

WIMBORNE
DRAMA PRODUCTIONS

SOME MOTHERS DO 'AVE 'EM

BY GUY UNSWORTH
BASED ON THE TV SERIES
BY RAYMOND ALLEN



21 - 24 FEBRUARY 2024
TIVOLI THEATRE
WIMBORNE

Director's Notes

HELLO and welcome to the wonderful Tivoli Theatre for our production of *Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em*.

I wasn't around to enjoy the TV show when it originally aired back in the 1970s but luckily, with a resurgence last year due to its 50th anniversary and with all the episodes available to catch up on, we can still enjoy the hilarity so many years later. That said, I still have extremely fond memories of watching some of the iconic episodes with my family, maybe a repeat at Christmas and finding them absolutely hilarious from the minute we hear that

familiar theme tune. Who could not love the slapstick humour, the impeccable comic timing, the impressive stunts and the characters that we all know and love? So when I found out that the performing rights to this newly written stage show were available, I was immediately interested and signed up almost straight away.

I didn't really stop to think about the level of complexity involved in a show like this before suggesting it as a possible production. As an amateur group, we have to juggle rehearsals around day jobs, evening jobs, holiday, sickness, children, parents, the list goes on. There's been long days, late nights, sleepless nights, cold, wet and windy set building sessions, a huge amount of miles driven to collect various props and furniture and literal blood, sweat and tears. I'd say we have thrown everything but the kitchen sink into this production, but that is even in there too! I am extremely thankful to each and every member of Wimborne Drama Productions who has contributed to the show you see today. With every show we produce, whether a small or large cast, staged simply or elaborately, it demands a high level of commitment and dedication from all involved. This show has taken that commitment to stratospheric heights.

As will become apparent, the set plays a pivotal role in this performance and could arguably be the star of the show. My absolute



Rob Cording-Cook

thanks must go to Chris Durham. As well as performing on stage, he has designed and built almost everything you see before you, on top of organising the pyrotechnics and more technical details. It wasn't that long ago that I remember him saying he wanted to take a step back from set design and construction and yet he has worked tirelessly and outdone himself once again. I am eternally grateful. Nothing short of heroic.

My utmost thanks too to all of my creative team, led so ably by Tracey Nicholls and Nick Clark. This production is technically demanding and has taken time, ingenuity, skill and perseverance. Tracey, Nick and the team have taken it all in their stride, with faultless smiles and unwavering positivity. We've laughed, we've cried, we've vowed never to do this again – but it'll all be alright on the night, right?

It has been a pleasure to work with Kyle Best and his team here at the Tivoli. They have once again supported us every step of the way so a huge thank you to all the Tivoli staff and volunteers.

And to the cast. Every single one of this talented bunch of actors have been incredible to work with, developing superb characterisations and really embracing the madness from the very early rehearsals. I must give special thanks to James Bourner, my Frank, for being brave enough to take on this almighty role. It has been a joy to watch you bring Frank off the pages of the script and into life in your own unique, charming way. Playing Frank, a character so well-known and immortalised, is no mean feat and I applaud you for giving it your all and thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Finally, thank YOU for supporting Wimborne Drama Productions and making it possible for us to keep doing what we love, providing you with an enjoyable evening of entertainment. Our next production is *Still Alice* in May and whilst it's a gear change from *Some Mothers*, it is a poignant and emotional piece touching on a delicate and sensitive subject, written beautifully and with moments of humour. But for now, please sit back and take the floor off your feet as Frank would say. It has been an immense pleasure bringing this to the stage for you, so relax, forget your worries and enjoy the magic (and mayhem) that is about to unfold...

Rob Cording-Cook, Director

The Story of Frank and Betty Spencer

WE were first introduced to accident-prone Frank Spencer, played by Michael Crawford, when *Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em* aired on the BBC on Thursday February 15, 1973. Within half an hour of his screen debut, he'd managed to demolish a chicken coop, break a lift, pull a cupboard on top of himself and leave an unsuspecting company boss



Michael Crawford as Frank Spencer

a quivering wreck. One of our favourite TV characters had been born and he would go on to appear in three series and several Christmas specials between 1973 and 1978. (There was also a short sketch for Sport Relief in 2016, featuring a much older but still hapless Frank.)

At its peak, more than 25 million viewers regularly tuned in to watch the hilarious misadventures of Frank, and his long-suffering wife, Betty, played by Michele Dotrice.

The sitcom was written by Raymond Allen (1940-2022) from the Isle of Wight. After years of continual rejection, he struck upon an idea which was nurtured by the experienced hands of BBC Head of

Comedy and producer of the show, Michael Mills.

