

WIMBORNE
DRAMA PRODUCTIONS

Alan Bennett's

HABEAS CORPUS



20-22 OCTOBER 2016
TIVOLI THEATRE
WIMBORNE

Director's Notes



Barry Baynton

Habeas Corpus is a legal term which demands the presence of someone in court, but literally means 'bring forth the body'.

The opening lines immediately set the ethos and tone of the play with their reflection on death, and yet we are talking comedy here! Or are we talking farce, satire or light domestic comedy?

The playwright, Alan

Bennett, has presented us with a production that is all these things. It is a complex play, in both verse and prose, about social conventions, manners, mortality and domestic misunderstandings, all set in the late 1960s.

Does this all make sense? Probably not. Is it funny?

Yes. Thought provoking? Without doubt. And, if you are capable of laughing at yourself, then you will enjoy Bennett's creation. But, be careful when you laugh for, without doubt, somewhere within the play's rumination you may just see a ghost of a reflection - of yourself.

I am very grateful to John Willmott, my Stage Manager, and his team for their support during rehearsals - wisdom is a wonderful thing! To the cast, I thank them for their enthusiasm and patience during necessary changes and alterations.

Enjoy the play!

Barry Baynton - Director

The Permissive Society

Sexual intercourse began
In nineteen sixty-three
(which was rather late for me) -
Between the end of the Chatterley ban
And the Beatles' first LP.

Annus Mirabilis, Philip Larkin

The 1960s witnessed a revolution in British social attitudes and behaviour which gave birth to the 'permissive society', a term originally used as a hostile label by those who believed that sexual promiscuity was too high.

Unlike a political revolution, there was no single event that marked the beginning of these changes, although many contemporary commentators pointed to the 1960 trial of Penguin Books who won the right to publish an unexpurgated version of the novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

In 1963, the year referred to in Larkin's poem, the nation was gripped by the Profumo Affair, and the first British-made contraceptive pill went on sale, giving woman more sexual freedom.

In 1967, many people felt the revolution reached its apogee with the so-called 'Summer of Love' and the decriminalisation of homosexuality and abortion.

On 19 June 1969, the then Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer Roy Jenkins announced, in a speech in Abingdon, Oxfordshire, that "the permissive society has been allowed to become a dirty phrase; a better phrase is the civilised society" - although, arguably, it took another few decades for society's attitudes towards sexual behaviour to become truly tolerant, liberal and permissive.



10 Things You Need To Know About Alan Bennett

Here are 10 fascinating facts about the author, playwright and scriptwriter:

1. Bennett is extraordinarily prolific, having written nearly 50 TV plays, more than 20 stage plays and 13 films, and published more than 30 books. He has won more than 30 awards, including five Laurence Olivier Awards, two Baftas, five Evening Standard Awards and four British Book Awards.

2. Despite its reputation for lovable Englishness, Bennett's work is hard to pin down. Favourite themes recur - espionage, teaching, friendship, history, sexuality, liberalism, disappointment - but the characters range from the famous (Kafka, Guy Burgess, King George III) to the lonely and overlooked. Bennett is accustomed to the difficulties people have in classifying his work: winning the *Evening Standard* award for best comedy with *Getting On* in 1971, a play he did not consider funny, was "like entering a marrow for the show and being given the cucumber prize," he said.

3. Both Bennett and his elder brother Gordon share the same birth date, 9 May, which, Bennett suggested, probably means his parents achieved "erotic abandon" while on August bank holidays in either Morecambe or Filey. The day has been inauspicious ever since. On 9 May 1966, he collapsed in Sardinia and saw black-shawled women cross themselves as he was carted off on a stretcher ("I was obviously a goner"). On his 50th birthday, filming in Ilkley with Michael Palin and Maggie Smith, he was served a mixed salad with shards of glass among the rocket ("Very mixed," said Smith). His long-time outdoor lodger, the lady in the van, Miss Shepherd, had her funeral on 9 May 1989. On the same date in 1992, while on holiday in Todi, Bennett was attacked and hit over the head with a length of

steel scaffolding by two Italian hoodlums. And in 1998, he spent the night in Middlesex hospital having an abscess drained.

