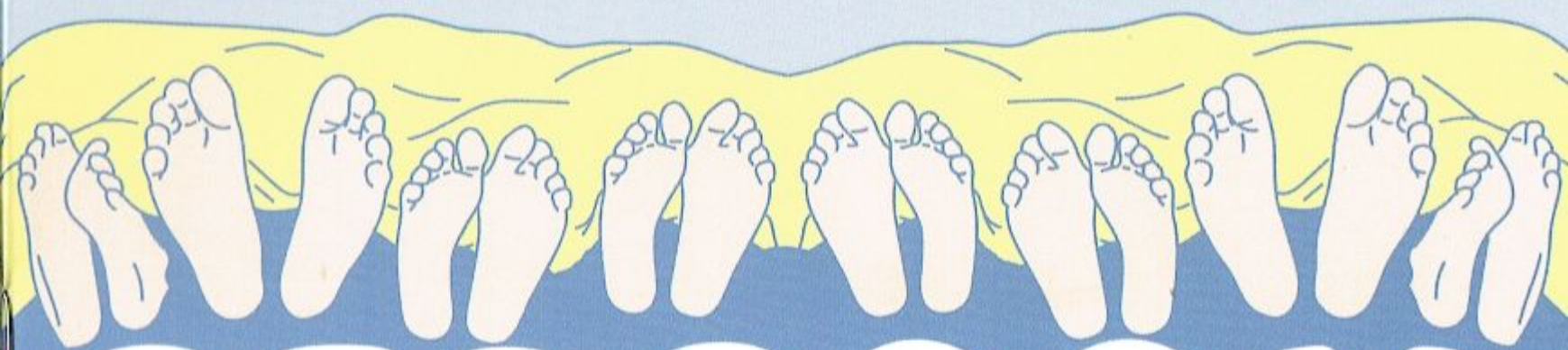


WIMBORNE
DRAMA PRODUCTIONS



BEDROOM FARCE

BY
**ALAN
AYCKBOURN**

23 - 25 FEBRUARY 2023
TIVOLI THEATRE WIMBORNE

Directors' Notes

HOW do you rehearse a play - requiring three double bedrooms - in the Royal British Legion, which is only hired for two evenings a week?

This was the first obstacle to overcome before we could embark on our farcical journey into the world of Alan Ayckbourn: a world originally set against the backdrop of the 1970s, with trunk roads, landlines and



Suzanne Viney and Michelle Barter

dubious politically incorrect terminology! We've removed all these archaisms, bringing the script into the 21st century; however, the issues surrounding the four couples, and their marital beds, seem universal and timeless. During our endeavours, we have satisfactorily destroyed two inflatable beds, one, quite spectacularly, proving that stiletto heels and blow up mattresses are not a good combination (which should really be mentioned in the manufacturer's guidelines). It took us half the first rehearsal to work out how to inflate them: who knew that the pump was designed to suck as well as blow!?

Needless to say, our rehearsals have been filled with fits of riotous laughter. It's been wonderful to work with a cast and crew who - thankfully - don't take themselves too seriously. The whole production is a testimony to teamwork, commitment and a willingness to practise, listen...and make complete fools of themselves.

Talking of beds...We are extremely grateful to Rob Cording-Cook and family, who have kindly provided all three of the beds used in this production. We'd also like to thank the many members of Wimborne Drama Productions who have raided their blanket boxes, upended their ottomans and ransacked their airing cupboards in order to find pillows and linen. We hope the third week in February is not too cold or they might feel chilly without their spare duvets!

Alan Ayckbourn insists that the play is not a "farce" but a "comedy", which is undoubtedly true. Nevertheless, the circumstances leading to

its opening production (at the Library Theatre, Scarborough, in October 1975) are most definitely farcical. Ayckbourn was commissioned to write the play during January 1974 but, allegedly, did not begin the script until the Wednesday before rehearsals were due to begin on the Monday. On Sunday afternoon, he took some duplicated copies to Scarborough to begin rehearsals, without even showing it to his agent.

Interestingly, this is not the first time *Bedroom Farce* has been staged by Wimborne Drama Productions. It was previously performed in 1994 and was our first production at the newly reopened Tivoli. On that occasion, the role of Jan was played by Jan Stevenson who will provide the Book Cover for this performance. Judy Garrett - Delia in the current production - has also previously played the role of Jan. It will be interesting to see whether any of our cast members appear as Ernest or Delia in thirty years time!

