

**WIMBORNE**  
DRAMA PRODUCTIONS



# BEDROOM FARCE

BY ALAN  
AYCKBOURN

**16 - 18 FEBRUARY 2023**  
**TIVOLI THEATRE**  
**WIMBORNE**

EVENINGS 7.30PM, £16. SAT MATINEE 2.30PM, £14

BOX OFFICE: 01202 885566 [TivoliWimborne.co.uk](http://TivoliWimborne.co.uk)

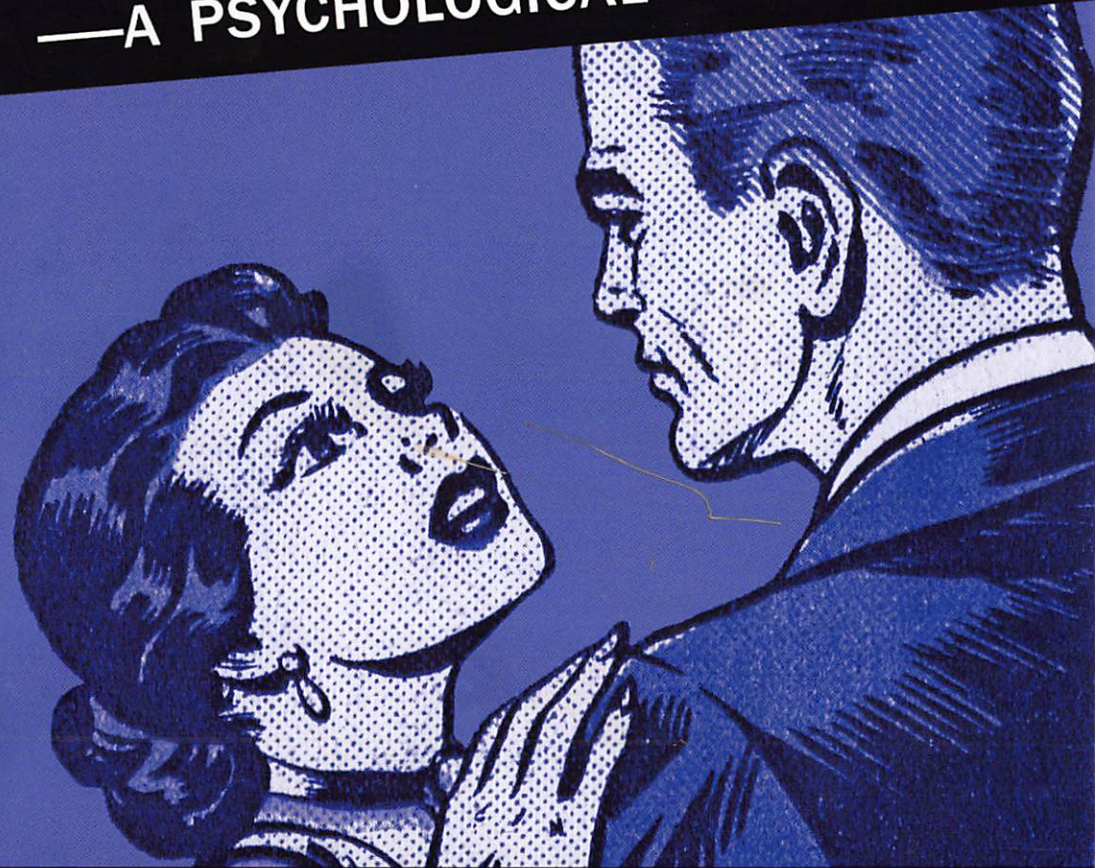
(Booking fees may apply)

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**WIMBORNE**  
DRAMA PRODUCTIONS

# LOVE FROM A STRANGER

BY AGATHA CHRISTIE & FRANK VOSPER  
—A PSYCHOLOGICAL THRILLER—



**20 - 22 October 2022**  
**Tivoli Theatre Wimborne**

# Director's Notes

HELLO and welcome to the wonderful Tivoli Theatre for our October production of *Love from a Stranger*.

Our plays by Agatha Christie are always popular – we hope that you love them as much as we love producing them and so it is for that reason that I relished the opportunity to take up the director's chair for the second time. This isn't your classic Agatha whodunnit however; it is a tense thriller that is based on one of her short stories.