4. One of Bennett's favourite poets is Philip Larkin. "His verse [is] so lucid and explicit," he wrote in *Untold Stories*. In 1980, *The South Bank Show* did a TV programme on the



poet. Larkin gave his blessing to the programme, though he would not appear himself. Bennett was interviewed and persuaded to say why he liked Larkin's poetry. "This was a mistake," Bennett later recalled, after he had found out that Larkin had complained in a letter to fellow poet Anthony Thwaite that there was "an awful lot of Alan Bennett" in the programme.

5. After running for some 3,500 episodes, on 24 March 1996 the last ever *Jackanory* children's programme was broadcast. The book read was AA Milne's *The House at Pooh Corner*, and Bennett was the reader.

6. Bennett has turned down a CBE and a knighthood. He did not do so out of any republican sympathies, but rather because "it would be like wearing a suit every day of your life". He also turned down an honorary degree from his alma mater, Oxford University, because its chair of language and communication was sponsored by the media mogul Rupert Murdoch, whom he despises for, among other reasons, *The Sun's* treatment of his friend Russell Harty when he was dying of hepatitis B.

7. Bennett lives with his civil partner, the journalist and editor

Rupert Thomas. Bennett did once have one female lover, Anne Davies, his former housekeeper. He later said he fell in love within a fortnight of the meeting. They ended up living next door to each other in the village of Clapham, Bennett's Yorkshire Dales bolt-hole. The unconventional relationship lasted for many years with Davies's live-in, long-term partner reportedly moving out of the cottage during Bennett's monthly visits. When asked once by the actor Sir Ian McKellen at an Aids benefit whether he was heterosexual or homosexual, Bennett replied: "That's a bit like asking a man crawling across the Sahara whether he would prefer Perrier or Malvern water."

8. While appearing on the BBC Radio 4 programme *Front Row*, Bennett was asked the same questions about his TV plays that a contestant had faced on BBC One's *Mastermind* as his specialist subject. Much to Bennett's embarrassment, the contestant got more answers right than the author did.

9. *Habeas Corpus* is one of Bennett's favourite plays: "It's one of the few times I've managed not to write a naturalistic play." It opened to favourable reviews at the Lyric, Hammersmith in May 1973 with a distinguished cast, which included Alec Guinness, Patricia Hayes, Andrew Sachs and John Bird. Bennett (pictured right) took over the role of Mrs Swabb in the latter stages of the London run.



10. Bennett was diagnosed with bowel cancer in 1997. The offending polyp was "about the size of an average rock bun". The seeming death sentence acted as a deadline, and Bennett rushed down on paper stuff he didn't expect to publish while alive. "I had no objection to it being read; I just didn't want to be in the room at the time." Happily, the surgery and subsequent chemotherapy worked, and Bennett is still with us 20 years on.

Memories of Penny

Everyone connected with Wimborne Drama Productions was desperately sad to lose our dear friend Penny Pearson to cancer in July, aged just 49.

Penny had been an active member since joining the group back in 2004, when she appeared as the Irish nurse Fay in Joe Orton's *Loot*. 13 more performances followed, some of them lead roles, some supporting, but all memorable.

Reviews from the local papers included accolades such as "excels" (*Loot*), "superb performance" (Liz Essendine, *Present Laughter* 2014), "superbly played" (Romaine, *Witness for the Prosecution* 2009) and "totally convincing" (Judith Bliss, *Hay Fever* 2012). These last two were particular favourites of hers.

Acting with Penny was a joy: there was always mutual trust and respect, reliability, empathy and of course humour. Off stage she was a great friend: witty, stylish, supportive, a giver of sound and honest advice when required, and just great fun. Far eclipsing all of her activities on the stage and her friendship to us all, of course, Penny was a wonderful wife and mother to Steve and Ellie.

Over the last year or so Penny was not physically up to the rigours of performing, but despite the huge difficulties she faced, she remained utterly herself: positive, cheerful and wonderful

company. We all miss her terribly, but we know that she would want us to remember the good times. So let's just reflect how fortunate we are to have known her and to have shared such creative, happy and memorable experiences with such a lovely person.

