

**PROSCENIUM**

# **A Bunch of Amateurs**

By Ian Hislop and Nick Newman

**A Bunch of Amateurs**

Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2023  
Compass Theatre, Ickenham

# A Bunch of Amateurs

## The Cast

Dorothy Nettle .....Hannah Lester  
Mary Plunkett .....Clare Wooster  
Nigel Dewbury .....David Pearson  
Denis Dobbins .....Robert Ewen  
Jefferson Steel.....Mark Sutherland  
Lauren Bell .....Nicola Bielicki  
Jessica Steel .....Eva Peerless

Directed by .....Neville Price

Stage Manager .....Peter Myers  
Properties .....Toni Price  
Assistant Stage Managers .....Ben Morris, Marsha Myers  
Lighting and Sound Operation.....Paul Davis  
Costumes.....Toni Price, Marsha Myers  
Rehearsal Stand In .....Paul Davis  
Sound Recording.....Mark Sutherland  
Music Adviser .....Duncan Sykes  
Poster and Graphic Design.....Charles Anthony

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Thanks to NODS theatre company

The action takes place over two Acts, in various locations including  
the Village Hall Theatre, Mary's B&B and Jefferson's Bedroom

There will be one interval of 15 minutes between Acts 1 and 2

# Director's Note

Did you know that according to the *Independent* newspaper there are around 2,500 Amateur Dramatics groups in the UK? A survey carried out by another organisation showed that amateur theatre groups put on over 25,500 performances a year, involving nearly 500,000 participants and gaining audiences of over 7,000,000, with a staggering turnover in excess of £34,000,000.

In the play you are about to see, the question is asked, 'why do you do it'? Why indeed? That is a question actors often ask themselves, whilst waiting in the wings listening for their cue to make their first entrance. It can be terrifying. It is terrifying. But is it worth it? 'You bet', as one of the characters in our play would say. Why – well for the applause. For the relief that the show went well. The feeling that you had done your best to be someone else for just a short time, and that you had not let the rest of the cast down. The costumes, the props... sounds like a song coming on!!!

But do the professional actors feel the same? 'You bet'. Amateur theatre groups are a microcosm of real life. They **are** real life. Participants come from every corner of society. Some to act, some to direct, some to do the costumes, some the props, lighting, some to build the sets. Lifetime friendships are forged. Life partnerships are made. All age groups come together. Fun is there to be had and a sense of camaraderie and daring egg us on.

This play shows what can happen when a real 'pro' - a 'star' - comes into the amateur mix and discovers the 'rough and tumble' of life at the sharp end. The times when not all the cast show up to rehearse. Actors who leave learning their lines to the last minute. The occasion when an actor becomes ill a week before curtain up.

'You do this without being paid'? asks the 'star'?? 'You bet'.

Ian Hislop and Nick Newman have written a very funny and heart-warming play and we hope you enjoy the experience of looking briefly into 'our world', the world of "amdram". You may even feel like becoming part of it.

# The Authors

## Ian Hislop

Ian Hislop is a writer and broadcaster and has been editor of *Private Eye* since 1986. He has been a columnist for *The Listener* and the *Sunday Telegraph* and TV critic for *The Spectator*.

As a scriptwriter with Nick Newman, his work includes five years on *Spitting Image*, *Harry Enfield and Chums* and *My Dad's the Prime Minister*, as well as the film and play *A Bunch of Amateurs*.

He has written and presented many documentaries for television and radio, and has appeared frequently on *Question Time*. Since 1990 he has been a team captain on BBC's *Have I Got News for You*, which has won many awards, including the BAFTA for Best Comedy in 2016.



*Photograph : Tom Pilston, The Independent*

## Nick Newman

Nick Newman is an award winning cartoonist and writer. He has worked for *Private Eye* since 1981 and has been pocket cartoonist for *The Sunday Times* since 1989.

His cartoons have appeared in many other publications including *The Guardian*, *Punch*, and *The Spectator*. He was the Cartoon Art Trust's Pocket Cartoonist of the Year in 2005, 2007 and 2009.

His script writing career with Ian Hislop began with *Spitting Image* and continued with Dawn French's *Murder Most Horrid* and *The Harry Enfield Show*.

# Playing Shakespeare on Screen

One of the projects Anthony Hopkins was preparing for at that time was the lead in the 1981 BBC production of *Othello*, directed by Jonathan Miller... Bob Hoskins was his Iago.