It is an absolute honour to be directing another show for Wimborne Drama Productions having been a member of the group for the last 15 years. The last few years have been trying times for us all - personally they have given me a chance to reflect on what really matters in life and I can honestly say that I am overwhelmed to be part of a group that wholeheartedly supports one another - not just in our few days on stage but throughout the year.

There are so many people that I am indebted to for their help and support in putting on the show you see today, all of whom are mentioned elsewhere in this programme but some deserve a special mention.

First and foremost, this production would not have been possible without Michelle Barter. There are not enough superlatives to describe this exceptional lady - she has been my assistant director, set designer/builder, right hand woman and confidante, all at the same time as preparing to direct our next production of *Bedroom Farce* in February. Michelle is superbly talented and gifted in every way and I thank her from the bottom of my heart.

To my entire cast and crew, who have worked so hard and given so much from the very first rehearsal, thank you. This really has been an ensemble piece from the beginning but I must take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to Tracey Nicholls and Richard Cawte. They have worked tirelessly in their performances - this play demands a lot of them both and I am eternally grateful.

As always, Wimborne Drama Productions are extremely thankful to all the staff and volunteers at the Tivoli and we hope you enjoy the show.



Rob Cording-Cook

**Rob Cording-Cook - Director**

## WIMBORNE DRAMA PRODUCTIONS

# BEDROOM FARCE

**By Alan Ayckbourn**

16-18 February 2023

Tivoli Theatre

Directed by  
Michelle Barter &  
Suzanne Viney

Funny, gripping and acutely observed, Alan Ayckbourn's classic comedy lifts the lid on the secrets of marriage.

Over the course of one hilarious night, an outrageously selfish couple parade their problems around the bedrooms of three other couples, exposing the cracks in other people's marriages as well as their own.

President of  
Wimborne Drama Productions  
Malcolm Angel

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but my all-time favourites were Joy Gresham in *Shadowlands*, Elizabeth Bennett in *Pride & Prejudice* and Catherine Winslow in *The Winslow Boy*. I've also loved directing *A Man For All Seasons*, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Sense & Sensibility*, all for WDP. **Last good thriller I read:** I've just finished reading *Moriarty* by Anthony Horowitz - lots of thrilling plot twists and one huge one that I never saw coming - but then again, I never do! It's a brave author who takes on the mantle of Conan Doyle but he did the Sherlock Holmes author proud. **Something thrilling I've done:** I studied English & Film at university and my dissertation was on the psychological thriller/horror story *Silence of the Lambs*, so beware if I invite you round for dinner...

## ROSIE NYE

### Ethel

**Place of birth:** Chichester. **Last role:** Chloe Custardine in *While the Lights Were Out* by Jack Sharkey with the UWTSO Lampeter Theatre Society in 2019. **Previous thrillers:** this is my first time acting in a thriller. **Favourite role:** Chloe Custardine – her personality is completely opposite mine! **Last good thriller I read:** *And Then There Were None* by Agatha Christie. It's self-explanatory why it's so good! **Something thrilling I've done:** My other half and I were very thrilled to meet Sir Ian McKellen after we watched him in *Hamlet*. Also, as part of my undergraduate dissertation, I made a documentary about Tyneham Village. It's on Youtube and has had more than 3,000 views! It's something I am incredibly proud of.

# Agatha Christie: Queen of Crime

AGATHA MARY CLARISSA MILLER was born on 15 September 1890 in Torquay, to an English mother and an American father. She taught herself to read at five years old, and began writing her own poems from a young age. Her education was a combination of informal tutoring at home (mainly by her parents) and then being sent to teaching establishments in Paris where she became an accomplished opera singer and pianist. By the age of 18 she was amusing herself with writing short stories – some of which were published in much revised form in the 1930s.

She spent a three month "coming out season" in Cairo which resulted in various marriage proposals, and then in 1912 she met Archie Christie, a qualified aviator who had applied to join the Royal Flying Corps. They married on Christmas Eve 1914, with Archie returning to the war in France on Boxing Day. Agatha became a nurse in the Voluntary Aid Detachment of the Red Cross Hospital in Torquay, and when the hospital opened a dispensary, she accepted an offer to work there and completed the examination of the Society of Apothecaries. This sparked a lifelong interest in the use of poisons, which made a huge contribution to her first novel *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*. The murderer's use of poison was so well described that Christie received an unprecedented honour for a writer of fiction – a review in the *Pharmaceutical Journal*.