**Sam Moulton -
Chairman**



Penny as Judith Bliss in *Hay Fever*

Cast in Rehearsal



Michelle Barter



Michael J Smith & Tony Parkinson



Judy Garrett, Calum Hearn & Jemma Cable

Cast in Conversation

Do you have an amusing medical anecdote?

JEMMA CABLE: I was once asked by a doctor to do a pregnancy test for cramps despite one tiny little thing that would have had to have happened which hadn't. The doctor nevertheless insisted... I don't know what it was about me at the time to make her think I was lying. Surprisingly, it came back negative - otherwise it would have been the immaculate conception!

MICHELLE BARTER: I was born with dysplasia in both my hips - people often nod sympathetically here and say "I had an Alsatian with that!" - so I am very familiar with hospitals. On one occasion I went in for surgery. They put me out and the next thing I know, I'm waking up in the recovery room. I flip over to my side to get comfy, I shake off whatever that annoying thing is on my finger, giving the nurse a fit because my vitals flatline. Naturally once they popped the thing back on my finger, all is well again. Two minutes later I'm fully awake and high as a kite, and everything is funny: Winnie-the-Pooh on the walls, my surgeon's beard. I'm crying with laughter for no particular reason other than good old drugs! The nurse is of course the mum of a popular boy I went to school with. Being a teenage girl at this point, I just lost any street cred I might have had.

JUDY GARRETT: I have had a couple of extremely amusing and embarrassing medical 'moments' - neither of which I could possibly share! Sorry.

KEN FLETCHER: I used to have a shop, and one day I returned there to be greeted by a retired but large burly doctor and his doctor son. The retired doctor said: "I believe you have a hernia." "Why yes," I replied (my wife had been talking about me). Then the doctor said: "So let me see yours and I will show you mine." The shop was slightly restricted for space so the doctor said "we can go behind this display." "Drop your trousers!" This I did with him on his knees in front of me and his son saying "my father is so embarrassing". But then it was my turn: me on my knees as I peered at his hernia in the centre of his rather large stomach. I quickly stood up, shook his hand and the health visitors left the shop. I then proceeded to question my wife: "What the hell...?!"

HABEAS CORPUS

By Alan Bennett

The Cast in order of appearance

Mrs Swabb	JUDY GARRETT
Dr Arthur Wicksteed	TONY PARKINSON
Muriel Wicksteed	JENNY HUGHES
Dennis Wicksteed	CALUM HEARNE
Constance Wicksteed	JEMMA CABLE
Canon Throbbing	JOHN SIVEWRIGHT
Sir Percy Shorter	MICHAEL J SMITH
Lady Rumpers	VAL MANTLE
Felicity Rumpers	MICHELLE BARTER
Mr Shanks	DAVID BEDDARD
Mr Purdue	KEN FLETCHER

Location: The action takes place in and around the Wicksteeds' house in Hove

Time: During the era of The Permissive Society

The play is divided into two acts, the action being continuous
Running time is approximately 2 hours 20 minutes including interval

The Creative Team

Director	BARRY BAYNTON
Company Stage Manager	JOHN WILLMOTT
Tivoli Production Manager	KYLE BEST
ASMs	TRACEY NICHOLLS PHYLLIS SPENCER
Continuity	HEATHER FLETCHER
Production Design	BARRY BAYNTON JOHN WILLMOTT
Lighting	KIERAN HENSHAW-RAY
Sound	PETER GREY
Costume Supervisor	CAROLINE BURR
Costume Assistants	MOIRA HAWEY LISA CLARKE

Production Acknowledgements

We are grateful to **Bournemouth Scouts**, for the loan of the vintage cub scout mistress's uniform, and to **The Wimborne Clinic**, for the loan of a screen. In recognition of their support, a donation has been made to Julia's House. We are also grateful to the following organisations for their assistance: **Bench Theatre**, **Havant** (www.benchtheatre.org.uk), **Daisy Graphic**, **Gullivers Bookshop**, **Royal British Legion Wimborne**, **Tivoli Theatre**, **Wimborne Clinic**, **Wimborne Radio** and **Wimborne Tourist Information Centre**

Produced by Wimborne Drama Productions at the Tivoli Theatre, 20-22 October 2016, by special arrangement with SAMUEL FRENCH, LTD.

