



THEATRE  
ROYAL  
BURY ST EDMUNDS



STEVE  
& *Steff*  
FOR EVER



Bury St Edmunds Town Council  
wishes all those involved in the  
production of

**STEVE**  
& *Steff*  
**FOR EVER**

Good luck! We are proud to  
support this amazing theatre.



For any council queries please visit us at  
79 Whiting Street, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 1NZ  
or contact 01284 725111  
[towncouncilmail@burystedmunds-tc.gov.uk](mailto:towncouncilmail@burystedmunds-tc.gov.uk)  
[www.burystedmunds-tc.gov.uk](http://www.burystedmunds-tc.gov.uk)

# INTRODUCTION

*Steve & Steff For Ever* is a play I have been dreaming up for over 10 years. I was interested in making a play about falling in love. I wanted an audience to experience going on a date with two people, who they were desperate to fall in love with each other. I also wanted to stage this play site-specifically, to enable the audience to feel as though they are right there alongside our two characters.

Since moving to Bury St Edmunds five years ago, I have felt that this town would be the perfect setting for this play. Its beautiful cobbled streets and quirky architecture are the perfect backdrop for a romantic comedy. When we first met with Ian, we knew he was the writer for this project. With so much experience in writing comedy for television, Ian immediately understood the need for both characters and audience to fall head-over-heels for each other, and he knew that the best way to do this was to make them laugh. Ian had also worked with me to adapt *A Christmas Carol*, so I knew that he would not only take care of my idea, but make it ten times better than I imagined. I was right, Ian's play is beautiful, heart-warming, and funny – you are going to love it.

Given the site-specific nature of this production, I only ever had one Sound Designer in mind to work alongside Ian. David Lewington has worked with me to create *Walking Stories* (audio-guided journeys around Suffolk villages), *The Wonderful Wizard Of Oz* and *A Christmas Carol* and is a master at immersing audiences in sonic experiences.

So, why has it taken 10 years to make this play? Well, not only are outdoor productions deeply complicated to stage, but with limited audience numbers, they make it almost impossible to cover their costs. But, since staging *A Christmas Carol* in 2020, our audiences have been asking when we will return to staging performances in the streets of our town. So, we're making this play for two reasons: to provide a unique and memorable experience for our audiences and to enable us to meet entirely new audiences. We're hoping that by bringing this play into the streets of Bury St Edmunds, we will meet audiences who have never encountered our work before. So, if this is your first Theatre Royal Bury St Edmunds production, hello! It's lovely to meet you. I hope this is the first of many.



**Owen Calvert-Lyons**



Steff

Steff is impulsive, easily bored, easily distracted, always looking for where the fun is. Steve doesn't like surprises, batch cooks his lunch for the week and chooses his clothes based on the weather.

They meet by chance on a heady summer evening when there's magic in the air and, for all their differences, fall in love before our very eyes. But when you're in your mid-thirties, with some bad choices behind you and some big milestones ahead, making a choice on who to spend the rest of your life with is easier said than done. If only they could ignore the small print, jump in, let the current take them.

*Steve & Steff For Ever* is an immersive and intoxicating love story that will leave you feeling like the world is just a little more romantic. Like the stars are a little brighter. Like anything is possible...

Click here  
to watch  
the trailer!



Coffee

Sandwich

Blond.  
MICROBES

Blond.  
MICROBES

## IAN JARVIS, PLAYWRIGHT

I usually write scripts for television, where the boundaries for each episode begin firm and become firmer as shooting approaches. Like slowly setting concrete each draft is increasingly beholden to not just the art of telling a good story but the practicalities of filming it and putting it on television. An hour long BBC script should be fifty eight pages, fifty one for commercial channels, with part breaks no longer than twelve pages and scenes ideally no more than three. Often scripts are re-written late in the day to account for your lead actor's laryngitis or the fact that scene you wrote with the exploding train is no longer in budget. In a way, a TV script is very much where idealism and the real world collide.

So it was with giddy abandon that I sat down with the simple task of writing a play for two people who fall in love that's 'about an hour long'. Soon, however, I was reminded of advertising grandee David Ogilvy, who said 'give me the freedom of a tight brief'. Because where do you start with love? What is it? How do you know when you've got it and how can I reflect an experience that is both unique and universal?

As with all writers the answers can only come from drawing on personal experience. For me, love began with a joke and, notwithstanding many other wonderful things, has been sustained by laughter. Beyond the physical cues and necessary shared interests, how do Steve and Steff truly know they're made for each other? Because they make each other laugh. Finding another person that understands you on such a fundamental level is the closest we'll ever get to real life magic. It's this magic that I set about trying to capture in *Steve & Steff For Ever*, the sheer life affirming, uncynical wonder that only a love story can deliver. But I don't think I could realistically reflect what it means to fall in love without also acknowledging that at some point romanticism and pragmatism will meet. In any relationship two lives need to find a way of growing around each other, the notion that loving someone means never wanting them to change is fantasy, anyone who's ever been on a caravanning holiday with a long term partner will attest to that.

So, after a brief and wonderful time in the clouds, Steve and Steff must return to earth to learn that just because they're meant to be together isn't enough. Like a TV script, idealism and the real world will collide. If they can get through that, painful as it may be, then whatever they're left with might actually be what love is after all.

*Ian Jarvis*



# CAST

Joshua Diffley  
is playing

**STEVE**



Joshua Diffley is a London based actor born and raised in Tooting & Kingston Upon Thames. He studied at Arts Ed on the BA Acting Course.