“Wonderful Bob! When he came in, his accent sounded very refreshing. Then it became clear he hadn’t read the whole script.” Hopkins does an uncanny impression of his cockney co-star: “‘Jesus, are these all my lines? These are the verbals? I’m in big trouble, Tone!’ I told him, ‘You’d better get learning them.’ He was terrific.”

*The Guardian*, 18<sup>th</sup> November 2022

Max Reinhardt's film adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* streaked the eyes of 1930s movie audiences, lulling some with delights and filling others with hateful fantasies...the modern viewer raises an eyebrow as high art collides headlong with high camp. The movie is a crazy jumble of rococo decor that mashes up pre-Christian Greece, sixteenth-century England, and nineteenth-century children's book illustrations with Victorian etchings, and Jazz Age grace notes...The Warner Bros stock company declaims the poetry of England's greatest dramatist with the subtlety of a vaudeville patter song...*A Midsummer Night's Dream* is absolutely bereft of taste, starved for respectability. Nevertheless, there are those who find every blessed, demented frame an utter delight.

*Midsummer dream, midwinter nightmare:  
Max Reinhardt and Shakespeare versus the Warner Bros  
Scott McQueen, in Moving Image, Vol 9 No 2, Fall 2009*

The shooting schedule of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* had to be rearranged after Mickey Rooney broke his leg...Since the production was too expensive to be delayed, Rooney's remaining scenes had to be shot with a stand-in. Foliage had to be used to conceal his broken leg, as well as holes in the floor to complete Rooney's scenes...Jack L. Warner was furious and threatened to kill him and then break his other leg.

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1935), Wikipedia

# King Lear – A Precis of the Plot

Shakespeare's *King Lear* revolves around the relationship the King has with his three daughters and his closest advisors. A strong theme is the correlation (or lack of it) between wisdom and old age.

Feeling his age, Lear has decided to divide his kingdom between his three daughters, but he requires each of them to declare her love for him to 'earn' her share.

Goneril, Duchess of Albany, and Regan, Duchess of Cornwall, both speak enthusiastically and earn their father's praise but Cordelia, the youngest, says nothing because she cannot voice her deep love for him.

Lear wants to be loved and admired. Misunderstanding her feelings, Lear disowns and banishes her. He also banishes the Earl of Kent, one of his oldest friends, for defending Cordelia.

Lear's kingdom is shared between Goneril and Regan. Lear plans to live alternately with each of them. Goneril becomes exasperated by the behaviour of Lear's companions, who are upsetting life at her castle. Lear leaves to go to Regan, who also rejects him.

Despairing, and deeply regretting rejecting Cordelia, Lear goes mad at the height of a great storm. He and the Fool run wild on the heath. Fooled by lies from the sisters, the Duke of Gloucester is trying to keep in with Goneril and Regan while secretly helping the King. They find out and blind him, turning him out onto the heath.

Goneril poisons Regan out of jealousy. Goneril's army attacks Cordelia, who has landed with an army to help her father.

There is a touching reunion between Lear and Cordelia, but they are captured just before Goneril's army is defeated. Goneril kills herself. The order is given for Cordelia to be hanged. Kent and Lear are too late to save her, Lear's heart breaks as he carries her body, and he dies.



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by  
Gail Young*



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## Our Next Production

# A Month of Sundays

By **Bob Larbey**

Spending their twilight years in a Surrey rest home, best friends Cooper and Aylott respond to the absurdities and indignities of age with wit and humour. Proscenium presents this award-winning comedy by the writer of *The Good Life* and *As Time Goes By*.

This first play by legendary writer Bob Larbey won the Evening Standard Award for Best Comedy of the Year.

Directed by Zena Wigram

Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2023, 7:45pm

Compass Theatre, Ickenham

Box Office : 01895 250 615

## About Proscenium

Proscenium was founded in 1924. Since then, the aim of this experienced group has been to present classic and contemporary plays to as wide an audience as possible. Since 1990, performances have taken place at the Harrow Arts Centre and, more recently, at the Compass Theatre, Ickenham.

The company meets three times a week in Harrow for rehearsals, so that four plays are presented in each season. Social, fund raising activities and play readings take place throughout the year.

Secretary : Marion Chamberlain

Chair : David Pearson

Contact us at [www.proscenium.org.uk](http://www.proscenium.org.uk)