

STRANGERS ON A TRAIN

By Craig Warner

Based on the novel by Patricia Highsmith



WIMBORNE
DRAMA PRODUCTIONS

17-19 October 2019
TIVOLI THEATRE WIMBORNE

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Welcome to the Tivoli Theatre for this production of *Strangers on a Train*. It is a play which I saw performed many years ago, and which I remembered as rightly deserving its description as a psychological thriller. Just how much it deserves that description has become increasingly obvious during rehearsals, as we have explored the many nuances of the characters and plot.

The original story was written by Patricia Highsmith in 1950, and was soon adapted into a successful film by Alfred Hitchcock. Much later, Craig Warner adapted the book for the stage. The film and the play both use Patricia Highsmith's original story, but the results are quite different. Film allows a degree of realism not possible on the stage as you can always be shown exactly where the characters are, and the action can range over widely different locations. A stage play relies more on the audience's imagination for a sense of location, and much more information is given by description. Our production has a strong visual element to support the narrative of the play, but there will still be plenty of scope for your imagination.

It has been a hugely rewarding experience directing this play. I have been very fortunate to work with such a wonderfully talented and committed team. My thanks go to the cast, the production team and the technical staff at the Tivoli Theatre; some 20 people in all. They bring a wealth of experience to the production, as you will see from the details in the programme.

I hope you enjoy watching this play as much as we have enjoyed preparing it. You'll talk to your friends about it, but you'll never again talk to strangers on a train!



Phyllis Spencer

Phyllis Spencer - Director

THE TALENTED MISS HIGHSMITH

Patricia Highsmith was born in Fort Worth, Texas in 1921. Highsmith, who wrote some 20 novels and seven short story collections, examined the darkest sides of human nature and frequently portrayed a world chillingly free of morality or consequences.

She had an unhappy childhood. Her parents separated several months before her birth, and she spent her earliest years with her maternal grandmother, who taught her to read before she was two years old. Her mother remarried and brought her to New York when



Patricia Highsmith in her twenties

she was about six. Highsmith's mother and stepfather frequently fought bitterly, and she developed a strong dislike for both.

She began writing chilling stories in high school. One story, about a murderous nanny, was rejected by her high school's literary magazine. She studied English at Barnard College, New York, then took a job writing comic book scripts.

Her first novel, *Strangers on a Train*, was rejected by six publishers before appearing in print in 1950. Alfred Hitchcock directed a 1951 film version of the movie, scripted by Raymond Chandler. Although she was paid only \$7,000 for the film rights, it was enough to support her writing full time.

As a writer, Patricia Highsmith was far more interested in the psychology of her characters than she was in writing typical



detective stories. In fact, her favourite character, charming murderer Tom Ripley, is never caught, and indeed finds fortune and prosperity from his string of murders. Ripley first appeared in *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1957) and starred in four more novels, the last of which, *Ripley Under Water*, was published in 1991. All of the novels have been adapted for the big screen, the most well-known being Anthony Minghella's 1999 version of *The Talented Mr. Ripley* with Matt Damon, Jude Law and Gwyneth Paltrow.

Other works by Patricia Highsmith included *The Price of Salt* (1952), her only novel in which no violent crime occurs and from which the 2015 film *Carol* starring Cate Blanchett was adapted, *Deep Water* (1957), *A Game for the Living* (1958), *The Two Faces of January* (1964) and *Edith's Diary* (1977).

Highsmith spent most of her adult life living abroad, eventually settling in Switzerland after stints in the United Kingdom, Italy, and France. She had many lovers, both men and women, but no long-lasting relationships. According to her biographer Joan Schenkar, "Pat thought about love the way she thought about murder: as an emotional urgency between two people, one of whom dies in the act".

She never married and preferred living alone, except for her many cats. An animal lover, she wrote an entire short story collection, *The Animal Lover's Book of Beastly Murders* (1975), in which animals avenge themselves on their human owners.

She suffered frequent bouts of depression and was a chronic alcoholic. She was outspoken and known to create havoc at dinner tables. One of her editors, Gary Fisketjon, described her as "very rough, very difficult ... But she was also dryly funny, and great fun to be around".

The author J.G. Ballard said she was "every bit as deviant and quirky as her mischievous heroes, and didn't seem to mind if everyone knew it".

Highsmith died from lung cancer in Switzerland in 1995 at the age of 74. She left her estate, worth an estimated \$3 million, to the Yaddo artists' community in New York, where she spent two months in 1948 writing the first draft of *Strangers on a Train*.

