

As unassuming a little play as **Arrow to the Heart** may seem to be, fifty years after it's transmission, it is without doubt a defining moment in history as it was Rudolph Cartier's first production for television.

Cartier - born Rudolph Katscher on 17th April 1904 - had studied at the Vienna Academy of Music and Dramatic Art and had initially harboured a desire to be a director of opera or, failing that, a director of film. In 1929 he managed to secure a job at Berlin film studio UFA and worked with such proto-luminaries as Billy Wilder and Emeric Pressburger. Cartier left Germany when Hitler came to power in 1933, arriving in Britain three years later. By 1949 Cartier had been to America to study how they made film and television and, thanks to a chance meeting with a young agent on a rainy night in Charing Cross Road in 1952, he was introduced to Michael Barry:

"One dark night I went into the old Charing Cross post office to catch the midnight post to Germany, and sheltering in the doorway from the rain was a young chap whom I recognised as a literary agent. We started talking, and he asked me why I never did anything for television. I told him that I had no contacts at the BBC. He arranged a meeting with Michael Barry who, together with Val Gielgud, was head of BBC television drama. I briefed myself by watching lots of television."

During the meeting, he was nothing if forthright: *"When Michael Barry asked my opinion of British television drama, I told him I thought it was terrible. I said that the BBC needed new scripts, a new approach - a whole new spirit, rather than endlessly televising classics like Dickens or familiar London stage plays."* Rather than show him the door, Barry was impressed enough to offer him a job: *"This resulted in a guest producer's contract. The first play I made was called **Arrow to the Heart** based on a German short novel about a German army priest talking through the night to a deserter who is going to be shot next morning."*

For this, his first production, he was given an Associate Producer - Douglas Moodie - who was doubtless there to 'keep an eye' on what he was doing. His lack of television production experience did not hinder him: *"There is not much difference, basically, between the task of a film director and that of a television director. Both tell a story visually with the aid of sound. But here the similarity ends ..."*

Even if Cartier's analysis of the state of drama at that time was ever-so-slightly tailored to allow him to get his foot in the door at the BBC, this production of a German play, about German soldiers, undoubtedly bucked the trend of what viewers could normally expect to see on a Sunday night in 1952. It must be borne in mind that the Nazis had only been beaten seven years before and Britain was still in the grip of rationing, a situation which didn't formally end until 1954. It must have been a brave choice to show this play and it paved the way for other European plays to become a regular occurrence on British television over the next two decades.

The play itself had comparatively heavy coverage in Radio Times - Cartier wrote a two-thirds page article ("*Meeting With A Christian Soldier*") whilst Lionel Hale devotes half of his column (which took up the rest of this page) with a synopsis of the play. Lionel did such a good job of it that I'm sure, half a century on, he wouldn't mind me letting him explain the plot again:

"The story is simple: a German Army chaplain visits a deserter in the condemned cell on the night before his execution. Good and evil, heroes and cowards, villains and lovers, emerge from the shadows during the night, driving the tale along as relentlessly as a Greek tragedy, with all the unity of time, place and action."

In the black hours before his execution, the padre finds out his history. The illegitimate son of a German cabinet-maker and a Polish girl, he grew up without comfort, or much education - or love. In the army he gets no Christmas parcel, or even letters. And then he meets a Russian woman, widowed in the war, and with a child. Discovered as her lover, he is sent to the dreadful Penal Battalion, escapes, lives with Russian partisans, is captured, court-martialled for desertion, and condemned."

This is the story in the [prisoner's] file in the few hours before dawn. But there is someone else of particular importance in this crowded military scene, Captain Brentano, who shares a billet with the padre. For he, too, in subtle similarity, is under unofficial sentence of death - he is to be flown to the Sixth Army already surrounded at Stalingrad; and he, too, had to wait for the dawn and his undoubted fate, and his fiancée (an Army nurse) waits with him."

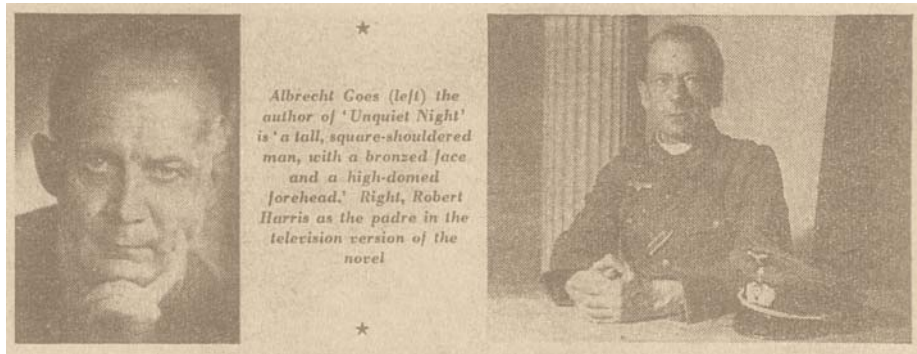
Arrow to the Heart finds its focal point in the padre's Christian pity and manly sense, a redeeming goodness in so much that is cruel and ugly all around him."

