



THE REAL INSPECTOR HOUND by Tom Stoppard

Prior's Field School Theatre, Godalming
2nd - 5th November: 7.45pm
Director: Matthew Lloyd Davies

AUDITIONS: Sunday 26th June from 10.00am

REHEARSALS: 1st September – 27th October Thursdays (7.30 – 10.00). Sundays (2.00 – 6.00).

IN THEATRE (rehearsals, tech, dress, performances):

Sunday 30th October to Saturday 5th November

GTG is delighted to welcome National Theatre veteran, Matthew Lloyd Davies directing a talented cast of GTG actors through the confusion to a murderously funny conclusion.

HELLO FROM OUR DIRECTOR

GTG asked me if I would direct the play and I happily accepted this invitation.

I performed with GTG back in the eighties in a festival play entry written by GTG member James Bowers called 'A Question if Vivi'. I was then in the ensemble in a panto, and then Keith cast me in 'My Fair Lady' as Doolittle's best mate, but although I started rehearsing for the show, very soon after I was offered a full-time job on the stage crew at Chichester Festival Theatre, which meant I had to leave GTG.

From Chichester I continued to work in theatre, eventually gaining a place at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School from where I began my professional acting career. You don't need an acting CV from me suffice it so say I have been an actor now for over 35 years and in the last 10 or more years have also been directing (having gained my Masters in Theatre Directing, again at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School).

You can check me out on-line. I have two websites, one for my acting and directing and one for my audiobook work.

www.matthewlloyddavies.com

www.mldaudio.com

Best wishes
Matthew Lloyd Davies

SO ... WHY DID I CHOOSE 'THE REAL INSPECTOR HOUND' BY TOM STOPPARD?

Firstly, it's just a very very funny play. If you're looking for deep and meaningful reasons as to why 'this play' and why 'now'...the answer is...it's short, it's wonderfully written and it's funny. There can't be any better reason to produce a play than to know it's going to be wonderful to work on, and so satisfying to perform. There is no better feeling in the world than making an audience laugh...and yes...we all need that nowadays.

Stoppard's play about the theatrical process has been described 'a classic of the English comic tradition'.

Two pretentious critics, Moon and Birdboot, settle down to review a classic murder mystery set in Lady Muldoon's remote, rural residence ...

But, as our two critics are drawn inexorably into the world of a country house whodunnit confusion sets in... we the audience are watching the critics as the critics watch each other watching the play, a wife is keeping an eye on a husband, the husband is having an affair with an ingénue, the ingénue is eyeing a handsome man, the handsome man is feasting his eyes elsewhere, the leading lady wants the critic but also wants her husband. Who is the madman? Who keeps calling on that phone? Who is the corpse?... Who killed the corpse? ...and the inspector...well where *is* the inspector, and indeed...*who* is the inspector...and the elderly char, well, she makes char...um tea...can any of this be real? And if so...what?

Got it? Good. See you there!

"Stoppard's play is a minor comic masterpiece about the theatrical process." The Guardian

Tom Stoppard loves to play with reality, he loves to explore the layers and complications of art vs life...this, is what his play *The Real Thing* is also about. (He does this in other plays too... but hey, enough of the PHD on Tom Stoppard)

As for how I'm looking at this production: Well, that's harder to define. The style of the play falls somewhere between SPAMALOT and a Pantomime, which, by coincidence (or is it coincidence?) is where it falls in the GTG calendar.

The characters in the 'play within a play' are large, but they MUST be truthful...think something like the Hugh Laurie/Stephen Fry series of JEEVES. The characters in Jeeves are wonderful, they are sometimes HUGE but always TRUTHFUL. That's a tricky line to walk and for me, as a performer, a wonderful challenge...I am hoping that the GTG actors will relish this challenge also.

I hope to present the play almost 'in the round' so that the audience and the critics are of the 'same world'.

I am casting the play with a couple of parts possibly/probably going to become female from the 'male' as written. It doesn't affect the play adversely, but it can be used to good effect and, in fact the characters of Mood and Inspector Hound are two characters that 'swap' realities near the end and so the gender change can work *for* us.

We will be rehearsing on Thursdays and Sundays. There are sections we can rehearse without the full cast which will help to give everyone some time off, and time to learn lines etc... and I plan to hold rehearsals with the actors playing Moon and Birdboot on their own, one on ZOOM. This will help us 'get ahead of the game' so to speak.

As a director, I see the rehearsal process as a team effort...but I do expect discipline. In theatre we must always be cognisant of the privilege that we are handed to be able to rehearse and perform, to be able to practice that thing we love, telling stories.

With that privilege comes a responsibility. A responsibility to present the authors words as written. A responsibility to others in the company to keep rehearsal notes, to learn lines 100% accurately and quickly. A responsibility to yourself to give all that you can.

But there is another responsibility, and this to me is paramount. To enjoy what we are doing. This **MUST** be fun, or else why do it. I want to have fun; I want the play to be fun. I can't wait to meet new people with an enthusiasm to go with mine.

I'm hugely looking forward to meeting you all.

HOUND CHARACTERS

Critics:

Moon – a second-string theatre critic, called to the production to review it in the absence of Higgs, another critic. Moon's jealousy of Higgs' superior reputation seems to make him question his own purpose, with Moon's ultimate thoughts being of Higgs' death.

I think Moon can be female, which I hope will enhance the characters' comments and attitude towards Birdboot's infidelities.

Birdboot – a theatre critic and a womaniser, who catapults young actresses to stardom by delivering dazzling reviews in return, we assume, for sexual favours. While married to Myrtle, he is having an affair with the actress who plays Felicity in the play within the play.

I suspect maybe a slightly older gentleman... 'using' his profession to have affairs with younger women.