In loving memory of Penny Pearson

Do you have an embarrassing moment you are happy to share?



Jenny Hughes & David Beddard

JENNY HUGHES: A friend and I once waited outside a house for over two hours because I was convinced I'd seen glam rocker Marc Bolan go inside. We were eventually put right, then sent packing, by the owner, an irate woman in platform boots and the biggest Afro perm in Dorset.

VAL MANTLE: I once slipped up on a discarded banana skin and landed in a most undignified manner in the middle of Bournemouth Square! And I always thought that only happened in cartoons!



Val Mantle

MICHAEL J SMITH: As a young student at Drama School I rather hero worshipped John Line (later of *Emergency Ward 10* fame) who was the leader of the senior students at the time. Forty years later I told this to a fellow guest at a dinner party (whose name I hadn't heard) and he said:

"John Line, that's me!" Cue blushes!

Ever been mistaken for someone else?

KEN FLETCHER: When a civil servant, I had to visit Dorchester Prison (not for a stay but business). I was greeted on the gate by a very polite officer who stood to attention saying "yes sir, how can I help?" I asked to be taken to the office. Again he was over polite with "Yes sir". I was then passed to the next officer who also stood to attention and was impeccably polite. I explained who I was and the reason for my visit. It then became apparent why there was such a fuss. I was the spitting image of the new Governor of the Prison!

VAL MANTLE: Once, in the 1960s, I was told that I looked a bit like Barbra Streisand!

TONY PARKINSON: Someone thought I was a German tourist when we were on holiday in Lanzarote. My knowledge of the German language gave the game away.



DAVID BEDDARD: I'm a skinnier, 11-years-younger doppelganger of my brother Michael, just without the slightly wonky nose. Mum struggles to attribute childhood memories to the right sibling and Dad has sporadically addressed me as Michael my whole life. Once, when I was 18, my family attended an anniversary event at the church in the village in Buckinghamshire where I was born but had left when I was five; despite the fact that Michael was just feet away from me, with wife and daughter, people still thought I was him because I was now roughly the age he was when we moved away.

JEMMA CABLE: I once mistook a stranger for my Dad in the swimming pool. Poor fella probably thought his luck had changed when a young woman in a bikini suddenly hugged him from behind.

Ever had an unexpected reunion, or is there someone from your past you'd like to see again?

DAVID BEDDARD: I became friends at university with someone who was at the same New Millennium Eve party as me when we were both children. I'd thought she looked strangely familiar when seeing her around campus. We then met through the G&S Society and it didn't take us long to work out the connection once we got chatting. I attended her wedding earlier this year.

CALUM HEARNE: There is one person I would like to see again. When (years back) I did panto, there was one professional actor Callum Knott (what are the chances, same name) and we became good friends. I would really like to see him again to see how he got on.

JOHN SIVEWRIGHT: I'd love to meet comedian Jack Whitehall again. I met him at a wrestling show in London in 2013 as I was sat next to him and his mates for the whole three-hour show. Unfortunately my phone ran out of battery so I never did get a chance to have my picture taken with him!

What's your favourite seaside resort?

MICHELLE BARTER: Bognor Regis. I worked there for four years in Butlins (no, not as a red coat!). It's got seaside and country side, good pubs and full of happy memories for me.

DAVID BEDDARD: Nowhere beats Swanage on a good summer's day for me; the setting, the atmosphere, the steam trains, the shops - it's idyllic.

JEMMA CABLE: Ask any 22 year old who's been to Magaluf what their favourite seaside resort is and they won't have to think twice. A 'saucy seaside romp' if ever I knew one.

KEN FLETCHER: Cornwall, where as a boy my parents took us every year, to stay in a caravan just outside Falmouth.

JUDY GARRETT: Cala Galdana in Minorca. Beautiful horseshoe bay surrounded by breathtaking coastal walks.