"I remember the day my fortieth TV drama, concerning a secret agent who fought his way across Europe, pursued by enemy forces and hordes of beautiful women, was like the other 39 – swiftly rejected," said Raymond Allen in 2018.



"An exasperated script reader enclosed a note saying, 'You'd stand more chance with a smaller cast, and why on Earth don't you try writing about something you know?'"

"Unfortunately, there wasn't much about life I did know. Nearly 30, I'd never been abroad, had little money, no proper job, was financially supported by my parents and so far everything I'd submitted to TV had been turned down. Not surprisingly, I was also very depressed."

Remembering the script-reader's advice, Allen considered writing a play about a man who was unemployed, unsuccessful and accident-prone, but he didn't think it sounded very promising.

"However, having failed dismally as a dramatist, I did eventually turn to humour, but more in desperation than hope. Most comedy springs from tragedy, but after I'd written, and rewritten my comedy script, about



Ooh Betty!

Did you know...?

Frank uttered the words "Ooh Betty!" just once, in episode 2 of series 2. In spite of this, it has become one of TV's most well-known and oft-repeated catchphrases.

Did you know...?

The theme tune for *Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em*, composed by Ronnie Hazlehurst, uses Morse Code. He spelt out the title (minus the apostrophes) in the opening bars of the theme, by having each note correspond to the Morse code alphabet.

Did you know...?

The remarkable stunts, which were a particular highlight of the sitcom, were all performed by Michael Crawford himself. 'Health and safety' was less of a concern back in the 1970s! His favourite stunt was Frank's runaway roller-skating escapade in the second series. "It was like being a kid again," he said. "It was the kind of thing you would have got in terrible trouble for, but you were getting paid for it... I just wanted to take it to the limit!"

a married couple called Frank and Betty Spencer, it seemed more tragic than funny."

Fortunately, Michael Mills did find the script — originally called *Have a Break, Take a Husband* (after the KitKat slogan) — funny and saw the show as a vehicle for Norman Wisdom. But Wisdom declined the offer as he didn't like the script. Ronnie Barker was then approached, but when he couldn't accept either, attention turned to Michael Crawford, then aged 30.

Michael Crawford had enjoyed a lot of success in the 1960s, appearing on Broadway and in films such as *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* and *Hello Dolly!* He had a reputation for extreme physical comedy, like his heroes Laurel and Hardy and Buster Keaton.

But by the early 1970s, his career had stalled and he was struggling for work, until he appeared in the West End farce *No Sex Please, We're British*, in which he played the innocent and inept chief bank cashier Brian Runnicles. The role caught the eye of Michael Mills and Michael Crawford was offered the part of Frank Spencer, adopting a similar characterisation to that which he used for Brian. Most of Frank's mannerisms were created by Michael Crawford himself, as were the facial expressions, which he got

from his two young daughters.

With the male lead resolved, attention turned to finding an actress to play Frank's loving wife, Betty.

Initially Sinead Cusack was offered the role, but she turned it down. Several other actresses auditioned, but none was quite right. Then they invited Michele Dotrice — only 24 years old, but already with a lot of stage and screen experience — to audition.

"I recall meeting the two Michaels (Mills and Crawford) in a big rehearsal room, somewhere in the bowels of the BBC," said Dotrice.

"The idea was for me to read with Michael Crawford, but we never got round to it because we never stopped laughing."

And so the Spencers were cast and the rest, as they say, is history.

Michele Dotrice has fond memories of working with Michael Crawford in the series. "We both had the same sense of humour. In rehearsals, I'd sometimes have to run to the loo because I would almost be wetting myself with laughter – literally!"

"Making people laugh is precious," said Michael Crawford.

About the series, Crawford said: "It's what you work for, it's what you long for, it's what you dream of as an actor, that you become successful — and we had it."