CRAIG WARNER

Craig Warner is a playwright and screenwriter who lives and works in Suffolk. He was born in Hollywood, California, in 1964, although for him it wasn't 'Hollywood', as in the near-mythical entertainment capital, when he was growing up. "It was just home."

His first thought was that he would be an actor. His next was that he would be a playwright, and it was that second idea that stuck.

At 17 he wrote his first play, influenced by Edward Albee, and "decided to commit to being playwright". After high school he moved to New York and then to London, which offered a thriving pub theatre scene, and a market for radio plays.

His first radio play for BBC Radio 4, *Great Men of Music*, in 1988, was performed by Phil Davis and was included in Radio 4's first Young Playwrights Festival. His second play in 1989, *By Where the Old Shed Used to Be*, with Miranda Richardson, won the Giles Cooper Award for Best Radio Plays of the Year. He was the award's youngest ever winner. His play *Figure With Meat* (1991) also won a Giles Cooper Award.

For television, he wrote *The Queen's Sister* for Channel 4 (2004), which was nominated for several BAFTA awards, and



Craig Warner

Maxwell for BBC2 (2006), which starred David Suchet as Robert Maxwell. Other projects include the mini-series *Julius Caesar* for Warner Bros (2002), *The Last Days of Lehman Brothers* for BBC2 (2009) and *Codebreaker* for Channel 4 (2011).

Craig Warner is also a composer and has written music and songs for a number of his works, including a full-length musical for BBC Radio 3 about the Ancient Greek legend of Cassandra, the mythical woman cursed to foresee true prophecies that others disbelieve due to her perceived mental instability, called *Agonies Awakened* (1997).

In 1995 he acquired the rights to adapt Patricia Highsmith's novel *Strangers on a Train* into a play. He did so first for BBC Radio 4 in 1996, starring Saskia Reeves, Michael Sheen, Anton Lesser and Bill Nighy. His stage adaptation premiered in the West End in 2013, starring Jack Huston, Laurence Fox, Imogen Stubbs, and MyAnna Buring.

The novel of course had also been the inspiration for Alfred Hitchcock's 1951 film starring Farley Granger, Ruth Roman and Robert Walker. But Craig Warner is keen to emphasise that the play is an adaptation of Highsmith's novel, and not of Hitchcock's film.

"It's disappointing to me that people are so distracted by the fact that there was another work created out of this book, which was so famous," he says.

"I can't imagine that they would have that reaction if they had read the book. The book is morally complex in a way that Hitchcock's film isn't at all. It's about spiritual decay. The film and the novel couldn't be more different."

THE GOLDEN AGE OF TRAIN TRAVEL

Long before supersonic jets made it easy to cross the country, train travel was the elegant way to get from place to place in the United States. During the golden age of American trains, their sleek, opulent interiors featured plush seats, porters for your every need and gleaming dining cars.

The 20th Century Limited was an express passenger train operated by the New York Central nightly from New York to Chicago. The 'Century' operated from 1902 until the last run in 1967. In 1938 industrial designer Henry Dreyfuss was commissioned to design their famous streamlined trains in Art Deco style, first pulled by steam engines and then from the late 1940s by diesel.

If leaving from New York, you departed at 6pm and arrived the next morning in Chicago at 8.45am. Settling in for the evening, after boarding the Century in downtown Manhattan, you enjoyed cocktails



The 'Century' leaving Chicago

in the observation car, dinner with views of the Hudson, a good night's sleep and then breakfast in bed or in the dining car - all included in

your first class Pullman fare.

For passengers wanting to travel further west, in Chicago you could board the streamlined 'Super Chief', the premiere diesel-powered Pullman sleeper train that used to run daily from Chicago to Los Angeles, via Kansas, New Mexico and Arizona. It was operated by the Sante Fe railway company (although difficult terrain prevented the main line from actually reaching Sante Fe, New Mexico).

From the late 1930s to the 1950s, Hollywood stars adopted the Super Chief as the primary mode of travel. The passenger list included Frank Sinatra, Zero Mostel, Janet Leigh, Ella Fitzgerald, Elizabeth Taylor, Paul Newman, Alan Ladd and Vincent Price.

The dining car was the heart of train life, a place for passengers to relax and enjoy a meal in the company of newfound friends. Menus included caviar, filet mignon and lobster. Bar tenders in the club cars took orders for Manhattans, Scotch highballs and very dry Martinis.