Agatha Christie on her Grand Tour in 1922 (Photo: The Christie Archive Trust)

She was spurred on to write a detective story by her elder sister Madge, who set her the challenge. As there were Belgian refugees in most parts of the English countryside, Torquay being no exception, Christie thought that a Belgian refugee, perhaps a former great Belgian policeman, would make an excellent detective for her first novel. Hercule Poirot was born.

By 1919, at the end of the war, Archie had found a job in the City and they had just enough money to rent a flat in London. Later that year Agatha gave birth to their daughter, Rosalind. This was also the year that publisher John Lane contracted Christie to produce five more books. She went on to be one of the first authors Penguin ever published in paperback, with fantastic results.

Following the war Agatha continued to write and to travel with Archie, including a Grand Tour of the Empire in 1922 during which she learned to surf in South Africa and Hawaii. Agatha and Archie divorced in 1928, and Agatha then fulfilled one of her lifelong ambitions: to travel on the Orient Express to the Middle East. This and future trips are recognised in books such as *Murder on the Orient Express*, *Death on the Nile*, *Murder in Mesopotamia*, *Appointment With Death* and *They Came to Baghdad*, as well as many short stories.

During a trip to the excavations at Ur in 1930, Agatha met archaeologist Max Mallowan – the man who became her second husband, and who was fourteen years her junior. Their marriage would last forty-six years. Agatha accompanied Max on his annual archaeological expeditions over the next thirty years. The excursions did nothing to stem the flow of her writing and her book, *Come, Tell Me How You Live*, published in 1946, wittily describes her early days on digs in Syria with Max.

By 1930, having written several novels and short stories, Agatha had created a new character to act as detective. Miss Jane Marple was an amalgam of several old ladies she used to meet in villages she visited as a child. When she created Miss Marple, Agatha did not expect her to become Poirot's rival, but with *The Murder at the Vicarage*, Miss Marple's first outing in a full length novel, it appeared she had produced another popular and enduring character.

## LINDSAY MCGOWAN

### Mavis Wilson

**Place of birth:** Southampton.

**Last role:** Mrs Palmer in WDP's *Sense and Sensibility* in July at Deans Court. **Previous**

**thrillers:** *Towards Zero* by Agatha Christie with WDP.

**Favourite role:** Mrs Palmer in *Sense and Sensibility* because it was fun to play someone very different in character to me (though my husband may disagree). **Last good thriller I**

**saw:** I do enjoy a classic thriller movie, but if I had to pick a more recent one, it would be *Fracture* with Anthony Hopkins. Nobody plays a villain as well as him.

**Something thrilling I've done:** I was a film extra in the remake of *Rebecca* when it was being filmed at Cranborne Manor. I was dressed as a Marlene Dietrich type character, in a

top hat and tails, for a ballroom scene. Hair and make-up took ages. It was an experience, particularly as they were trying to create a storm on the hottest day of the year!

## TRACEY NICHOLLS

### Cecily Harrington

**Place of birth:** Hammersmith.

**Last role:** *When We Are Married*, though not intentionally! I was stage manager but covered the role of Ruby when our poor actress came down with

Covid. **Previous thrillers:** *Dial M for Murder*, *The Unexpected Guest*, *An Inspector Calls*, *The Ghost Train* and *Towards Zero* (all for WDP) and *Deadly Nightcap* with Churchill

**Productions. Favourite roles:** I've had the privilege of playing a number of wonderful roles over the years,

**Called Me Mother! Favourite roles:** Francis Levison (*East Lynne*) and Maurice Mullins (*A Murder Has Been Arranged*).  
**Last good thriller I read:** *The One From The Other* by Phillip Kerr. This was one of the last in the Bernie Gunther series of books which tell the stories of a German detective from the early 1930s to the rise of the wall in Berlin. Probably, the best series I have ever read.  
**Something thrilling I've done:** In the late '70s I had a private tour of Warner Brothers Studio and then went on location filming for *Police Woman*. There I met Angie Dickinson and during a break in filming had a lengthy conversation with her over coffee.