Theatre Credits include; *Romeo & Juliet* (Leicester Square Theatre, Sh!tfaced Shakespeare), *Much Ado About Nothing* (Brighton Fringe, Sh!tfaced Shakespeare), *A Christmas Carol* (European Tour, TNT Theatre), *Peter Pan* (European Tour, TNT Theatre), *The Lady Vanishes* (UK Tour, Bill Kenwright LTD), *Rain Man* (UK Tour, Bill Kenwright LTD), *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (Edinburgh Fringe, Sh!tfaced Showtime).

TV & Film Credits include; *Stonehouse* (ITV), *The Private Lives of the Monarchs* (TV & Streaming), *Fantastic Beasts & Where to Find Them* (Feature Film).



Anna Soden  
playing  
**Steff**



*"This project is an absolute dream for me because I am absolutely OBSESSED with romcoms. The best genre to ever exist. I just love theatre when it makes you feel all warm and fuzzy inside, and these characters are just so gorgeous, people are going to fall in love with them! I'm super excited to be performing promenade, I think it'll give the audience a really unique fly on the wall perspective of the story- and hopefully I'll get my 10,000 steps in too!"*

Anna is an Actor and Comedian, trained at Mountview.

Her theatre credits include Feste in *Cbeebies Presents Twelfth Night* (Shakespeare's Globe), Nicola in the first UK revival of *Kinky Boots* (New Wolsey/Queens Theatre), Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* (Chinaplate UK Tour), *Jack and The Beanstalk* (Leeds City Varieties), *Return to Elm House* (Battersea Arts Centre), *Sleeping Beauty* (Liverpool Everyman), *Primary Playmaker* (Oxford Playhouse), *A Theory of Justice: The Musical* (Arts Theatre West End), *Heaven's Gate* (Pleasance/UK Tour), *Nele Needs a Holiday* (Theatre Royal Plymouth/ Summerhall), *Rapunzel* (The Theatre Chipping Norton), *The Travelling Pantomime* and *Jack and The Beanstalk* (York Theatre Royal), *Murder at The Gates* (DEM with James Bourne/Steven Sater), *Aladdin* (Derby Arena), and *Measure for Measure* (Donmar Warehouse).

Screen credits include: *Cbeebies Presents Twelfth Night* (BBC), *The Idea of You* (Amazon Studios), *TV Licence Detective* (Pulped).

Anna wrote and performed an adaptation of *Five Children*, touring to The Sheffield Crucible, Dukes Lancaster, Stephen Joseph Theatre, Latitude Festival and Glastonbury. Her folk musical *Mad For Our Daughters* has been performed at The Turbine and Seven Dials Playhouse. As a Comedian, Anna's work has been featured on Absolute Radio, won The British Comedy Guide Sketch Competition, and her solo show *It Comes Out Your Bum* was selected as part of the Made In Sussex programme at Brighton Fringe 2025.

Instagram: @itsannasoden Tiktok: @annasoden



# CAST

## Tim Welton | Paul

After studying Modern languages at Durham University Tim trained at RADA and has acted in numerous productions in theatre, television and film. Since 2001, Tim has also worked as a director, dramaturg and writer.

Theatre includes: *Dancing at Lughnasa* (Garrick Theatre), *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* (Royal National Theatre), *The People Downstairs* (Young Vic Theatre), *Measure for Measure* (Barbican Theatre and International Tour) *Bouncers*, *Closer*, *The Three Musketeers* (York Theatre Royal) *Overboard*, *All In the Wrong*, *Macbeth* (Orange Tree Theatre) *Romeo and Juliet* (Leicester Haymarket Theatre) *A Family Affair*, *Mad World My Masters* (New Wolsey Theatre) *Tons of Money*, *Return of the Native*, *The Winslow Boy* (Mercury Theatre, Colchester) *Twelfth Night*, *Good Golly Miss Molly* (New Victoria Theatre). Film includes: Phoenix Blue. Television includes: Hit and Run, the Bill and Aberfan: The Untold Story.



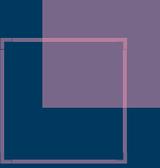
## Georgia Richardson | Yaz

Georgia is a South London based Actor, she trained at Italia Conti Academy of Theatre Arts. Most recently she has been involved in the series *Things I've Made My Roommate Do*, shooting the series with a team in Los Angeles. Other credits include *Tiny Plays BIG IDEAS* (Theatre Royal, Bury St Edmunds) *Tough Love* (New Wolsey Theatre).

## Alice Robertson | Carol

Alice read Modern Languages at Oxford where she appeared in a variety of productions including *Vanity Fair* (Becky Sharp) and *The Hostage* (Teresa) and performed at the Edinburgh Fringe, before moving to London where she enjoyed a range of roles, most notably *Black Comedy* (Carol) and *The Relapse* (Amanda). She worked as a LAMDA teacher in Yorkshire where she spent many years with Kirby Overblow Dramatic Society, highlights including *Noises Off* (Brooke), *Me and My Girl* (Sally) and *Lady Windermere's Fan* (Lady Windermere).





# Ellisons

Experts in law since 1764

## IN YOUR CORNER

### Here for you and the generations to come

While others answer to shareholders or investors, we answer to you.

We're partner-led, rooted in our communities and trusted by our clients — business owners, senior management teams, individuals and families.

No outside ownership. No distant decision-makers. Just trusted people you know, delivering expert legal advice you can count on... generation after generation after generation.

 COLCHESTER | BURY ST EDMUNDS | CHELMSFORD  
FRINTON-ON-SEA | IPSWICH



[ellisons.com/inyourcorner](https://www.ellisons.com/inyourcorner)

# CREATIVE TEAM

## Ian Jarvis | Playwright



Ian has been writing for television since 2010. He's co-created and written three series of *The Job Lot* (starring Russell Tovey and Sarah Hadland) for ITV, *Carters Get Rich* (James Van Der Beek, Kerry Godliman) and *In the Long Run* (Idris Elba, Bill Bailey) both for Sky One, and written episodes of *Timewasters* (Daniel Lawrence Taylor, Samson Kayo) and *The Windsors* (Harry Enfield, Morgana Robinson). For the BBC Ian has written episodes of *Death In Paradise* (Ralph Little, Don Warrington), *Beyond Paradise* (Kris Marshall, Sally Bretton) and *Death Valley* (Timothy Spall, Gwyneth Keyworth).