For the discerning traveller, Pullman was the only way to travel across America.



"oh, what a beautiful, beautiful train..."

new Super Chief

Why is when you're through dinner? And the
No wonder so many people look out "I usually have to get up"
No wonder the "oh, what a beautiful, beautiful train"
and pulled in with only five of your time about
a pleasant trip, unless you're looking for a
The excitement can be your whole life or just a day.



A 1951 advert for the 'Super Chief'

STRANGERS ON A TRAIN

By Craig Warner
Based on the novel by Patricia Highsmith

THE CAST

Charles Bruno

Elsie Bruno

Guy Haines

Anne Faulkner

Frank Myers

Robert Treacher

Arthur Gerard

RICHARD CAWTE

JUDY GARRETT

ROB CORDING-COOK

JEMMA CABLE

JAMES BOURNER

RICHARD SCOTSON

COLIN PILE

PERIOD AND SETTING

The action takes place in America in the 1950s over several months

Running time approximately 2 hours 30 minutes, including a 20 minute interval



*Produced by Wimborne Drama Productions at the Tivoli Theatre,
17-19 October 2019. Copyright by Craig Warner, copyright agent
Catherine King of 42M&P, 1-4 Argyll Street, London W1F 7TA.*

THE CREATIVE TEAM

Director

Assistant Director/Book Cover

Stage Manager

ASMs

Costumes

Carpentry & Furniture
Renovation

Publicity & Programme

Tivoli Production Manager

Head of Lighting

Head of Sound

PHYLLIS SPENCER

DAVID PILE

MICHELLE BARTER

BETHANY BARFOOT

DAVID BEDDARD

DEE HAWES

CALUM HEARNE

GARY PAINE

PAUL STOCKER

TRACEY NICHOLLS

BETHANY BARFOOT

LIZZIE PETERS

COLIN PILE

RICHARD NEAL

KYLE BEST

LUKE BAINES

CHANDLER WHITELOCK

PRODUCTION ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This production would not have been possible without the generous help of **Gilly Snaith** who kindly allowed us to film in her house, and **Sid Falla** and **Chris Durham** who carried out the filming.

Costumes supplied by **Hierarchy Costumes**, Guns supplied by **History in the Making**, Video equipment supplied by **Skrpt**.

We are also very grateful to the following for their assistance:

Daisy Graphic, Forest FM, Gullivers Bookshop, Robert Rodway Design & Architecture, Tivoli Theatre & Wimborne Royal British Legion.



Rob Cording-Cook and Richard Cawte



Richard Scotson, Jemma Cable and Rob Cording-Cook



Richard Cawte



Judy Garrett and Colin Pile



Jemma Cable and Rob Cording-Cook



**Rob Cording-Cook
and Richard Cawte**



Colin Pile



James Bourner



Richard Scotson



Richard Cawte and Judy Garrett



James Bourner and Rob Cording-Cook

THE CAST

JAMES BOURNER

(Frank Myers)

James appeared in our production of *She Stoops to Conquer* at Deans Court this summer, playing Tony Lumpkin. At the Tivoli he has appeared in *Single Spies* and *Murder on the Nile*. Other acting highlights include Demetrius in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with Bournemouth Shakespeare Players, Slightly in *Peter Pan* at the Lighthouse and appearances in productions of *Crazy For You* and *The Hot Mikado*.

"I am very happy to be a part of this play as I haven't done one in this layout. The story is gripping and well written and to see it done in this way pushes what I know about how plays are done. My character Frank Myers seems a very fun, firm and fair man and I am very happy to be portraying him."

JEMMA CABLE

(Anne Faulkner)

Jemma's last role for WDP was Nancy in *Gaslight*, and she has also played Tooley in *Travels*

with My Aunt, Peggy in *The Ghost Train* and Connie in *Habeas Corpus*. Jemma is very active with Wimborne Musical Theatre who also perform at the Tivoli. She most recently played The Wicked Witch of the West in *The Wizard of Oz*, and also played Maria in *9 - 5 The Musical*, Sister Mary Patrick in *Sister Act*, as well as appearing in a number of concerts including *The Best of the West End* and *Encore!*

"I've really enjoyed rehearsing for *Strangers on a Train* and I knew it was going to be a favourite since the first sharp intakes of breath during the read through in July. Acting within only a quarter of your normal space is unusual, but Anne has been a very enjoyable character to play and has given me the opportunity to tackle some emotionally challenging scenes."