## JENNY HUGHES

### Aunty Loo-Loo

**Place of birth:** Poole. **Last role:** Samantha in *Forget-Me-Knot*,

Broadstone Players. **Previous thrillers:** I played the murderer in *Death in High Heels*, Ferndown Drama. **Favourite roles:** Mistress Quickly in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Bournemouth Shakespeare Players, and Veta Louise in Ferndown Drama's production of *Harvey*. **Last good thriller I read:** *The Searcher* by Tana French. This is a slow burner but no less a thriller for that. The language is beautiful, its imagery of rural Ireland is absolutely stunning, while the measured, threatening build-up of evil intensifies on every page. Atmospheric and genuinely unputdownable.  
**Something thrilling I've done:** I'm lucky enough to have had many thrilling experiences in my life but possibly the most surprising, now that I've reached Aunty Loo-Loo's age, is that my first ever job was as a singer in a rock band.

In 1971 Agatha was made a Dame of the British Empire. Her last public appearance was at the opening night of the 1974 film version of *Murder on the Orient Express* starring Albert Finney as Hercule Poirot. Her verdict? A good adaptation with the minor point that Poirot's moustaches weren't luxurious enough.

Agatha died peacefully on 12 January 1976. She is buried in the churchyard of St Mary's, Cholsey, near Wallingford, Oxfordshire, where she and Max lived for more than forty years.

The actor and playwright Frank Vosper persuaded Agatha Christie to let him adapt her short story *Philomel Cottage* into the play *Love from a Stranger* in 1936. The first night was so tense there were reports that some of the audience fainted. It received rave reviews and ran for five months, with Vosper starring as Bruce Lovell. He then took the play to Broadway where it ran for another couple of months later that year. The play was twice turned into a film.

## Agatha and Queen Elizabeth

IN HER autobiography, Agatha Christie described dining with Queen Elizabeth II at Buckingham Palace as one of the most exciting things that ever happened to her.

She said it was one of "two summits of ambition fulfilled" - the other was owning a bottle-nosed Morris car.

She described the Queen as "so small, and slender, in her simple dark red velvet gown with one beautiful jewel", and remembered, "her kindness and easiness in talking".

Agatha Christie was honoured by Queen Elizabeth II when she gave her the title of Dame Commander of the British Empire in 1971.

On another occasion, the Queen met Agatha at the premiere of the film *Murder on the Orient Express* in London in 1974, pictured below (photo CSU Archives/Everett Collection).



# The Mysterious Death of Frank Vosper

FRANK VOSPER'S life ended in a mystery worthy of Agatha Christie.

Vosper was a successful stage actor, best known for playing Henry VIII in *Rose Without a Thorn*. He also appeared in more than 20 films including Alfred Hitchcock's *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. His life was cut tragically short at the age of 36.

In March 1937 he was returning to England from New York with his partner, the actor Peter Willes, on board the liner SS Paris. Other passengers included the American writer Ernest Hemingway and Muriel Oxford – Miss Great Britain 1935 – who had been taking screen tests in Hollywood.

On the night before the liner was due to arrive in Plymouth, Frank Vosper disappeared.

Two weeks later, his badly bruised body was found washed up at the foot of the Seven Sisters, just west of Beachy Head, about 200 miles away.

Was it an accident, suicide or murder?

One press report at the time said that Vosper had been seen arguing with fellow passengers during the voyage and might have got into a fight. Another newspaper said that Willes had been flirting with Muriel Oxford and that Vosper could have jumped overboard in a fit of jealousy.

The night before his disappearance, Vosper and Willes had been partying with Muriel. She confirmed at the coroner's inquest that she had danced with Willes before ordering a bottle of



WDP. **Last good thriller I read or saw:** I don't really like thrillers, preferring sci-fi, such as Arthur C Clarke's books, *Babylon 5*, *Star Trek* and *The Expanse* on TV and the *Star Wars* films. **Something thrilling I've done:** I have flown a plane over Niagara Falls and did several circuits to allow my passengers to take lots of fabulous photographs.