Recently Ian has co-created and written *The Completely Made Up Adventures of Dick Turpin* starring Noel Fielding, Hugh Bonneville, Tamsin Grieg, David Threlfall, Jessica Hynes, Asim Chaudrey and many more fantastic names from the world of British comedy for Apple TV +.

Currently he's sole creator and lead writer on a major new green lit comedy-drama for Channel 5.

## Owen Calvert-Lyons | Director



Owen has been Artistic Director and CEO of Theatre Royal Bury St Edmunds for five years and this is his fourteenth production here. Before relocating to Suffolk Owen was Head of Theatre at Ovalhouse: a radical and experimental theatre in South East London. Previously, he was Artistic Director of The Point and The Berry theatres in Hampshire, as well as Director of the Eastleigh Unwrapped Arts Festival.

Theatre Credits: *Murder in Play* (ACT); *Random Selfies* (Ovalhouse); *Beauty and the Beast* (Derby Arena); *Little Red Riding Hood* (Chelsea Theatre); *Across the Dark Water*, *Jack and Pinocchio* (The Berry Theatre); *Boy with a Suitcase* and *Walking the Tightrope* (Arcola Theatre); *I Am A Camera* (Cornelius Cook – Nominated for Best Director, Off West End Awards). For Theatre Royal: *A Christmas Carol*, *Around the World in Eighty Days*, *Holes*, *Cinderella*, *Home I'm Darling*, *The Secret Garden*, *The Legend of Robin Hood*, *The Children*, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, *Snow White*, *Dorothy Back in Oz*, *Aladdin* and *A Trawl of Witches*.

## Zoe Fox | Creative Producer



Zoe is Head of Producing at Theatre Royal Bury St Edmunds and the Producer on all in-house productions. Before moving back to England in 2021, Zoe worked in Belfast as General Manager & Producer for Kabosh Theatre Company, one of Ireland's leading independent theatre companies with a reputation for both addressing the legacy of conflict and creating site-specific theatre. Prior to this, Zoe worked as a freelance Events and Theatre Producer in London for organisations including Shakespeare's Globe, Young Vic and The Roundhouse.

Theatre Credits: *A Tryal of Witches, Aladdin, Santa's Red Nose Rescue, Dorothy Back in Oz, Snow White, Where's Santa's Hat?, The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, The Children, The Legend of Robin Hood, Where's Santa?, The Secret Garden, The Lies You Tell, Home, I'm Darling, Cinderella* (Theatre Royal Bury St Edmunds); *The Shedding of Skin, Green & Blue, Lives in Translation, The Enemy Within* (Kabosh).

## David Lewington | Sound Designer



David has worked as a Musician, Composer, Sound Designer and Arts Educator on over 80 productions since 2012. They include actor-muso promenade pieces, drama school performances, large ensemble youth theatre projects, queer theatre solo shows, audio-guided walking radio plays, Christmas shows for young audiences and collaboratively devised musicals. He has also worked extensively in youth theatre; composing and performing live as well as leading music and vocal workshops.

His theatre credits include: *JOAN* (Derby Theatre); *Counting Down To Christmas* (MAST Southampton); *Peer Gynt* (Salisbury Playhouse); *Christmas Carol* (Theatre Royal Bury St Edmunds), *Crossing Lines* (Chichester Festival Theatre); *Marty and the Party* (Southbank Centre).

This is David's 11th production with the Theatre Royal, and second back on the streets of Bury!



atkinsdellow

Entrance at front of building



# CREATIVE TEAM

## Emily Bestow Costume Designer



Emily is a set and costume designer from Ipswich. She has won an Off West End Design award for “Best Pantomime Design” and been nominated for five other Off West End Design awards.

Recent Design credits include: *Pop Off*, *Michelangelo!* (Underbelly Boulevard Soho), *Parlour Song* (Greenwich Theatre), *Stalled* (King’s Head Theatre), *Dick Whittington* (Greenwich Theatre), *The River* (Greenwich Theatre), *Alice In Wonderland* (Derby Theatre), *Fun at the Beach Romp-Bomp-A-Lomp* (Southwark Playhouse) *Dick Whittington and his Cat* (New Wolsey Theatre), *Snow White* (Greenwich Theatre), *Metamorphoses* (New Wolsey Theatre) *Robin Hood and the Major Oak* (Derby Theatre) *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (Hull Truck); *The Lies You Tell* (UK Tour); *Cratchit* (Park Theatre); *From Rushmere With Love* (Eastern Angles), *Extra Time* (Derby Theatre), *Sam Snape and the Chillesford Chough* (Eastern Angles), *42nd Street* (Upstairs at the Gatehouse)

## Lucy Farrant | Stage Manager



Lucy is a Stage Manager originally from Suffolk, they have a deep interest in working on new writing and comedy, coming from a theatre making background herself.

For Theatre Royal: Assistant Stage Manager on *Aladdin*, Assistant Stage Manager on *Dorothy, Back in Oz*.

Other Credits: Assistant Stage Manager on *The Crucible* (Shakespeare’s Globe), Technical Stage Manager on *Boy on the Roof - Tour* (Vamos Theatre), Assistant Stage Manager (cover) on *Princess Essex* (Shakespeare’s Globe), Stage Manager on *Elephant - Rural Tour* (fEAST Theatre), Stage Hand on *Dick Whittington* (Esher Theatre), Stage Manager on *The Velveteen Rabbit - Rural Tour* (Spinning Wheel Theatre).