CALUM HEARNE: Sandbanks because of the beach with the sea, mini golf and the sand on the beach that goes as far as the eye can see.

JENNY HUGHES: Bembridge on the Isle of Wight because that's where my youngest daughter finally learned to swim.

VAL MANTLE: I love North Cornwall, especially Port Isaac and Port Gaverne where I spent several happy holidays as a child with my parents. My husband and I visit there often.

TONY PARKINSON: Torquay - good memories from family holidays.

JOHN SIVEWRIGHT: Boscombe beach. I grew up in Boscombe and couldn't think of anywhere else I'd rather go for sun, sea and ice cream!

MICHAEL J SMITH: I actually hate traditional seaside resorts as I don't like the water and the sand is irritating!!

Cast Biographies

MICHELLE BARTER

(Felicity Rumpers)

Michelle was born in Poole and works with young people in youth services. This is her first time with Wimborne Drama Productions and is also part of Broadstone Players where she loved playing Julia in *Deadly Embrace* and Bella in *Gaslight* with John Sivewright. Michelle used to work in professional theatre and enjoyed her role as a vindictive torcheress at the London Dungeons, insulting tourists and being generally nasty. "My character of the Honourable Felicity Rumpers is a revolutionary, just stopping short of burning her bra. She is quietly rebelling against her upbringing. She is a touch manipulative towards men, knows what they want and will play the game to win."

DAVID BEDDARD

(Mr Shanks)

Born in High Wycombe, David works for an IT company and has appeared in WDP's *An Inspector Calls* and *Pride and Prejudice*. His favourite roles have been Arthur in *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime* for P&P Players, Maj Gen Stanley in *The Pirates of Penzance* with the University of Nottingham G&S Society and Javert in *Les Miserables* with St Edward's RC/

CE VA School. "Shanks is insecure, isolated, nervous, well-meaning, harmless. Not the smartest but knows his trade. Seeks quiet life with similar consensual partner."

JEMMA CABLE

(Constance Wicksteed)

Poole-born, Jemma is studying screenwriting and media at Bournemouth Uni. Jemma is new to WDP but not to the Tivoli where she played No-Wit the Pirate and the Big Orange Chicken in the Tivoli Theatre Pantomimes *Sinbad* and *Jack & the Beanstalk* respectively. Other favourite roles include the Scarecrow in *The Wizard of Oz* and Mother Abbess in *The Sound of Music* (both at Stage Wise) and more recently Patricia in *Crazy for You* at Wimborne Musical Theatre Society. "Connie is a dowdy, flat chested spinster who is desperate for a bigger bust which she hopes will liven up her presently dull love (and sex) life."

KEN FLETCHER

(Mr Purdue)

Ken was born in Torquay. Now retired, his last job was a surveyor with a green energy company. He joined WDP in 2015 and played a couple of roles in our highly acclaimed

production of *Shadowlands* earlier this year. His theatrical highlight however was playing Arthur Askey and singing his famous *Busy Bee* song in a comedy play in Wareham. "Mr Purdue is basically lonely. He wants attention, saying he is depressed (I'm playing myself!). The trouble is to get attention he goes to the extreme, but no one is hearing him as they are always too busy with their own affairs."

JUDY GARRETT

(Mrs Swabb)

Judy is a familiar face to audiences here in Wimborne having appeared regularly in WDP productions over the past few years. Her favourite role was Constanza in *Enchanted April* in 2012. She also enjoyed playing Teresa in *Memory of Water* and Karen in *The Anniversary*, both with Broadstone Players. Judy was born in Poole and is semi-retired. She works part time as a care support worker. "Amelia Swabb, the housekeeper, steers the play through its meanderings. She is 'fate' - nothing escapes her. She is working class, uncomplicated, kind, nosy, enjoys a gossip, full of fun."

CALUM HEARNE

(Dennis Wicksteed)

This is Calum's fourth appearance for WDP having previously appeared in *Present Laughter*, *A*

Man For All Seasons and *Pride and Prejudice*. His favourite role was Pop in *We Will Rock You* for QE School. "My character is a depressed hypochondriac who is always looking for sympathy from other people and just wants people to feel sorry for him. Also he is always trying to get his parents' love, but never getting it. The play has been an absolute joy to rehearse as it is such a funny play but also it's the first play that I have done with my Auntie (Jenny Hughes)!" Calum is a sales administrator and was born in Poole.