We've had a great time directing this play together. It's our directorial debut for Wimborne Drama Productions, although we have previously directed David Tristram's *Forget*



The cast of *Bedroom Farce*, 1994

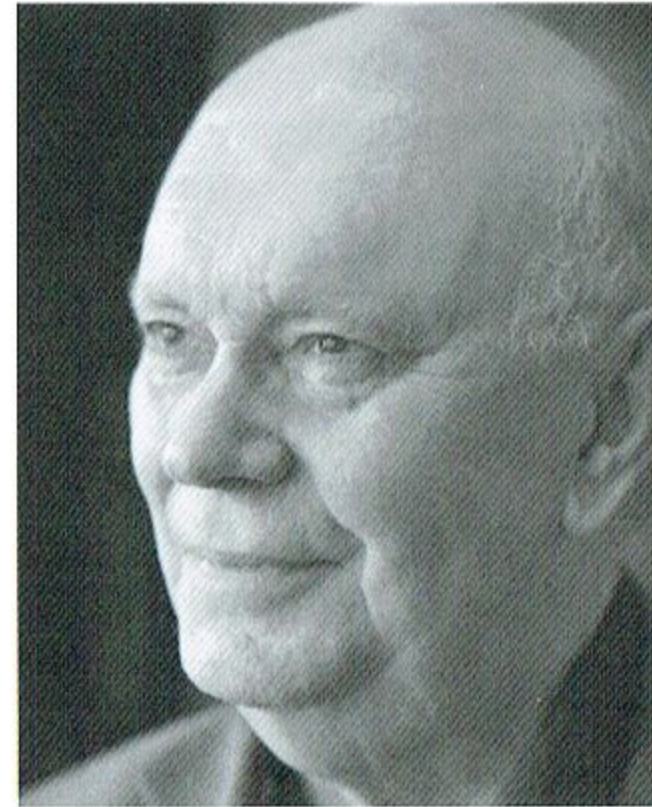
Me Knot for Broadstone Players. We'd like to thank all the cast and crew for their great contributions. What you see on stage is just a small part of the whole process. Backstage, a whole dedicated team is slaving away, dealing with props, costumes, lighting, sound and coordinating effects. Without them, none of this could have been possible. In particular, we'd like to give a special mention to Colin Pile for his creation of the "technical furniture" (you'll know what we mean when you've seen the play).

We hope you enjoy the show ...and that your bedrooms are less farcical than some of those you will see today.

Michelle Barter and Suzanne Viney, Directors

The Indispensable Alan Ayckbourn

SIR ALAN AYCKBOURN is one of the world's most popular and prolific playwrights. To date, he has written 89 full length plays. He is also an acclaimed director.



Every year between 1970 and 2000 there was at least one Ayckbourn play in the West End. His plays are richly tragicomic, focusing on the intricacies and peculiarities of personal relations, often among the middle-classes. Renowned theatre director Sir Peter Hall called him an indispensable chronicler of post-war England.

Alan was born in Hampstead, London, on 12 April, 1939. His mother was Irene Maud Worley – better known as the novelist Mary James – and his father Horace Ayckbourn, lead violinist with the London Symphony Orchestra.

Educated at Haileybury, Alan left school at the age of 17 to pursue a career in the theatre immediately gaining a job with the theatre impresario Sir Donald Wolfit in 1956. In 1957 he was employed as a stage manager and actor at the Library Theatre, Scarborough.

The Library Theatre had been founded in 1955 by Stephen Joseph and was home to the UK's first professional theatre-in-the-round company, Studio Theatre Ltd. Alan was inspired by Stephen Joseph, who became a mentor and encouraged Alan to both write and direct.

Alan's first professional writing commission was inadvertently inspired by his acting career when he complained about a role he was playing; Stephen threw down the gauntlet saying that if Alan wanted better roles, he should write one himself. Alan wrote *The Square Cat*, a success for the company in the summer of 1959.

Alan continued to act and write for the Library Theatre until 1962 when he was involved in the formation of the Victoria Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, the country's first permanent professional theatre in-the-round.

Alan premiered two plays there, *Christmas V Mastermind* and *Mr Whatnot*. The latter was produced in London in 1964 and received such a critical mauling that Alan retreated to the BBC in Leeds as a radio drama producer where he worked between 1965 and 1970.