## Lara-Louise Jones | Deputy Stage Manager

Lara (she/her) is a South West based stage manager; a Devonian born and bred. She earned her BA in Production Arts at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School.

Theatre credits include;

*Romeo & Juliet* (Exeter Northcott), *White Christmas* (Mill at Sonning), *The Whistling* (Mill at Sonning), *Bedroom Farce* (Mill at Sonning), *War Horse* (UK Tour), *A Child of Science* (Bristol Old Vic), *The Sweet Science of Bruising* (The Station), *Grow Up!* (Barbican Theatre), *Dick Whittington* (Exeter Northcott), *Holes* (Wuzhen Theatre Festival), *Aladdin* (Theatre Royal Bath), *Two Popes* (Rose Theatre)



# LEGENDARY BEER

# Centuries

IN THE MAKING



ENJOY RESPONSIBLY  
WWW.ENJOYRESPONSIBLY.CO.UK

17  99  
GREENE KING  
BREWERY

## CAST

### Steve

Joshua Diffley

### Steff

Anna Soden

### Yaz

Georgia Richardson

### Carol

Alice Robertson

### Paul

Tim Welton

## CREATIVE TEAM

### Playwright

Ian Jarvis

### Director

Owen Calvert-Lyons

### Creative Producer

Zoe Fox

### Costume Designer

Emily Bestow

### Sound Designer

David Lewington

### Choreographer

Julia Cave

### Stage Manager

Lucy Farrant

### Deputy Stage Manager

Lara-Louise Jones

## PRODUCTION TEAM

### Production Manager

Andy Stubbs

### Technical Manager

Dave Thwaites

### Senior Technician

Chris Last

### Technicians

Nick Goodridge & Josh Watson

### Photography & Videography

Dan Cole Media

## COMMISSIONING CIRCLE

Michael & Jane Crowe, Vivien Gainsborough Foot, Linda Keenan & Alice Robertson

### Special Thanks

Michael, Kristina and everyone at Blend. Terri Fox aka The Fab Miss Fox. Gareth, Stacey and everyone at Abbeygate Cinema. Matthew and everyone at Palmers House. Atkins Dellow. With grateful thanks to Mike Spenser-Morris. West Suffolk Council.



# FROM A MUGHUL PALACE TO A MULTI-STOREY CAR PARK: THE JOYS AND PERILS OF SITE-SPECIFIC THEATRE

## BY OWEN CALVERT-LYONS

I love making site-specific theatre. For those who haven't come across this term before, it describes making a play in which the location of the performance is woven into the play itself. Truly site-specific plays could only take place in the location in which that production is performed. Not all of the plays I'm going to describe are site-specific, in this context I'm using it as a catch-all term to describe ways of making theatre in unusual locations.

My first taste of site-specific theatre came early in my career. In 2007 I was making a new play, *Keys to The Kingdom*, written by Richard Hurford and performed by a cast of 100 young people from York Theatre Royal Youth Theatre. The play was staged inside York's Museum Gardens, a beautiful public park in the heart of the city, which contains a ruined abbey, a church, and a museum. It was a magical play performed on Autumnal evenings as part of the Festival of Light. Creating my first outdoor production was a steep learning curve. If outdoor



theatre has taught me anything, is to prepare for the unexpected. For this production, we were blissfully unaware that all of the lighting across the gardens was on a timer.

All rehearsals had taken place during the garden's opening hours, so it wasn't until 8pm on the evening of our dress rehearsal that all of the lights across the park went out simultaneously; leaving our team and 100 children in the pitch black. After several panicked phone calls to the council, we eventually restored power to the site and continued. We quickly learned that no two days are ever the same. Not only had we been rained on several times during *Keys to The Kingdom*, but one evening our team arrived at the scene which took place inside a church, to be greeted by a team of bell-ringers! With the audience due to arrive any moment, we asked them how long they were going to be, only to be told, 'this peal's got another three hours to go'!



Lighting is a perennial challenge for this kind of work. We are so used to working in purpose-built theatres in which we can light from every angle. As soon as we are outside and after dark, lighting a performance can be deeply complicated. In 2012 I made a site-specific production inside a former Mughal Palace which is now the home of the National Academy of Performing Arts in Karachi, Pakistan (a). We decided the performance would be particularly atmospheric if we lit the entire play by candlelight. We asked the production team to buy hundreds of tealights, impressing upon them that we needed larger '1 hour' candles and not the smaller 20-minute candles. 20 minutes into the performance, when the first candle went out, our stomachs dropped as we watched every candle in the palace go out one-by-one like a row of dominoes, leaving both actors and audiences in complete darkness.

In 2008 we returned to the Festival of Light in York; this time armed with the learning from our experiences in the Museum Gardens. We again worked with playwright Richard Hurford, to make a play called *Secret Solstice*, which we chose to set inside a multi-storey car park. One of the ingenious aspects of this idea, was that audiences walked up the car park, experiencing a different scene on each level, whilst actors could travel by lift through the middle of the car park, appearing in each scene moments before audiences arrived. This all worked perfectly until 3 nights in, when the team arrived to find a Volvo parked in the middle of Scene 3.



So if it's this complicated, why do we do it? What's the pay off? Why don't we just make plays inside theatres, which are made for this purpose?

Well, at times there are magical moments in site-specific theatre which could not be achieved somewhere else. Moments in which an audience feels that they are experiencing something truly unique. In 2020, in the height of the Covid pandemic, we staged *A Christmas Carol* (b) outside the Angel Hotel, where Dicken's wrote *The Pickwick Papers*. For the arrival of the Ghost of Christmas Future, we used the hotel's enormous black gates, through which a 9-foot figure entered on stilts, shrouded in a black cloak and surrounded by billowing clouds of smoke. It was an extraordinary moment which was made more 'real' and therefore more terrifying by being outside of a theatre.