## TONY FELTHAM

### Nigel Lawrence

**Place of birth:** Poole Hospital.

**Last role:** I played Albert Parker in *When We Are Married*. **Previous thrillers:** I was in WDP's productions of *The House Guest*, *The Hollow* and *Towards Zero*. **Favourite roles:** Lord Fancourt Baberley in *Charley's Aunt* at The Tivoli with Wimborne Drama Productions in 2004, Bill

Snibson in *Me and My Girl* at The Tivoli with Wimborne Musical Theatre Society in 1999 and Trotter in *Journey's End* for WDP at The Tivoli in 2007. **Last good thriller I saw:** *Last Night In Soho* - I love any film that Edgar Wright is involved with. **Something thrilling I've done:** I recently did a skydive, jumping out of a plane from 13,000 feet to raise money for CCLG.

## RUSS GUILLAUME

### Hodgson

**Place of birth:** Sherborne. **Last role:** Stingo in *She Stoops To Conquer* at Deans Court in 2019. **Previous thrillers:** *The Ghost Train* (twice), *Dead On Nine*, *A Murder Has Been Arranged*, *Rebecca*, *And Then There Were None*, *The Hollow* and *East Lynne Or Never*

# Meet the Cast

## RICHARD CAWTE

### Bruce Lovell

**Place of birth:** Honiara, Solomon Islands. **Last role:** Robert Zeinfeld, *Forget-Me-Knot*, Broadstone Players.

**Previous thrillers:** *Strangers on a Train* (WDP), *Dial M for Murder* (Broadstone Players), *Never the Sinner* (London Playhouse).

**Favourite roles:**

The fab cast, crew and director working on this play mean that Bruce is right up there. I'll always have a soft spot for Charley Bruno in *Strangers on a Train* too, because he got me back on stage after a 30-year absence! **Last good thriller I saw:** Watching Liverpool beating Chelsea on penalties in last season's EFL Cup Final! 21 spot kicks were taken and scored before the Chelsea

keeper missed his, to hand Liverpool the trophy!

**Something thrilling I've done:**

I once tried to climb the Great Pyramid at Giza in the middle of the night, only to be arrested by several heavily-armed policemen, mounted on camels!

## CHRIS DURHAM

### Dr Gribble

**Place of birth:** London. **Last role:** Henry Ormonroyd, the drunken photographer, in *When We Are Married*, at the Tivoli in February this year.

**Previous thrillers:** *Towards Zero* in 2021, playing the part of Mathew Trevis. **Favourite roles:** Arthur Winslow in *The Winslow Boy* in 2018 and The Duke of Norfolk in *A Man for All Seasons* in 2014, both for

champagne to be taken to her state room. She asked Vosper and Willes to join her. They sat talking and after about 20 minutes, Vosper got up and walked across the state room to the private lounge. Muriel thought Vosper wanted some air and she showed him how to open the window. Later when she and Willes couldn't find him, they raised the alarm.

At the inquest, which also heard testimony from two night stewards, the captain, Vosper's father and his solicitor William Pengelly, it was established that Vosper probably had climbed out of the window, even though it was small - Pengelly placed a cardboard frame the same size as the window over his shoulders to demonstrate that it was possible - but did he jump to his death, or was it an accident?

Willes could not believe Vosper had committed suicide. He had spent the whole journey writing a new play, he told the inquest. He believed that Vosper, who was very short sighted and not wearing his glasses, must have thought the low sill of the window led to the boat deck and not straight into the sea. He added that Vosper always preferred to leave parties unobtrusively so as not to appear rude.

Pengelly said his client's financial position was good. He confirmed Vosper was rather sensitive about his poor eyesight and would never wear his glasses in public.

Vosper's father said that his son was always bright and cheerful and was particularly level headed. He was not quarrelsome, and his father had never seen him drunk.

The jury at the inquest took just 25 minutes to reach an open verdict on Frank Vosper's death. They decided that he met his death by drowning, but it was impossible to say how he got into the water.

The true circumstances of his death remain a mystery to this day.



Muriel Oxford

# The Mystery of Christie's Disappearance Explained?

IT WAS one of the most notorious disappearances of the 20th century and has perplexed biographers ever since.

In the winter of 1926 the 36-year-old Agatha Christie had recently experienced the death of her mother, and had just discovered that her husband Colonel Archibald Christie was having an affair.