Alan continued writing, though, and produced *Meet My Father* for the Library Theatre in 1965. This would be a turning point in his life. In 1967, the play – retitled *Relatively Speaking* – opened in the West End and was a phenomenal hit.

It launched him into the public eye and in quick succession, plays such as *How The Other Half Loves*, *Absurd Person Singular* and *The Norman Conquests*, established Alan Ayckbourn as one of the country's most popular and successful playwrights.

Bedroom Farce was commissioned by Sir Peter Hall for the National Theatre's new home on London's South Bank. It was produced there in 1977, having premiered in Scarborough in 1975.

Concurrent to success as a playwright, Alan's directing career also flourished. He directed his first play in 1961, *Gaslight*, at the Library Theatre and in 1963 directed the world premiere of one of his own plays for the first time. Since 1967 he has directed the world premieres of all his plays and since 1977, he has directed all the West End premieres of his plays bar one.

After Stephen Joseph died in 1967, Alan was instrumental in keeping the Library Theatre in Scarborough alive. He became Artistic Director in 1972. He oversaw the company's move to its present home, the Stephen Joseph Theatre, in 1996.

Alan Ayckbourn has received more than 35 awards and honours including two Oliviers, a Tony, two Molières and Lifetime Achievement Awards from both the Variety Club of Great Britain and the Writers' Guild of Great Britain. He was appointed a CBE in 1987 and in 1997 was knighted for services to theatre; the first playwright to be knighted since Sir Terence Rattigan.

In 2010, he received the prestigious Special Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Theatre. His plays have been regularly staged in America and more than 25 have been produced on Broadway and Off-Broadway.

In February 2006, Alan suffered a stroke and he stepped down as the Artistic Director of the Stephen Joseph Theatre in 2009, but continues to be closely associated with the venue where he premieres his new work and directs revivals of his plays.

His 88th and 89th plays, *Welcome to the Family* and *Constant Companions*, will premiere this year.

“To sleep... perchance to dream”

A Bed Biography by Suzanne Viney

MOST of us are conceived in a bed, born in a bed and die in a bed; in our lifetime, we spend more time in a bed than on any other piece of furniture. Even Napoleon Bonaparte - the infamous, bloodthirsty megalomaniac - asserted that he would not exchange his bed, “...for all the thrones in the world”.

Beds, in their rectangular splendour, are vital components of human existence.

Today, beds and bedrooms are synonymous with intimacy, solitude and sanctuary. However, this has not always been the case: historically, sleeping was a communal activity. It was once common for servants to sleep on the floor of the master’s bedchamber, or even in the bed itself. Enormous beds were tourist attractions and curiosities. The Great Bed of Ware, currently in the Victoria and Albert Museum, was installed in The White Hart Inn, Ware, Hertfordshire, in 1590. It measured ten by eleven feet and could accommodate the nocturnal activities of at least four couples, many of whom carved their names onto the bedposts.

Sharing beds with complete strangers in inns and boarding houses was commonplace until the eighteenth century: a stomach-churning fact considering that we each produce about 26 gallons of sweat in bed each year. In addition to any human bedfellows, we also share our sleeping quarters with around 1.5 million dust mites; a ten ounce pillow will double its weight in three years due to the presence of these microscopic squatters.

Infested or not, beds have often been symbols of wealth and status. In ancient Egypt, King Tutankhamun owned a bed made of ebony and gold, which was one of the “marvellous things” discovered by Howard Carter in 1922. In Mediaeval times, beds - being ostentatious items - were often used in the quest for social one-upmanship. In wealthy