RICHARD CAWTE

(Charles Bruno)

This is Richard's first appearance on stage since 1990, when he was in a

production of *Never the Sinner* at the London Playhouse. It's always been his intention to do more acting, but life's quirks have led him along different paths – until now! He's very grateful to have been given such a warm welcome by everyone at the Wimborne Drama Productions and would like to thank Phyllis Spencer in particular for casting him as Charles Bruno. Of the play, he says: "It's a wonderful thriller, with lots of twists and turns right up to the very last moment. I've loved every minute of rehearsals, working with such a generous group of people. Exploring the ins and outs of a 'baddie's' mind has been fascinating and I hope everyone in the audience will find something to like about Charley, even if you feel he should be locked up too!"

ROB CORDING-COOK

(Guy Haines)

Rob played Tom Ripley in our 2008 production of *The Talented Mr Ripley*, Phyllis Nagy's stage adaptation of Patricia Highsmith's novel. This was also Rob's first role for WDP. Since then he has

appeared in numerous productions here at the Tivoli and he is also a regular in our summer plays at Deans Court. His favourite parts have been Simon Bliss in Noël Coward's *Hay Fever* and Jan Warwick in *The Unexpected Guest* by Agatha Christie. Other plays include *She Stoops to Conquer*, *Single Spies*, *Travels With My Aunt*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Ghost Train*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Relative Values* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*. "This has been one of the most challenging parts that I have been lucky enough to have been given. The relationship between Guy and Bruno is so complex, it has been a real pleasure to rehearse."

JUDY GARRETT

(Elsie Bruno)

Judy played Miss Ffoliot-foulkes in *Murder on the Nile* and Grace Winslow in *The Winslow Boy* here at the Tivoli last year. In June this year at Deans Court she played Pimple in *She Stoops to Conquer*. Other recent highlights for WDP include Miss Paterson in *Travels With*

My Aunt, Antonia in Much Ado About Nothing, Mrs Swabb in Habeas Corpus, Mrs Gardiner in Pride and Prejudice, Miss Erikson in Present Laughter, Maria in Twelfth Night and Costanza in Enchanted April. "This adaptation of *Strangers on a Train* is, I feel, a super, well crafted script which will enthral the audience. As the mother of one of the 'strangers' my role is complex and intriguing. It has been helpful to explore Elsie's motivations and relationships with those around her. It is a fine part. I hope to portray Elsie as the author envisaged her."

COLIN PILE

(Arthur Gerard)

Colin has played many varied roles since joining WDP in 2000. Most recently he played Tom Twist and Jeremy in *She Stoops to Conquer* and Desmond Curry in *The Winslow Boy*. Other plays include *Travels With My Aunt, Much Ado About Nothing, The Hollow, Shadowlands, Pride and Prejudice, A Man For All Seasons, Pack of Lies, Spiders Web* and *On the Razzle*. Colin

is also much in demand as a set designer, his credits including *Murder on the Nile, The Ghost Train, The Hollow, The Ladykillers* and *An Inspector Calls*. In *Strangers on a Train* he plays Arthur Gerard, a private investigator who is a friend of and works for Charles Bruno's father. "I see my character as a 'Lieutenant Columbo'. Everyone knows what has happened before I arrive. He is the official figure who gives a summary of the facts before acting."

RICHARD SCOTSON

(Robert Treacher)

This is Scottie's third outing with WDP, having previously appeared in *Murder on the Nile* and *Gaslight*. He is looking forward to playing Treacher in this intriguing thriller by Patricia Highsmith. "Treacher is trying to help Guy get a job working for his firm, but it's not as easy as he thinks! It has been a great pleasure working with the cast and crew for this fantastic production."

WIMBORNE DRAMA PRODUCTIONS

Neil Simon's
BAREFOOT
in the **PARK**

20-22 February 2020

Tivoji Theatre Wimborne

Rob Cording-Cook directs
this classic 1960s
romantic comedy



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WIMBORNE
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BAREFOOT



in the

PARK



20-22 February 2020

Tivoli Theatre Wimborne

EVENINGS 7.30PM, £14. SAT MATINEE 2.30PM, £12

BOX OFFICE: 01202 885566 ONLINE: TivoliWimborne.co.uk

(Booking fees may apply)