On 4 December the novelist's car was found abandoned near Guildford, and after police began a manhunt rumours began to circulate that Christie had taken her own life.

The search for Christie involved thousands of volunteers, and the media attention led some to speculate that the vanishing was a publicity stunt, a claim angrily denied by the author's secretary who said she was "too much of a lady for that".

Detectives consulted Christie's own work in a bid to understand her motives, but the author eventually turned up 11 days later in the Yorkshire town of Harrogate, with no memory of what she did or who she was. She had booked into a hotel under the name Mrs Tressa Neele, the surname of her husband's mistress.

This dramatic event, and the reference to her love rival, has led some people to speculate that Christie intended the whole episode - which she barely spoke of again - as a stunt to spite her cheating husband or to frame him for murder.

But historian Lucy Worsley now believes Agatha Christie's disappearance was prompted by a rare psychological state caused by emotional trauma.

Worsley has said that Christie entered a "fugue state", in which sufferers lose their sense of self while experiencing amnesia and setting off on journeys to unexpected locations.

Worsley told *BBC History Magazine*: "This mysterious disappearance of 11 days seems to be the central injustice of Agatha Christie's life.

"By 1926 Agatha was a successful novelist, and she was under a lot of pressure to keep producing books. But her mother

# The Creative Team

Director

**ROB CORDING-COOK**

Assistant Director & Stage Manager

**MICHELLE BARTER**

ASMs & Properties

**JUDY GARRETT & DEE HAWES**

Set Design & Construction

**MICHELLE BARTER**

**DAVE BARTER, NICK CLARK**

**CHRIS DURHAM, COLIN PILE**

& Members of the Company

**KELLY WEBB**

Costume Supervisor

**JAN STEVENSON**

Book Cover

**DAVID BEDDARD-BANKS**

Sound

**SUZANNE VINEY &**

**GARY PAINE**

Stage Crew

**RICHARD NEAL**

Publicity & Programme

**ELOISE PERRY**

Artwork

*For the Tivoli Theatre:*

**KYLE BEST**

Technical & Production Manager

**CHANDLER WHITELOCK**

Head of Sound

**FABIEN BARROW-BLANKEN**

Assistant Stage Manager

## Production Acknowledgements

Costumes supplied by **Hierarchy Costumes**

This production would not have been possible without the generous help and support of **Daisy Graphic, Forest FM, Gullivers Bookshop, Minster Press, Radio Wimborne, St Mary's Church Ferndown, Tivoli Theatre, Viewpoint, Wimborne Minster Town Council, Wimborne Royal British Legion, Yarrells Preparatory School, Steve Garrett, Dominic Cording-Cook, Bethan Morris & Broadstone Players**

*Produced by Wimborne Drama Productions at the Tivoli Theatre, 20-22 October 2022. This amateur production of "Love From A Stranger" is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals Ltd. on behalf of Samuel French Ltd. [www.concordtheatricals.co.uk](http://www.concordtheatricals.co.uk). "Love From A Stranger" © 1936 Agatha Christie Limited All rights reserved. 'AGATHA CHRISTIE' and the Agatha Christie Signature Mark are trademarks of Agatha Christie Ltd.. All rights reserved. The rights to this play are controlled by Agatha Christie Ltd. For further information about this play, others by Agatha Christie and about other stage adaptations of her stories, please visit: [www.agathachristie.com](http://www.agathachristie.com). The videotaping or making of electronic or other audio and/or visual recordings or streams of this production is strictly prohibited, a violation of United Kingdom Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 and an actionable offence.*



# LOVE FROM A STRANGER

BY AGATHA CHRISTIE & FRANK VOSPER  
—A PSYCHOLOGICAL THRILLER—

## The Cast in order of appearance

Auntie Loo-Loo	<b>JENNY HUGHES</b>
Mavis Wilson	<b>LINDSAY MCGOWAN</b>
Cecily Harrington	<b>TRACEY NICHOLLS</b>
Bruce Lovell	<b>RICHARD CAWTE</b>
Nigel Lawrence	<b>TONY FELTHAM</b>
Hodgson	<b>RUSS GUILLAUME</b>
Ethel	<b>ROSIE NYE</b>
Dr Gribble	<b>CHRIS DURHAM</b>

## Setting

Act 1 - Cecily and Mavis's flat  
Acts 2 & 3 - A country cottage

## Time

Act 1:  
Scene 1 - Early in March 1952  
Scene 2 - Two hours later  
Act 2:  
Scene 1 - Six weeks later  
Interval  
Scene 2 - September 1952  
Act 3:  
Scene 1 - Two weeks later  
Scene 2 - 40 minutes later

Running time approximately 2 hours 25 minutes, including interval

*In loving memory of Dorothy Dodman and Val Joliffe*

died that year, and she went into an episode of what today would be described as a depression.