After reading this, could anyone have not tuned in to watch on that Summer Sunday night in 1952? It is fortunate indeed that a casual viewer did not have to rely upon the listing description to entice them to decide whether the play was worth watching: *"The action takes place between 6.0pm and 8.0am in the little garrison town of Proskurov in the German-occupied Ukraine, in January 1943"*.

Given that the plot was covered elsewhere in that issue, Cartier relates a charming story of how he first came by the story and how he met its author, Albrecht Goes:

"Back in London I wrote to the publishers in Hamburg about the film and television rights, and heard that the author lived as a pastor in the village of Gebersheim (pop. 750) in Wurtemberg, that the novel was based on his life in the German army in Russia and Rumania during the war, and that it describes two true events he experienced as a padre in field hospitals and military prisons."

Cartier explains he talked to Goes at length about turning his book into a television production: *"We got down to work. I had prepared a large 'questionnaire' with more than forty questions regarding sets, props, costumes, military manners and procedure involved in the TV production of his novel, and his answers revealed a familiarity with all*



Radio Times image that accompanied the **Arrow to the Heart** article.

aspects of the German Army, into which he was drafted in the first year of the war."

Cartier also gives us a lovely travelogue, which - alongside its lovely descriptive prose - imparts, perhaps incidentally, how feudal and isolated some areas of Germany had become after the war ended: *"Albrecht Goes had written me detailed instructions on how to get to Gebersheim - there is no railway line leading there but only a postal bus from Leonberg, which has to be reached by a small branch-line from Stuttgart. As instructed, I changed from express-train into toy-train and then into a yellow postal coach, and after two and a half miles drive through idyllic landscape, a church steeple appeared behind a hill, with a few farmhouses scattered around it. The bus stopped on the main square of a typical South German village and the driver said: Gebersheim."*

Though it was a slender book (*"The novel had only eighty-six and a half pages, but I was fascinated by its terse and brilliant writing, by its perfect plot and by its moving narrative"*) Cartier scripted a play which ran to approximately 100 minutes in length. He was no stranger to scriptwriting, having worked on at least a dozen scripts while at UFA (his first being **Der Tiger**) and he regularly collaborated with Egon Eis: *"We became famous as the first screenwriters of talkie crime stories. Anyone who wanted to make a crime story came to us."* The PasB credits Nigel Kneale with creating additional dialogue, though it is unclear how much he contributed.

Nigel Kneale had been the BBC's only staff writer since 1951 (at a salary of £5 a week). His job generally consisted of polishing and tightening other people's scripts, though obviously that was to change midway through 1953 with **The Quatermass Experiment**. Cartier and Kneale were kindred spirits, with both of them taking as a credo Cartier's belief that *"one only discovers the possibilities of television by attempting the impossible."* In 1955, Kneale was given the task of defining a single format and terminology for use in writing television scripts - this format (with few variations) is still in use today.

It is interesting to note that, in the final production, both the Stage Manager and Assistant Stage Manager took part in the production as extras. Cartier reflects on this time at the BBC by stating that *"The facilities were very small because television had a very small budget."* The production had three weeks rehearsal, with a day and half for camera rehearsal (with three cameramen).

Cartier used 3'26" of 35mm film inserts to paper over the cracks of scene changes and so forth, also recording an audio insert of 3'45" duration (BBC DLO 12102/1/2/3) which was recorded and played into the production during transmission.

As was standard practice until some way into the 1960s, both performances of the play were transmitted live. Although some plays were telerecorded to film (and, later, video) this play was not and, as such, no recording exists. The insert film sequences were probably destroyed not long after transmission as they would have been of no further use.