Outdoor Theatre can also create moments of great serendipity. On the opening night of *A Christmas Carol*, freezing fog descended on Bury St Edmunds. Whilst you might have thought this was disastrous, the fog was beautifully lit by our stage lights. The performance was shrouded in an eerily atmospheric haze, which gave that night's audience a truly unique experience.

There can also be something wonderfully surprising about site-specific theatre. In 2011 I transformed an empty shop in Dalston, London, into a Dickensian soup kitchen as part of our production *The Uncommercial Traveller* (c) created with legendary immersive theatre company Punchdrunk. Audience's entered a non-descript shopfront and found themselves transported into Victorian England through this immersive experience. This is something we have been building on through *Theatre Royal Bury St Edmunds' Christmas Cabin* (d), which is designed to look like the inside of a Lapland log cabin, so audiences under the age of 7 can walk from the Arc Shopping Centre and straight into Santa's living room.



In my experience, audiences love this kind of performance. In part, because it removes all of the regularity of theatre: there are no seats, there are no walls, you don't know where to stand or how you should react; there is no blueprint for how you should experience it. Your senses become heightened to everything and you feel that you are experiencing everything for the first time. There is very good evidence that new experiences more easily create memories. And we are in the business of making memories.

There is a thrill to making this kind of work. I have stood with actors before our opening nights in a ruined abbey, a multi-story car park, an urban wheatfield, a Mughal palace, and a freezing market square and felt the electric anticipation of doing something risky. Knowing that anything could happen. Knowing that we are about to meet an audience who will have no idea what is about to happen. So, here we are on the cusp of opening *Steve & Steff For Ever*. Born out of almost 20 years of making plays in unusual spaces and at the same time brand new and uncharted territory. I hope you enjoy experiencing Bury St Edmunds as the beautiful set for this play. I hope you enjoy the 'liveness' of a play taking place in a public place. A hope it lives long in your memory.





# ANGEL HOTEL

BURY ST EDMUNDS

## EARLY EVENING EXPRESS MENU

Monday to Friday

5-6pm

3 courses and cocktail £35

## FISH, CHIPS & SIPS

IPA-battered fish and chips with an ice cold glass of Laurent-Perrier Rose

Monday to Saturday

£25

## SUNDAY LUNCH

Every Sunday

12-4pm | 5-9pm

## THEATRE ROYAL DINING OFFER

Complimentary glass of fizz when dining from the A La Carte menu when you show us your tickets for the same day\*

*\*t&c's apply*

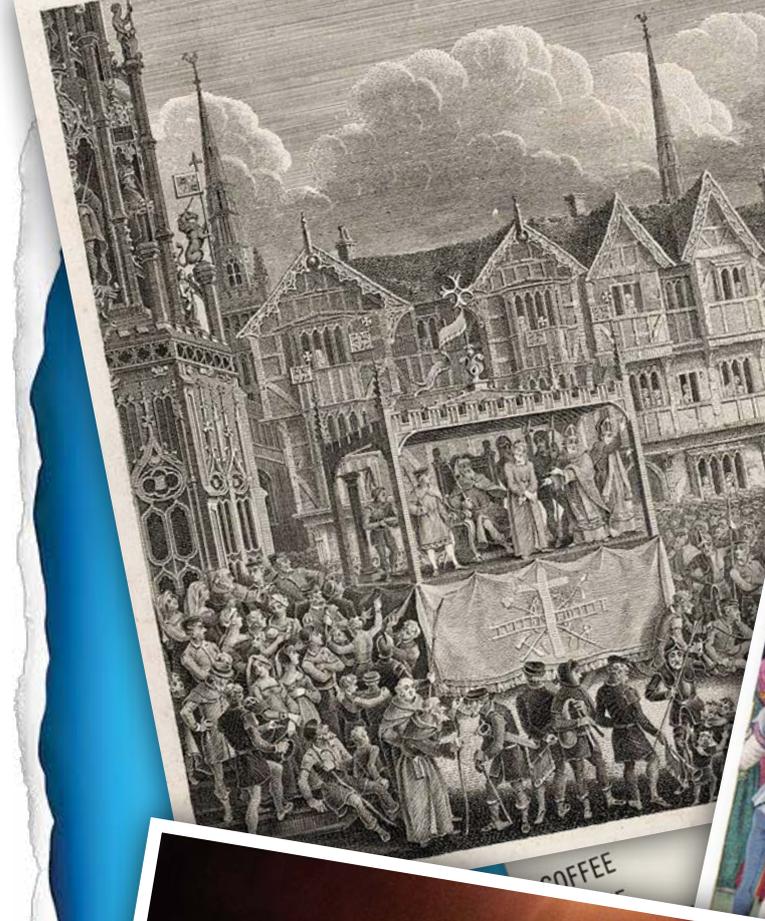
# A BRIEF HISTORY OF PROMENADE THEATRE

Promenade theatre, where audiences move through a performance rather than sitting in one place, is often seen as innovative or even radical. But the idea of storytelling on the move is nothing new, in fact, it's as old as theatre itself.

Long before stages were built and curtains raised, performances happened in streets, marketplaces and town squares. In medieval Europe, some of the earliest forms of popular theatre involved religious plays performed on carts that rolled through towns, stopping at various points to stage different scenes. The *York Mystery Plays* is perhaps the most well-known example, where crowds of people would follow the action from one 'station' to the next, creating a collective experience. It was theatre not just as spectacle, but as a shared ritual - part spiritual, part social and woven into everyday life.