JENNY HUGHES

(Muriel Wicksteed)

Jenny is a writer of teenage horse books and was born in Poole. This is Jenny's first stage role for WDP. Her favourite parts previously have been Mistress Quickly in Bournemouth Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor* and Veta, Elwood's dappy sister, in *Harvey* with Ferndown Drama. "At first Muriel seems bored, repressed and prim, but once her dormant libido is unleashed the Permissive Society doesn't know what's hit it!"

VAL MANTLE

(Lady Rumpers)

Val appeared in WDP's 2000 production of *Habeas Corpus* as Muriel. She has appeared in

many plays for WDP and Broadstone Players. She has twice played Lady Bracknell in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, for Broadstone Players in 2006 and Wimborne Drama Productions in 2010. Other favourites include Mother in *Barefoot in the Park* and Dotty in *Noises Off*, both for Broadstone Players. "Lady Rumpers is not amused by the goings-on in the Wicksteed household. She is very protective of her beloved daughter, Felicity, whose honour she guards relentlessly." Val was born in Enfield, North London, and is retired.

TONY PARKINSON

(Dr Arthur Wicksteed)

Tony was born in Kent and works in financial services. He joined WDP in 2009 and has appeared in seven productions, including *Hay Fever*, *Present Laughter* and *The Ladykillers*, but his favourite role was Mellersh in *Enchanted April*. He also has happy memories of Father Mullarkey for Big Little Theatre's production of *Once a Catholic*. "Dr Arthur Wicksteed is a provincial GP in Hove's upmarket district on the outskirts of Brighton. In his mind, he's a bit of a ladies' man who has reached a mid-life crisis."

JOHN SIVEWRIGHT

(Canon Throbbing)

Boscombe-born John is an administrator for a home care provider. He played Louis in *The Ladykillers* in 2015, and has also appeared in *Pride and Prejudice*, *A Man For All Seasons* and *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime*, but his favourite part was Gerald in *An Inspector Calls* in 2013.

"Throbbing is a 'frustrated' vicar. Devoted to the Lord but not too happy about the vow of celibacy and is hopeful of wooing the dowdy spinster, Connie. Beyond his fairly dull exterior is actually quite a nice chap - Connie longs for more prominent features, but he likes her just the way she is!"

MICHAEL J SMITH

(Sir Percy Shorter)

Born in Harrow, Michael is a retired theatre accountant. He joined WDP in 2007. "There have been so many roles over the years, the favourite has to be whichever I am working on at present!" Michael's last appearance here at the Tivoli was as Sir Henry Angkatell in *The Hollow* in 2015. Other plays include *A Man For All Seasons*, *And Then There Were None* and *Present Laughter*. "Sir Percy is of small stature (that's me!), a randy old bugger (type casting?), and probably a bit past it now (definitely not me!!)"

WIMBORNE DRAMA PRODUCTIONS

THE GHOST TRAIN

**A COMEDY THRILLER
BY ARNOLD RIDLEY**

16 -18 February 2017

Directed by David Pile

A group of passengers are left stranded in the waiting room of an isolated railway station on a dark and stormy night. But when the old station master warns them about a ghost train that haunts the tracks after dark, bringing death to anyone who sets eyes on it, the evening starts to take one chilling turn after another.

Arnold Ridley - best known of course for playing Private Godfrey in DAD'S ARMY - was inspired to write the story after becoming stranded overnight at Mangotsfield station near Bristol, now a disused station, on the Midland Railway main line.

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WIMBORNE
DRAMA PRODUCTIONS

THE GHOST TRAIN

A COMEDY THRILLER
BY ARNOLD RIDLEY

**16-18
FEBRUARY
2017**

**TIVOLI THEATRE
WIMBORNE**

EVENINGS 7.30pm, £12. SAT MATINEE 2.30pm, £10

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