Michael Crawford and Michele Dotrice



James Bourner



James Bourner



Chris Durham



Judy Garrett and Lindsay McGowan

SOME MOTHERS DO 'AVE 'EM

**BY GUY UNSWORTH
BASED ON THE TV SERIES
BY RAYMOND ALLEN**

The Cast in order of appearance

Betty Spencer **LINDSAY MCGOWAN**

Father O'Hara **CHRIS DURHAM**

Frank Spencer **JAMES BOURNER**

Barbara Fisher **JUDY GARRETT**

David Worthington / Terry Luscombe **RICHARD NEAL**

Leslie Robin / Constable **ANDY GILL**

Setting

The play is set in the home of Frank and Betty Spencer

It is a spring evening in 1974

Running time approximately 2 hours 10 minutes, including interval

Production Acknowledgements

Golden Age TV for the hire of camera

CPS Group for the hire of staging and pyrotechnic equipment

Hierarchy Costumes for the hire of costumes

Bill Moulton for music production

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The Creative Team

Director **ROB CORDING-COOK**

Stage Manager **TRACEY NICHOLLS**

Deputy Stage Manager **NICK CLARK**

Sound **COLIN PILE**

Set Designer **CHRIS DURHAM**

Set Construction **CHRIS DURHAM & NICK CLARK**

Set Decoration **HEATHER BIRCHENOUGH**

DEE HAWES &

ROB CORDING-COOK

Assisted by members of the company

ASMs **DEE HAWES**

HEATHER BIRCHENOUGH &

MICHELLE BARTER

Book Cover **DAVID BEDDARD-BANKS**

Publicity & Programme **RICHARD NEAL**

For the Tivoli Theatre:

Technical & Production Manager **KYLE BEST**

Assistant Stage Manager **CHANDLER WHITELOCK**



Lindsay McGowan and Chris Durham



Richard Neal, Judy Garrett and James Bourner

Meet the Cast

JAMES BOURNER **(Frank Spencer)**

What was your last role? I played the slow but loveable Leo in *Rehearsal for Murder*, last October. **What was your favourite comedy role?** I loved playing the cantankerous Tony Lumpkin in the Oliver Goldsmith play *She Stoops to Conquer*, at Deans Court in 2019. His stubborn and pranky behaviour was a treat to play. **What is the most unusual job you've had?** I have mostly been a chef and bartender in my professional career. While I wouldn't call this an unusual job, you definitely meet some unusual people, including Guy Ritchie who said my moustache reminded him of Matthew McConaughey. **Have you had any DIY disasters?** Whereas I think my DIY skills are impeccable, I have had my share of mishaps. I had to miss a few rehearsals for *Still Life* for Bournemouth Little Theatre because I was working as a carpenter for a friend one summer and was cutting a wooden joist down to size when the end flew off and managed to

give me concussion, as well as a lovely gash on my forehead. **What is your favourite TV sitcom?** I am a guy that loves a good sitcom, from watching *Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em*, *Fawlty Towers*, *The Good Life* and *'Allo 'Allo!* with my parents. But my favourite I would say has to be the sci fi sitcom *Red Dwarf*. I definitely related to Dave Lister as a child. **What song makes you happy and want to sing and dance?** I have always loved music and have never been afraid of the dancefloor, but I'd have to say the song that always gets me to sing and dance is *Canned Heat* by Jamiroquai because it featured in one of my favourite films, *Napoleon Dynamite*.

CHRIS DURHAM **(Father O'Hara)**

Last role: I played General 'Ike' Eisenhower in the D-Day play *Pressure* by David Haig last year. **Favourite comedy role:** Crestwell, the butler in *Relative Values* by Noel Coward in 2016. **Most unusual job:** Being responsible for the planning and conduct of all the Field Trials for the MoD's



Lindsay McGowan and James Bourner



Judy Garrett and Richard Neal

Andy Gill



Chris Durham

Richard Neal, James Bourner and Lindsay McGowan

BOWMAN digital communications and IT system.

DIY disasters: I can honestly say I have never had a DIY disaster, but then I am a bit of a perfectionist when it comes to building things! **Favourite TV sitcom:** I rarely watch sitcoms, but I am an avid fan of the *Star Trek* series. **Song that makes me happy:** Not a song, but any Andre Rieu concert.

JUDY GARRETT (Barbara Fisher)

Last role: I appeared in *Bedroom Farce* in February 2023, playing Delia. **Favourite comedy role:** It has to be Mrs Swabb in *Habeas Corpus* which WDP did at the Tivoli in 2016. **Most unusual job:** I'm a bit boring! I haven't held an unusual job role! All quite 'serious', in social services, health and education. My last paid employment, which I left this summer, was 'waiting' in a local garden centre restaurant — fairly unusual as I am, what could be defined as, in the 'mature category'!! **DIY disasters:** I can recall, many many years ago, my husband drilled through a water pipe. I was summoned to assist -

finger over hole - whilst an emergency plumber was contacted. **Favourite TV sitcom:** *Only Fools and Horses*. **Song that makes me happy:** *Hi Ho Silver Lining* by Jeff Beck. An old song that has lasted through the ages and one I have very happy memories of dancing to!