The play within a play:

Mrs Drudge – The maid, or char, of Muldoon Manor. Her cockney accent adds to the humour of Stoppard's play.

I'm enjoying the idea of this role being played by a man...NOT in drag, so to speak, but absolutely playing Mrs Drudge...just to push the 'what is real' question just a little more.

Simon Gascoyne – New to the neighbourhood, Simon has had affairs with both Felicity and Cynthia. He takes an instant dislike to Magnus, as they are both in love with Cynthia. Later in the play, Birdboot assumes the role of Simon Gascoyne, and vice versa.

I think Simon can be youngish, or indeed young middle aged...He needs to be intense and utterly truthful.

Felicity Cunningham – A beautiful, innocent, young friend of Cynthia's who has had an affair with Simon and Birdboot. She is seemingly sweet and charming, but soon seeks ruthless revenge. The ingenue.

Don't be too worried about the age aspect...it's more her personal immaturity and competition with Cynthia that matters...their jealousy of one another.

Cynthia Muldoon – Apparent widow of Lord Albert Muldoon who disappeared ten years ago. She claims to be very upset about her husband's disappearance, but the audience is led to think otherwise. Sophisticated and beautiful. She has had an affair with Simon.

I think she is very confident in her position as the 'new' love of Simon...she doesn't seem threatened by Felicity ... it's her experience that Simon is attracted to???

Major Magnus Muldoon – Lord Albert Muldoon's crippled half-brother who just arrived from Canada. Has a desire for his late brother's widow, Cynthia. Takes an instant dislike to Simon, as they are both in love with Cynthia.

The actor playing Magnus has to find truth in the most ridiculous of roles, he's in a wheelchair for most of the play, he wears a false beard, he MUST appear to be Magnus in reality...until he, of course, isn't. (Dr Strangelove could be a useful reference???)

Inspector Hound – Appears from outside the house in the middle of the play to investigate an alleged phone call. Moon assumes this role near the end of the play, and vice versa.

I see no reason whatsoever why Hound cannot be female and therefore a reflection of the many 'female' inspectors on the tv. I quite like the idea of a 'Helen Mirren'/Prime Suspect detective...Properly serious...don't mess with this detective.

HOW TO AUDITION FOR 'THE REAL INSPECTOR HOUND'

STEP 1: Complete the attached Audition Application form and send it to Keith Thomas, who is assisting Matt with auditions: keith@keith-thomas.net

STEP 2: [Download a PDF scan of the script from here:](#)

I would like you to read the entire play before you audition.

It might be a good idea to watch a bit of Peter Sellers (Dr Feelgood and The Pink Panther...oh, and Herbert Lom in The Pink Panther also). I also think the Stephen Fry and Hugh Laurie Jeeves and Wooster series are worth a watch. What these have are immense characters that remain truthful. The truth always comes from the intention and intensity of the characters...from their relationships with each other and their reactions remaining consistent within the largesse of their personalities if that makes sense.

Please bring with you to the audition...a sense of humour and a willingness to try things out, to be pushed a little and perhaps to step somewhere away from your comfort zone.

ALSO...if you're interested in auditioning for Mrs Drudge...I am quite liking the idea of Mrs Drudge being played by a man...oh...and here's something to watch for Mrs Drudge especially regarding the 'Tea Scene' just as an idea of what we may be aiming for...

If you have any questions about the roles, please don't hesitate to email me on emeldee@me.com

AUDITION MATERIAL

Moon and Birdboot

P's 1 – 3 / Also P's 15-16

Moon: Camps it around...

to

Birdboot: If we knew that we wouldn't be here.

Simon and Drudge

P's 6 -7

Simon: Ah Hello there!

To

Drudge: ...completes the house party

Felicity (and Simon)

P's 9 -10

Felicity: You!

To

Felicity: I'll kill you for this Simon Gascoyne

Magnus and Cynthia

P 12 – 13

Cynthia: Simon

To

Magnus: I do. No bid!

Inspector Hound and Cynthia

P 19 – 21

Hound: Lady Muldoon?

To

Hound: Is there anything you have forgotten to tell me?

THE REHEARSAL SCHEDULE IS ON THE NEXT PAGE

REHEARSALS

Thursday evenings (7.30 – 10.00) and Sunday afternoons (2.00 – 6.00).

I think it most unlikely that you will all be called for every rehearsal and I shall endeavour to make Sundays as easy on you as possible, although I think once we get to October I will need everyone in every rehearsal...but that has yet to be confirmed and if there are 'difficulties' with certain dates, then with plenty of notification (by which I mean by 20th August) I will be able to schedule around them.

* I have proposed one possible Zoom but please don't think this is the norm...I am not a great fan of rehearsing a stage play on a screen!

September

Thursday 1st: Moon and Birdboot
Sunday 4th: Moon and Birdboot possibly on *ZOOM
Thursday 8th: Full Company – Intro to me, to the show, slow read, character work, text study, style, etc
Sunday 11th: TBC
Thursday 15th: TBC
Sunday 18th: NO REHEARSAL
Thursday 22nd: TBC
Sunday 25th: TBC
Thursday 29th: TBC

October

Sunday 2nd: TBC
Thursday 6th: TBC
Sunday 9th: TBC
Thursday 13th: TBC
Sunday 16th: TBC
Thursday 20th: Run Through / notes / work bits
Sunday: 23: Run Through / notes / work bits
Thursday 27th: Run Through x Two

In theatre

Saturday 29th: Get-In/Rig LX and Focus – Sound
Sunday 30th: Hound Tech (cast called)
Monday 31st: TBC

November

Tuesday 1st: Dress x TWO
Wednesday 2nd: Performance
Thursday 3rd: Performance
Friday 4th: Performance
Saturday 5th: Performance