As theatre became more formal over the centuries, with purpose-built playhouses and ticketed audiences, much of this mobility was lost. Audiences were expected to sit still, observe in silence and stay behind an invisible but very real fourth wall. But in the 20th century, theatre-makers began pushing back and returning once more to storytelling in unexpected venues.

In the 1960s and 70s, British theatre had taken this spirit of visceral, outdoor theatre and brought it back out into the community, with companies like *Welfare State International* and *Theatre Workshop* leaving the confines of theatres behind altogether. They staged work in the landscape itself, from lantern processions to





spectacular fireshows, community carnivals to participatory festivals. Audiences didn't just watch, they walked, followed, and more often than not joined in. These shows were often political, sometimes celebratory, and always rooted in place. Promenade theatre became a way to reach people where they were, to bring performance into the public arena and allow it to respond to its surroundings in real time.

From there, the form continued to evolve. Promenade theatre became closely linked to site-specific work - performances created not just in a place, but for it. In these shows, the location isn't a backdrop. It's a character. A derelict building might become a haunted mansion, or an old dockyard a battleground. The best examples blur the line between space and story with the environment shaping the action and by doing so becoming a character.

Few companies have explored this more thoroughly than *Punchdrunk*. Their landmark production of *Sleep No More*, a moody, nonlinear version of *Macbeth*, redefined what immersive theatre could be.

Audiences, who wore plague doctor inspired masks, were free to roam a huge, meticulously designed space, unravelling scenes in a series of three 'loops' that reset every hour, leaving the audience to discover the narrative themselves, before culminating at the end of the third and final loop. The unmasked actors behaved as though the audience did not exist, apart from brief moments where they would lock eyes with a single audience member, whisper in their ear or lead them into a small, private encounter.

Promenade theatre often gives the story over to the audience, not simply letting

them follow but instead actively allowing them to participate. You choose where to go, what to focus on, which thread to follow. The result is a different kind of engagement, more active and more personal and one that makes the audience feel as though they are within the story.

A powerful example of this came with *The Passion*, staged in 2011 in Port Talbot, South Wales. Co-directed by and starring Michael Sheen, it was a modern retelling of the Easter story, performed over three days across the entire town. Scenes unfolded in real time - in supermarkets, on beaches, roundabouts and hillsides; all the while making local residents and the streets of Port Talbot an integral part of the narrative.

What made *The Passion* so extraordinary wasn't just its scale, but its sense of ownership for the local community, as Port Talbot didn't simply host the play, it became a character itself. The result was theatre that felt both epic and deeply personal.

The same can be said for our own production, *Steve & Steff For Ever*. As the two leads learn more about one another and their relationship becomes more complex, the two actors wonderfully weave in and out of local businesses leaving their mark as they go. Our hope is that every time you grab a coffee in Blend or take a seat in Abbeygate Cinema, the memory of that hazy Summer night comes back to you long after the performance has ended.

In today's world, shaped by screens, algorithms and solitary scrolling, that physical, collective experience feels more valuable than ever and like no other form



of theatre, a Promenade performance takes us on a journey to reconnect with a place that can sometimes be taken for granted.

From medieval processions to modern-day love stories, promenade theatre reminds us that sometimes the best way to tell a story is to live it.



## A CHRISTMAS CAROL, 2020

When lockdowns shuttered indoor venues and silenced stages worldwide during the COVID-19 pandemic, Theatre Royal wanted to reach out into the wider community and find a way to continue to tell stories. The decision was to embrace innovation (and the cold) with an outdoor production of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* on Angel Hill. This outdoor performance was our way of continuing to be there for our audiences whilst restrictions were in place and also marked our first foray into bringing live theatre to the streets of Bury St Edmunds.

Set against the historic backdrop of the Angel Hotel, a site tied to Dickens himself, the production was a logistical challenge. To comply with strict social distancing guidelines, audiences stood in socially distanced zones wearing headphones that received the voices of the actors via microphones, enhancing the intimacy of the experience. The ingenious staging featured two minimalist platforms, allowing scenes to flow seamlessly while capturing the warmth of the Cratchit family's hearth or the cold austerity of Scrooge's home.





The cast of six, supported by a towering stilt-walker embodying the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come, brought to life Dickens tale against the backdrop of the streets of Bury St Edmunds. Quick costume changes, inventive props, and evocative lighting transported the audience through Scrooge's journey.



Theatre Royal's design team, faced a series of challenges. The need for daily setup and deconstruction of the stages required ingenuity and efficiency. The set featured wrought iron designs that evoked 19th-century timepieces, so striking a balance between visual simplicity and period authenticity was paramount. Costumes did much of the storytelling, transforming actors into multiple characters with strategic layering and versatile accessories.

The production also embraced sustainability, reusing existing costumes and creatively repurposing materials. For instance, the eerie, flowing attire of the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come began its life in a pantomime before being dyed and reshaped into its chilling new form.

Theatre Royal's outdoor *A Christmas Carol* was more than a theatrical event, it was a lifeline for a community yearning for connection and joy. For an hour each evening, the audience escaped the grim realities of the pandemic, finding solace in Dickens' timeless tale of redemption and goodwill.

At the close of each performance, applause rang out in the cold December air, a poignant reminder of theatre's unique ability to bring people together, even in isolation.