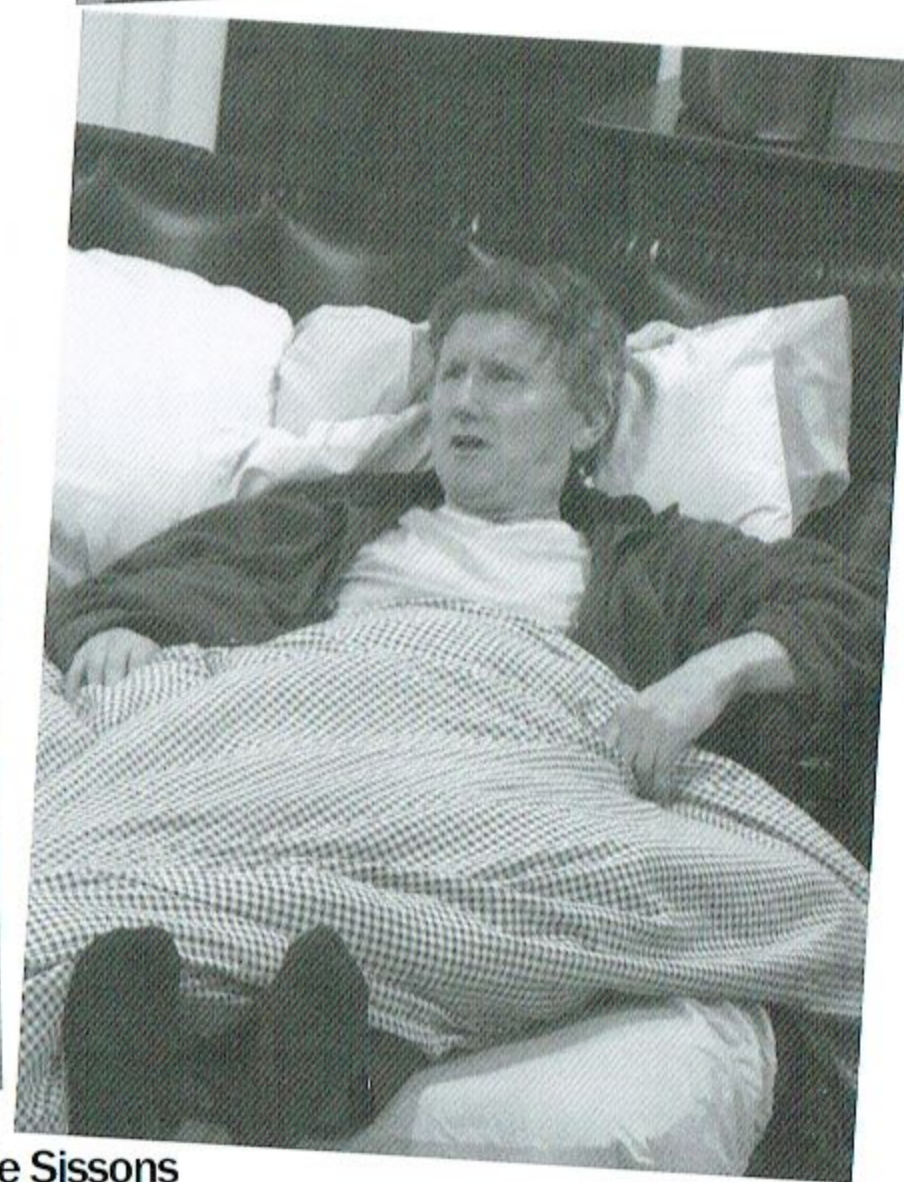
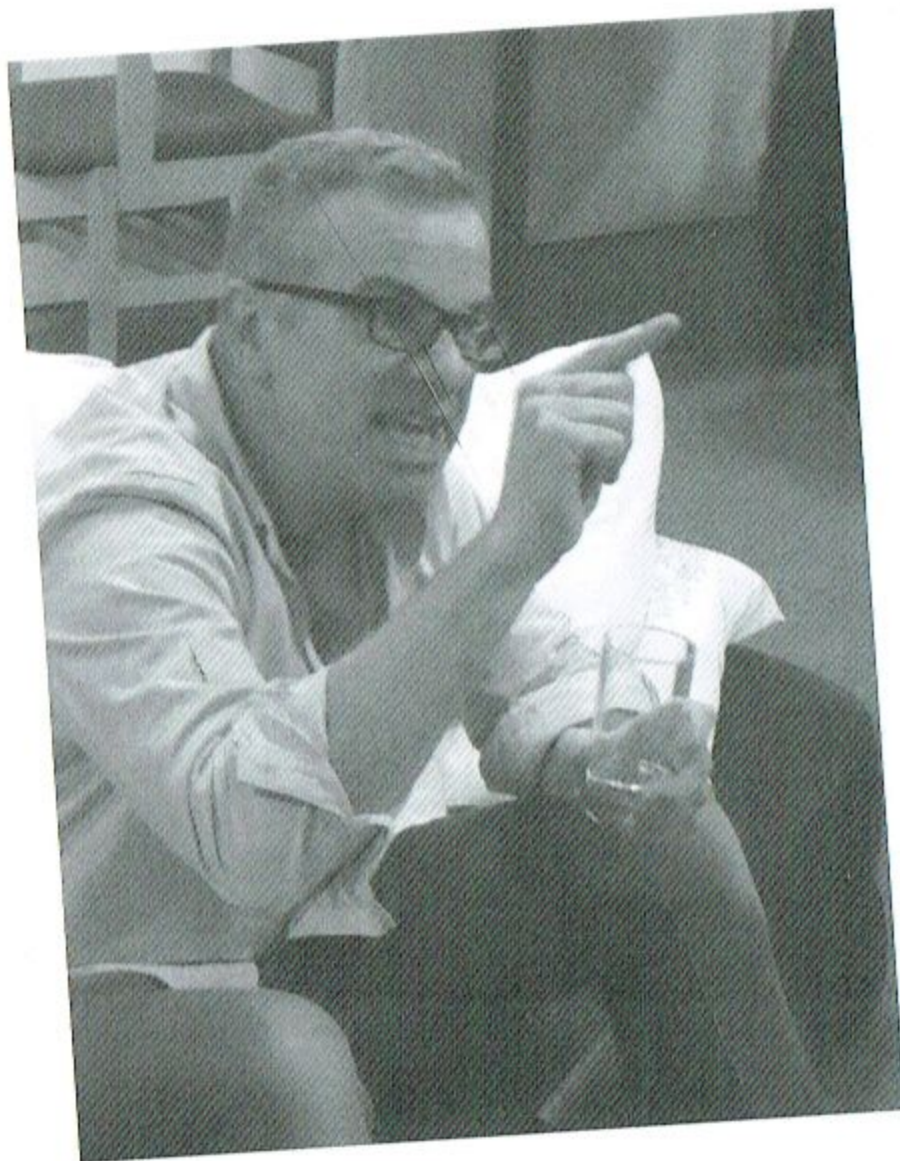
The Great Bed of Ware (V&A Museum)