ANDY GILL (Leslie Robin / Constable)

Last role: I played the killer in *Rehearsal for Murder*, October 2023. **Favourite comedy role:** This is my first, so I guess this one! **Most unusual job:** Like Frank I've had a lot of jobs...25 to be exact, from dustman to nursing to the police. The strangest was probably the month I spent as a deckhand on a tall ship sailing across the Atlantic...or maybe making tea at Prince Edward's production company...or giving talks on 4,500-year old Sumerian mudbricks... **DIY disasters:** My first day in a new flat I tried to fix the leaky pipe under the sink and ended up flooding the kitchen! **Favourite TV sitcom:** I grew up watching 'Allo, 'Allo! and *Only Fools and Horses*, but the



Lindsay McGowan



Richard Neal



Andy Gill



James Bourner and
Lindsay McGowan

American version of *The Office* is easily the funniest comedy I've ever seen. It makes me laugh no matter how many times I've seen it. **Song that makes me happy:** *New Shoes* by Paolo Nutini always puts a smile on my face and a glow in my heart. I can't help but sing along to it. As for dancing, Pearl Jam's *Alive* regularly has me jumping all over the sofa.

LINDSAY MCGOWAN **(Betty Spencer)**

Last role: I played Karen in *Rehearsal for Murder* in October last year. **Favourite comedy role:** My favourite comic part was Mrs Palmer in *Sense and Sensibility* in WDP's open air production at Deans Court in July 2022. **Most unusual job:** Working at Winchester prison in the prison shop! **DIY disasters:** As a teenager, I remember the pipes bursting in the attic and flooding my newly decorated bedroom. Less DIY disaster, just an old (and possibly haunted) house! **Favourite TV sitcom:** *The Good Life* - Margo is priceless! **Song that makes me happy:** Music has been taken over by my children, so it's whatever is on

their playlist! If they aren't around, I enjoy a bit of musical theatre!

RICHARD NEAL **(David Worthington/** **Terry Luscombe)**

Last role: I played Superintendent Battle in Agatha Christie's *Towards Zero* in 2021. **Favourite comedy role:** Professor Marcus in *The Ladykillers*, here at the Tivoli in 2015. **Most unusual job:** Probably the most unusual job I have done was also my very first paid employment. I earned the princely sum of £22 working as a litter picker at The Open at Royal Lytham in 1979. As a golf mad school kid, this was a dream job. **DIY disasters:** I try to avoid DIY if I can. I don't have the skill or the patience. I have of course screwed through a water pipe. Hasn't everybody at some time in their life? **Favourite TV sitcom:** I love *Dad's Army*, *The Good Life*, *Porridge* and *dinnerladies*, but my favourite is *Fawlty Towers* - twelve episodes of comedy gold! **Song that makes me happy:** *Shake a Tail Feather* by Ray Charles and The Blues Brothers, from the 1980 movie *The Blues Brothers*.



The company of *Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em*

Guy Unsworth



GUY UNSWORTH is an award-winning director and writer working in the UK and internationally. His work spans a wide range of genres, including Shakespeare, musicals and theatre-films.

He grew up in Southport, Lancashire. After reading Industrial Economics at the University of Nottingham, he studied theatre directing at Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts. He worked as Assistant and Associate Director on numerous productions in the West End and at the Royal Shakespeare Company before establishing himself as an international theatre director.

He worked with Alain Boublil on the 2012 revival of *Marguerite*, and devised the narrative for the West End hit *Cool Rider*. In 2016, he was part of the team behind the 90th Birthday Celebrations for Queen Elizabeth II. His adaptation of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* set in modern-day Singapore was a critical success in 2018.

Guy's stage adaptation of *Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em*, which starred Joe Pasquale as Frank Spencer, was a huge hit in 2018-2022.

Other work has included *Miss Saigon*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *My Fair Lady*, *Being Mr Wickham*, *Of Mice and Men*, *The Ghost Train*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Merrily We Roll Along* and *Spamalot*.

Coming soon...

STILL ALICE

Adapted by Christine Mary Dunford
From the book by Lisa Genova

23-25 May 2024
Tivoli Theatre

Alice Howland is a university professor at the height of her career when she is diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's disease. Fiercely independent, with a husband and two children, Alice strives to make sense of her changing world as her memory begins to fail. This heartbreaking and hopeful adaptation of the award-winning book by Lisa Genova puts Alice onstage with *Herself*, providing the audience with an extraordinary window into the experience of living with dementia. Directed by Sali Pike.



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STILL ALICE



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From the book by Lisa Genova

23 - 25 May 2024

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STILL ALICE was originally published by Simon and Schuster.
STILL ALICE premiered at Lookingglass Theatre in Chicago, April 2013.
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