ABBEGATE  
CINEMA

**NEW RELEASES** **BALLET + OPERA**  
**THEATRE SCREENINGS** **FAMILY**  
**MATINÉES** **DOG FRIENDLY**  
**SCREENINGS** **PARENT + BABY**  
**LIVE COMEDY** **ARTS RESTAURANT**

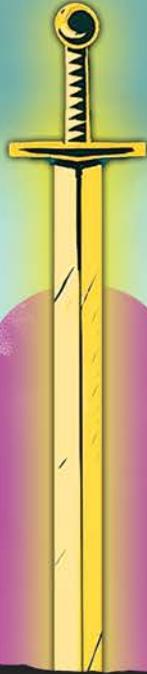


**NO.4**  
RESTAURANT  
+ BAR

4 Hatter Street, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 1LZ  
[www.abbeygatecinema.co.uk](http://www.abbeygatecinema.co.uk)



THEATRE  
ROYAL  
BURY ST EDMUNDS



[Click here to book!](#)

THU 21 - SAT 23 AUG

# Sword in the STONE

A NEW ADAPTATION BY EILISH MULLANE

PERFORMED BY THEATRE ROYAL'S  
SUMMER YOUNG COMPANY

[www.theatreroyal.org](http://www.theatreroyal.org) | 01284 769505



Supported using public funding by  
ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND



# THE COMMISSIONING CIRCLE

A huge thank you to the Theatre Royal Commissioning Circle  
who made this adaptation possible.

Michael & Jane Crowe  
Vivien Gainsborough Foot  
Linda Keenan  
& Alice Robertson

Theatre Royal's Commissioning Circle supports the theatre's artistic programme by expanding its capacity to commission new plays. This is a unique and exciting experience for theatre lovers, literary enthusiasts or business owners and entrepreneurs to commission a play and accompany it on its journey from 'page to stage'.

A small number of Circle Members fund the cost of commissioning a playwright to write a new play for Theatre Royal's stage. As the commissioners of the play, Circle Members play a significant part in enabling the theatre to produce an artistically excellent and creatively ambitious production each year, including this year's Theatre Royal

The Commissioning Circle programme includes:

- Being the first to read the play at each stage of the drafting process and discuss its evolution
  - A copy of the published play.
- Backstage access; witnessing how the production develops, including exclusive insights from the director and opportunities to join the rehearsal room and meet the cast.
- Names credited in materials including the published playtext, production programme, and on Theatre Royal's website.
  - VIP tickets to attend the opening night of the production.
  - Complimentary programmes for the production.

Please contact Emma Suckling via [development@theatreroyal.org](mailto:development@theatreroyal.org) for details on the programme and how to join the Commissioning Circle as we grow this exciting phase of our work.

AGE  
GUIDANCE  
12+

The Hal Company in association with Suzanna Rosenthal Productions presents

**CAN WORDS BE THE GREAT ESCAPE?**

# PENNING UP

**A NEW PLAY**  
*By Danusia  
Iwaszko*



[Click here to book!](#)

**10 - 11 SEP [theatroyal.org](http://theatroyal.org)**

  
**THEATRE  
ROYAL**  
BURY ST EDMUNDS

 **ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

 **THE  
DRAPERS'  
COMPANY**  
1361

 **menagerie**

 **Ridley  
Godfrey  
FOUNDATION**

**St Giles**  
Turning a past into a future

 **SUFFOLK  
Community  
Foundation**



 **Suffolk  
County Council**

**synergy  
theatre  
project**

 **THEATRE  
ROYAL**  
BURY ST EDMUNDS

In association with  
HighTide and  
Conservatoire East

Photo by Rob Laker  
Design by Danica Pitt

At Theatre Royal, our mission is to shape, produce and showcase high quality theatre and participation activities that reach all corners of our community.

We can only continue to do this with the amazing support of individuals, funders, sponsors and audiences.



As a registered charity, fundraising is crucial to our survival. Simply to keep our doors open, we must raise £235,000 each & every year (with additional funding raised for our project work) via individual giving and memberships, donations, sponsorship, income from trusts & foundations and fundraising events.

You can make a difference, simply by purchasing a ticket to one of this season's fundraising events – *Last Night of the Proms*, *Whose Wine Is It Anyway*, *Carols from Cambridge* and the two wonderful events in conjunction with The Bury Literature Festival – *Harriet Walter* and *Philippa Gregory*.



The income from tickets for these events stays right here at Theatre Royal and supports all our work across the year – we work with over 12,000 members of our community each year supporting those most in need through educational workshops and artistically lead projects for schools, young people and community groups across East Anglia.

# Our Sponsors

## Sponsors



## Funders, Trusts & Foundations



The Alfred Williams Charitable Trust | The St Edmunds Trust | The Tanyard Trust |  
The Thompson Family Charitable Trust

## Theatre Patrons & Ambassadors

**THEATRE PATRONS:** Dame Judi Dench DBE, Sir Jeremy Isaacs, Mrs Judith Shallow DL,  
Mr Colin Blumenau, Mrs Patricia Thompson CBE.