households, they were displayed in reception rooms in the hope that they would be admired by guests. Another option was to ensure they were near windows and, consequently, in full view of passers-by.

The concept of the bedroom as a place of intimacy and privacy was a product of the Victorian age. Communal beds were considered immoral and curtains or bed hangings were added to provide extra privacy (and warmth) for the occupants. In wealthy households, couples sharing beds was seen as archaic and undesirable. In 1892, *The Yorkshire Herald* published an article that announced, “... the twin bed will, in time, succeed the double bed in all rooms occupied by two persons”. There was concern from Victorian doctors that sharing a bed would allow the weaker sleeper to drain the vitality of the stronger.

Nowadays: twin beds, Queen beds, bunk beds, camp beds, water beds, air beds, hammocks, futons, Z beds and roll-out beds. Anything goes! But remember, “laugh and the world laughs with you, snore and you sleep alone” (Anthony Burgess).

Sleep well!



Clockwise from top left: Richard Scotson, Judy Garrett, Tim Fearon, Rosie Nye, Colin Pile, James Renwick, Beth Morris and Julie Sissons

BEDROOM FARCE BY **ALAN AYCKBOURN**

The Cast in order of appearance

Ernest	TIM FEARON
Delia	JUDY GARRETT
Nick	COLIN PILE
Jan	JULIE SISSONS
Malcolm	JAMES RENWICK
Kate	BETH MORRIS
Trevor	RICHARD SCOTSON
Susannah	ROSIE NYE

Setting

The play is set in the present and takes place in three bedrooms in separate houses

Act I Saturday evening at 7pm
Act II A few moments later

Running time approximately 2 hours 30 minutes, including interval

In loving memory of Ann McColgan-Clark



The Creative Team

Directors	MICHELLE BARTER & SUZANNE VINEY
Stage Manager	TRACEY NICHOLLS
Deputy Stage Manager	KELLY WEBB
Sound	DAVID BEDDARD-BANKS
Properties	DEE HAWES
Costumes & Properties	HEATHER BIRCHENOUGH
Book Cover	JAN STEVENSON
Publicity & Programme	RICHARD NEAL
 <i>For the Tivoli Theatre:</i>	
Technical & Production Manager	KYLE BEST
Head of Sound	CHANDLER WHITELOCK
Assistant Stage Manager	FABIEN BARROW-BLANKEN