"She reported forgetfulness, tearfulness, insomnia, an inability to cope with normal life. Her mental state became so bad that she considered suicide. She then entered, I believe, into a fugue state.

"It causes you to step right outside your normal self and adopt another persona, so that you don't have to think about the trauma you've been experiencing."

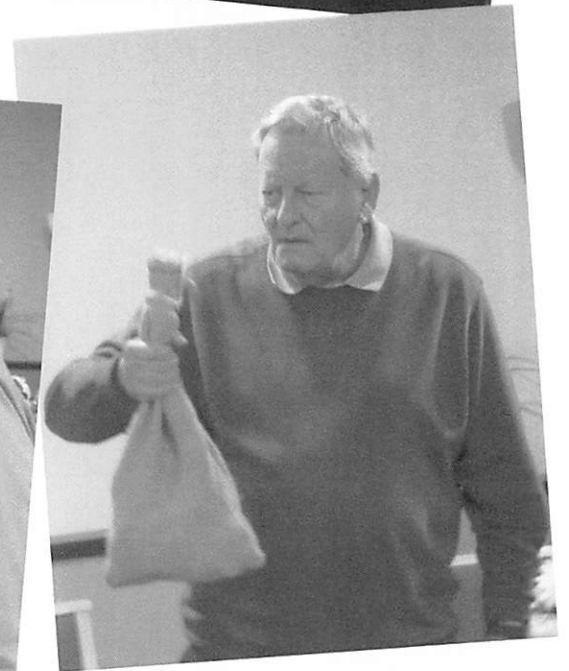
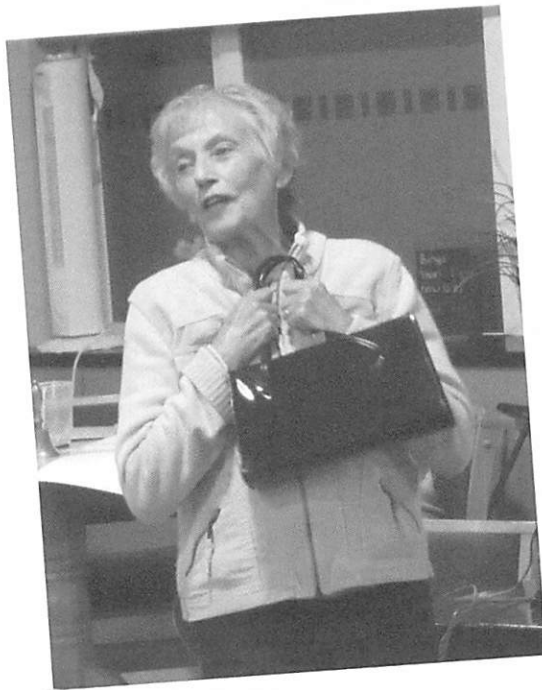
She said: "That's not framing your cheating husband for murder, that is living with a really serious mental health condition.

"And yet the narrative is that she was somehow a bad person who was playing some sort of trick on the world; to frame her husband or get attention to sell novels."

A few months after Christie's ordeal she filed for divorce from her husband. Two year later, the author remarried and her ex-husband married Miss Neele.

Christie gave one interview touching on the subject of her disappearance, in which she alluded to wanting to deliberately crash her car, but deciding against it. She later bumped her head while driving and said that after this moment she was no longer "Mrs Christie". She did not mention the incident in her autobiography.





**Clockwise from top left: Jenny Hughes, Tracey Nicholls, Richard Cawte, Lindsay McGowan, Russ Guillaume, Chris Durham, Rosie Nye and Tony Feltham**