatre than a warmly extended invitation to tea.**

The Independent (London)

In the fridge sits one solitary egg: ‘Who says life is devoid of possibilities?’ And who, after this immaculate production by Mike Bradwell, could say that theatre is?

Observer (London)

**Wise, witty and really rather wonderful...** a marvellously diverting and coherent show... Bette Bourne’s performance was **character-acting at its finest**, showing us how a seemingly outrageous way of living can tell us more about ourselves than we might realise. There lay the serious undercurrent of a splendidly crafted and acted play. The rest was **sheer entertainment.**

Daily Mail (London)

Bourne brings his own particular majesty to this audience with a performance signally free of camp and bitchiness but loaded with wit, irony and humanity.

**One cult meets another: the result is a treat all round. Life-enhancing.**

The Herald (Scotland)

Tim Fountain’s beautifully wrought production... an evocation of Quentin Crisp’s life and dystopic philosophy is distilled from the old master of style’s aphoristic writings. Thanks to Fountain’s heartfelt production and Bette Bourne’s remarkable acting the text does not simply induce rueful laughter in performance. It achieves a stinging pathos, too... The tremendous Bette Bourne plays Crisp to the manner reborn. Bourne is almost uncannily Quentin... Fountain’s script and Bourne’s performance remind us Crisp was that rare thing – an authentic gay hero.

Evening Standard (London)

**The authentic Crisp in all his subversive glory.**

The Telegraph (London)

Bourne is superb: funny, touching, unsentimental, sometimes even profound. Bourne’s Crisp combines stoic patience with what he darkly assures us is a seething, even murderous rage, a fatalism that at times verges on nihilism with a disbelieving indignation. Droll, tart and dryly eccentric Bourne’s Crisp may be: he has earned the right to tell you just what life has painfully taught him.

The Times (London)

Now that Crisp is dead, this thoroughly enjoyable evening is the closest you’ll get to an ‘at home’ with the 91 year old eccentric... **his witticisms and humour make Oscar Wilde seem like a dullard.**

The Guardian