Production Acknowledgements

Special thanks to:

Cornish Bakehouse Poole for the supply of baked goods
Colin Pile for furniture adaptations
Nick Clark and Chris Durham for help with the set
Rob Cording-Cook & family for the loan of the beds

This production would not have been possible without the generous help and support of Daisy Graphic, Forest FM, Gullivers Bookshop, Radio Wimborne, Tivoli Theatre, Viewpoint, Wimborne Minster Town Council and Wimborne Royal British Legion

*Produced by Wimborne Drama Productions at the Tivoli Theatre, 23-25 February 2023
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Memories of Ann

EVERYBODY involved with Wimborne Drama Productions was desperately sad to lose our dear friend Ann McColgan-Clark to cancer just after Christmas at the end of 2022.

Ann joined the group in 2014 and over the next few years portrayed a wide variety of characters on stage, including a psychopathic killer (*The Hollow*, 2015), a gangster's moll (*The Ghost Train*, 2017) and Queen Elizabeth II in *Single Spies* in 2018 (pictured below).

Ann brought total commitment to every role she played, often portraying characters struggling to manage or suppress strong emotions. This always gave a vividness and immediacy to her performances that truly gripped audiences. As well as in leading dramatic roles, Ann also delighted us with comic cameos, such as the pushy reporter in *The Winslow Boy* (2018) and the registrar in *Shadowlands* (2016).

But it was not all about the limelight. Ann was more than happy to help out backstage or coordinate costumes. And when it came to set construction, it increasingly seemed to be that no production was complete without her expert wallpapering skills!

What we all really miss, though, is Ann's wonderfully warm and lively personality, her laughter and her kind and generous interest in other people. We send our love and condolences to her husband Nick and all her family.

Sam Moulton, Chairman



Meet the Cast

Tim Fearon (Ernest)

Last role: King Lear in Shakespeare's *King Lear* for The Extraordinary Theatre Company, October/November 2022. **Favourite roles:** King Lear, plus Richard, Duke of Gloucester in *Richard III* for Brownsea Open Air Theatre 2019; Alex in *Heisenberg - The Uncertainty Principle*, Bournemouth Little Theatre 2020; Voltore in *Volpone*, Bristol Old Vic, a long time ago! Kulygin in *The Three Sisters*, Birmingham Repertory Theatre, even longer ago! **Tell us about your character in this play:** A suppressed, repressed worrier and sardine lover. **Breakfast in bed or late night snack?** Neither. Unlike Ernest I can't stand eating in bed! **Watch TV in bed or read a book?** Read a book every time! Watching TV in bed is akin to eating in bed - NOT to be done! **Best bedroom you have ever slept in:** A fabulous, marble floored suite overlooking the sea in Saint Lucia, where every time we returned to the room after a wonderful day in the sun, the towels were on our bed, modelled as swans!

Judy Garrett (Delia)

Last role: Mrs Dashwood, *Sense and Sensibility*, Deans Court, Summer 2022, WDP. **Favourite roles:** For WDP - Elsie Bruno in *Strangers on a Train*, Grace Winslow in *The Winslow Boy* and Mrs Swabb in *Habeas Corpus*. For Broadstone Players - Ruth in

Entertaining Angels, Karen in *The Anniversary* and Teresa in *Memory of Water*. **Tell us about your character in this play:** Delia's character is, I feel, somewhat irritating and bossy; she thinks she is superior, very middle class and ultra respectable (not sure how husband Ernest tolerates her!!) I've enjoyed the challenge of exploring her. **Breakfast in bed or late night snack?** Late night snack (not pilchards!) **Watch TV in bed or read a book?** Read a book. **Best bedroom you have ever slept in:** I've slept in a few beds over the years! One that stands out and with a wonderful view was at Hotel Los Gigantes in Tenerife, overlooking the Atlantic, towards La Gomera.

Beth Morris (Kate)

Last role: Last role was as Margaret Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility* at Deans Court last summer. **Favourite roles:** Only had two roles with the group so far, Margaret in *Sense and Sensibility* and Ruby in *When We Are Married*, so not much choice, but both enjoyable and memorable roles. **Tell us about your character in this play:** Kate is, as mentioned in the play, beautifully uncomplicated - kind, caring and very patient! **Breakfast in bed or late night snack?** Can't I have both?! But probably breakfast (or more likely brunch) in bed. **Watch TV in bed or read a book?** More likely to watch TV in bed, although I do want to find more time for reading. **Best bedroom you have ever slept in:** Best bed I have ever

slept in must be the airbed at rehearsals.... But in seriousness, it has to be the hotel on the beach in Tulum, Mexico, mainly due to the incredible views and memories made.