The initial production was transmitted between 08:59:58pm and 10:38:48pm on Sunday 20th July 1952. The repeat performance happened four days later, between 07:24:10pm and 09:12:48pm, Thursday 24th July 1952. This second performance had an 05'29" interlude between 08:17:55pm and 08:23:24pm. Thursday's transmission (whose content, despite a running time five minutes longer than the original performance, is billed in the PasB as being *"exactly as previously broadcast on 20th July 1952"*) was prefaced by the (in)famous **Potter's Wheel** interlude programme from 07:30:55pm to 07:33:20pm. This legendary piece of film is billed as being only 227" feet long, and was accompanied by the Queen's Light Orchestra (conductor: David King), playing C. Williams' *The Young Ballerina*. The interlude between the play and the newsreel that followed it was the **Harp Interlude Film**, probably made even more bizarre as, in this instance, it was played mute...

Cartier re-made **Arrow to the Heart** four years later, from the same script, and again starred Robert Harris and Martin Starkie in the same roles they played in the original production. It was shown as part of the **Sunday-Night Theatre** umbrella strand on 22nd April 1956.

Cast
 The PadreRobert Harris
 The Courier-PilotHoward Lang
 Major Kartuschke, Legal OfficerEsmond Knight
 Lieutenant ErnstLeonard White
 The Corporal in charge of the Officers Transit Billet.....Donald Pleasence
 Sergeant-Major Mascher, guard
 at the military prisonMichael Brennan
 Private BaranowskiMartin Starkie
 The General, Commander in Chief of the German forces in the Ukraine.....William Devlin
 Captain BrentanoHugh Kelly
 Sister MelanieCita Crichton

Extras.....John Boyd-Brent
Denis Gaocher
Robert Sansom
Geoffrey Bayldon
Robert Irvine
George Murrell
John Garvin
Hugh David
John Knight
Hans Bouterwek
Vernon Gibb
Rodney Diak
John Whyte
Carl Duering
R. Beynon
J. Knight
R. Irvine

Crew
 Written by.....Albrecht Goes
 Dramatised and Produced by.....Rudolph Cartier
 Additional dialogue by.....Nigel Kneale
 Associate Producer.....Douglas Moodie
 Settings by.....Richard R. Greenhough
 S. Tel. E.....Mr. Meakin
 Lighting.....Mr. Monk (sp?)
 Stage Manager.....John Whyte
 Assistant Stage Manager.....Robert Irvine
 Studio Manager.....Alan Sleath
 Secretary.....Sylvia Rich

Production Information
 Project Number.....[not listed in script or PasB]
 Telerecording Number.....[not listed in script or PasB]
 Camera Rehearsal.....19th, 20th and 24th July 1952
 Camera Recording.....Live Transmission on 20th
and 24th July 1962 - not recorded
 Duration (Original Performance).....98'50"
 Duration (Repeat Performance).....103'09"
 Studio.....Studio D, Lime Grove
 Recording Format.....not recorded
 Archive Format.....non-extant

Film Sequences Used
 o War Office: 27' unspecified format film (ME109 landing and taxi-ing)
 o War Office: 26' unspecified format film (HEIII on runway and taxi-ing)
 o BBC Specially shot: three sequences of unspecified format of length 15', 24' and 228'. The latter was overdubbed in the studio on 16th July with dialogue from Robert Harris, Esmond Knight, Leonard White, Martin Starkie, Michael Brennan, D. Goacher, R. Diak, P. Sansom, G. Murrell, J. Garvin, H. David, H. Bouterwek, V. Gibb, J. Whyte, C. Duering and R. Irvine

Music Listed as Used:
 o 01'05" of Richard Strauss's *Elektra*, played by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra [HMV DB 9393]
 o Two sequence (01'10" and 03'40") of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde: Liebestod*, played by the Philharmonic Orchestra [HMV C 4111/4112, respectively]
 o 05'05" of Carl Nielsen's *Symphony No.2 de Fire Temperamenter Op. 16*, played by the Staatsradiofoniens Symfoniorkester [HMV Z 7003]
 o 02'30" of Berlioz's *Funeral March 'Hamlet' Op. 18*, played by the London Philharmonic Orchestra [HMV DB 9393]
 o 00'55" of Richard Strauss's *Death and Transfiguration*, played by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra [HMV DB 21171]
 o 00'30" of Martusckhe's traditional *Russian Song*, sung by Vera Fusekova [DLO 12102]
 o 00'30" of the hymn *Spread Out Thy Wings O Jesu*, sung by members of the cast [DLO 12102]

BBC Effects Listed as Used
 o Chatter 02'30" [3 C 61]
 o Wind 02'00" [703/23 C 6]
 o Clock ticking 00'15" [3 A 46/3]
 o Plane taxi-ing 00'40" [1 A 88]

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Thanks to Andrew Ptkley for the generous loan of some background information on this production

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Arrow to the Heart © Albrecht Goes estate 2004

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