**AMBASSADOR:** Mrs Gina Long MBE

## Patrons & Major Donors

Joan Abbs, Matthew Abercrombie, Nancy Ackland-Lang, George Agnew and Adrian White, Alix and Robert Ashton, The Association Management Company, Gary Avis MBE, Robert and Sally Baxter, Countess Helen Benckendorff, Christine Bird, Sarah Birrell, Derek Blake MBE and Valerie Blake, Stephen and Stephanie Bourne, Joy Bowes, Gyles Brandreth, Marie Brown and in memory of Tony Brown, Mary Burr, Tonya Callihan, William and Lynn Cardale, Sir Geoffrey and Lady Cass, in memory of Gordon Cawthorne MBE and Judith Cawthorne, Richard Chaplin, Christine Clark, Sian Couture, Louise Cramp, The Croft Family, Rev. David Crofts, Jane and Michael Crowe, Yvonne Curtis, Lady Mary Damerell, Piers Day, Nicholas Denyer, Nicki Dixon, Ian and Alison Duncan, Anthony and Celia Earl, Chris Eyden, Andrew Flatt, Emma Fisher, Vivien Gainsborough Foot, Fenella Ford, Sarah George, Jayne Gittus, Philip Glenister, Robert Glenister, Adrian Grady, Judith Grandi, Bryan Hamilton, Michael Harrington Spier, Zach Helm, Gillian Hodge and in memory of David Hodge, Stephen Hubner, Sam Hughan, Tim Holder, Trevor and Sarah Howard, Debbie Hudd and in memory of Roy Hudd OBE, Eric and Hazel Humphreys, Karen and Antony Hurden, Sir Derek Jacobi CBE, Philip Jackson, In memory of Peter Jackson CBE and Ann Jackson, Gillian Jessop, Linda Keenan, Jim and Carol Keohane, Fiona Langley, Nicholas Law and Susan Tanis, Barry Lingwood, Bryan and Emma Littlefair, Andrew Long and Gina Long MBE, Karl and Annette Ludvigsen, Janet Martin, John Meers and Jo Holden, Julie Merrick, Nic and Kat Metcalfe, Martin and Sylvia Moss, Marguerite Nice, Irene and David Overman, Riccardo and Michaela Parfitt, Jeffrey Parker, Nicholas Pearson OBE and Fiona Pearson, Mark Pendlington DL, Heather Phillips, Steve Pickles, Diane Piperno, Mary Porch, Libby Purves OBE, Roger and Thelma Quince, Sue Rawlinson, Michael Redgrave, Mike and Kate Redmond, Jo St Clair Roberts, Susan Roberts, in memory of Struan Robertson, Alice Robertson, Paul Romaine, Nic Rumsey, Michael and Margaret Rustin, John Sergeant, Michael Shallow and Judith Shallow DL, Graham Showell, Charles and Suzanne Simpson, Sue and Dick Soper, Simon Spence KC, Jo Stark, Sha Starr, Christian and Susan Stenderup, Richard and the late Heulwen Stewart, Steven and Kimonie Stroud, David Taylor, Nick and Rosemary Thomson, Patricia Thompson CBE, Vincenzo and Debbie Truncellito, Fiona Unwin, Terry Waite CBE, Julia Wakelam, Christine Webber, Peter Wenban and Sarah Wenban CBE, Deborah Williams, The Association Management Company, Theatre Royal Friends Committee.

Registered Charity Number 242977

## The Board

**Chair - Sarah Kemp**  
Joanna Bradbury  
Danny Braverman

Emma Fisher  
Joanne Howlett  
Liz Michie

Sumathi Sundram  
Karen Thomson

## The Staff

### SENIOR MANAGEMENT

**Artistic Director**  
Owen Calvert-Lyons

**Finance Director**  
Fiona Wilson Waterworth

**General Manager**  
Richard Melchior

**Head of Producing**  
Zoe Fox

**Head of Development**  
Emma Suckling

**Head of Marketing & Sales**  
Julie Cole

**Head of Creative Learning**  
David Whitney

**Technical Manager**  
Dave Thwaites

### MARKETING & SALES

**Box Office & Memberships Manager**  
Joseph Sparkes

**Marketing Assistant - Media**  
Rebecca Woollam

**Marketing Assistant - Design & Communication**  
Sam Foley

**Box Office Assistants**  
Angela Hunter  
Diane Richardson

**Casual Box Office Assistants**  
Julia Foulsham  
Caroline Holt  
Kay Howlett  
Brahim Oulahan  
Nina Sumerling  
Jessica Weston

### CENTRAL SERVICES

**Facilities Manager**  
Douglas Coombes

**Finance Manager**  
Stephanie Smith

**Programming & HR Coordinator**  
Sharron Stowe

**Finance Officer**  
Jo Hambling

### CREATIVE LEARNING

**Young People's Producer**  
Emma Thorpe

**Creative Learning Associate (Community)**  
Eilish Mullane

**Drama Facilitators**  
Rowan Currie  
Tracey-Ann Cutbush  
Justine Di Mierre  
Beth Easdown  
Maia Elsey  
Ruth Lo  
Simon Sterrow  
Grace Wellfare  
Lynn Whitehead  
Anna Williams

**Youth Theatre Assistants**  
Eva Balding  
Jack Purkiss

**Trainee Youth Theatre Assistants**  
Rowan Currie  
Anna Williams

### TECHNICAL

**Senior Technician**  
Chris Last

**Technicians**  
Nick Goodridge  
Josh Watson

**Casual Technicians**  
Shannon Ambrose  
Jacob Barry  
Oliver Brown  
Tabbi Dodds  
Dorian Hammam  
Caitlin Pegley

Alex Ray  
Kate 'Sky' Skylar  
Tanya Starling

### FRONT OF HOUSE

**Front of House & Events Manager**  
Jonny Gleeson

**Bar Manager**  
Craig Jarvis

**Duty Managers**  
Stephen Moody  
Bex Morrison-Corley  
Rory O'Brien  
Ann Phizacklea  
Sue Polley

**Front of House Assistants**  
Amy Anderson  
Richard Brooks  
Cally Butterworth  
Alison Mee  
Andrea Morris  
Sally Parker  
Janet Sainsbury  
Nina Sumerling

**Bar Stewards**  
Gina Byford  
Louise Gibson  
Julie Jarvis  
Sophie Kemp  
Eline Kimber  
Jason Rampling  
Helen Stewart  
Katy Stubbs  
Wendy Turner  
Chris White

**Car Park Stewards**  
Stephen Collen

**Cleaners**  
JG Cleaning Service

OUR SINCERE THANKS TO OUR VALUED VOLUNTEERS –  
WE COULDN'T OPEN WITHOUT THEM!

[Click here to book!](#)

# RAPUNZEL

*written by Chris Hannon*

A Theatre Royal Production

**FRI 21 NOV 2025 - SUN 18 JAN 2026**

ChassisCab  
**DAF**

**THEATREROYAL.ORG**  
**01284 769505**



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL**  
**ENGLAND**