Rosie Nye **(Susannah)**

Last role: Ethel in *Love From a Stranger*. **Favourite role:** Ethel will always be special as it was my first acting role with WDP. **Tell us about your character in this play:** Dangerously potty! **Breakfast in bed or late night snack?** Both! **Watch TV in bed or read a book?** Read a book - currently reading Agatha Christie's autobiography. **Best bedroom you have ever slept in:** My own bedroom! Whether my childhood one or the one in my new house, my own bedroom has always been the best one to sleep in.

Colin Pile **(Nick)**

Last role: My last role was in one of the one act plays for Broadstone Players, *A Cut in the Rates* by Alan Ayckbourn (2022). **Favourite roles:** The majority of plays I have performed in have been for Wimborne Drama Productions. The ones that are memorable are Bob Jackson in *Pack of Lies* (2011), Lieutenant Hibbert in *Journey's End* (2007) and Melchior in *On the Razzle* (2002). **Tell us about your character in this play:** Nick with his bad back tries childishly to elicit attention and sympathy from his wife. **Breakfast in**

bed or late night snack? Late night snack. Breakfast in bed is too much fuss. **Watch TV in bed or read a book?** I'd like to say read a book but I usually just listen to the radio. **Best bedroom you have ever slept in:** I stayed in a hotel just outside Rugby. The room was oak panelled with a very large bed.

James Renwick **(Malcolm)**

Last role: Edwards Ferrars - *Sense and Sensibility* - WDP - July 2022. **Favourite roles:** Barry Hopper, in a David Hare play *Murmuring Judges* for a group in Bristol in 2012. I've also played the Beast in *Beauty and the Beast*, the baddie in *Aladdin* and of course Edward Ferrars for WDP last year! **Tell us about your character in this play:** I'm Malcolm, a bit of a joker, married to Kate, and prone to the occasional strop... **Breakfast in bed or late night snack?** Breakfast in bed. **Watch TV in bed or read a book?** Tough choice, both are great! If you pushed me, I'd probably say TV. **Best bedroom you have ever slept in:** Not something I've ever really thought about! But I guess I'd have to say my bedroom at home - there's nothing quite like it!

Richard Scotson **(Trevor)**

Last role: Mr Palmer in *Sense and Sensibility* with Wimborne Drama Productions, Summer 2022. **Favourite roles:** Loved them all since I joined WDP in 2018, but acting in *Sense and Sensibility* was incredible. Fabulous cast, wonderful setting and

glorious summer days. Delayed because of Covid, it felt like a breath of fresh air. **Tell us about your character in this play:** Trevor. He's an enigma. Wants what he hasn't got, inflicts his misery on others and is a constant thorn in everyone's side. I'm working on finding on his more compassionate side, which appears a little in Act 2. **Breakfast in bed or late night snack?** Breakfast at Wetherspoons and late night After Eights. **Watch TV in bed or read a book?** TV in your bedroom? That's wrong. No one has a clothes cupboard in their lounge, do they? Love reading, but I'm not really a sesquipedalian librocubicularist. **Best bedroom you have ever slept in:** Can sleep anywhere. I slept in the porch of my house when I was a teenager after a party, as I'd forgotten the front door key. Sound asleep, until the police woke me up. Mum and Dad had some questions the following day. (To the family. Big love and many Happy Birthdays to those who are seeing the show.)

Julie Sissons **(Jan)**

Last role: *Little Shop of Horrors*, Wimborne Musical Theatre, April 2022. **Favourite roles:** Joy Gresham in *Shadowlands* and Robin in *Godspell* both performed at Buckfast Abbey with Unleashed Theatre Company. **Tell us about your character in this play:** She's not a very good nurse! **Breakfast in bed or late night snack?** Breakfast in bed. **Watch TV in bed or read a book?** Read a book. **Best bedroom you have ever slept in:** Hotel in Switzerland with amazing views of Lake Geneva.

WIMBORNE DRAMA PRODUCTIONS

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