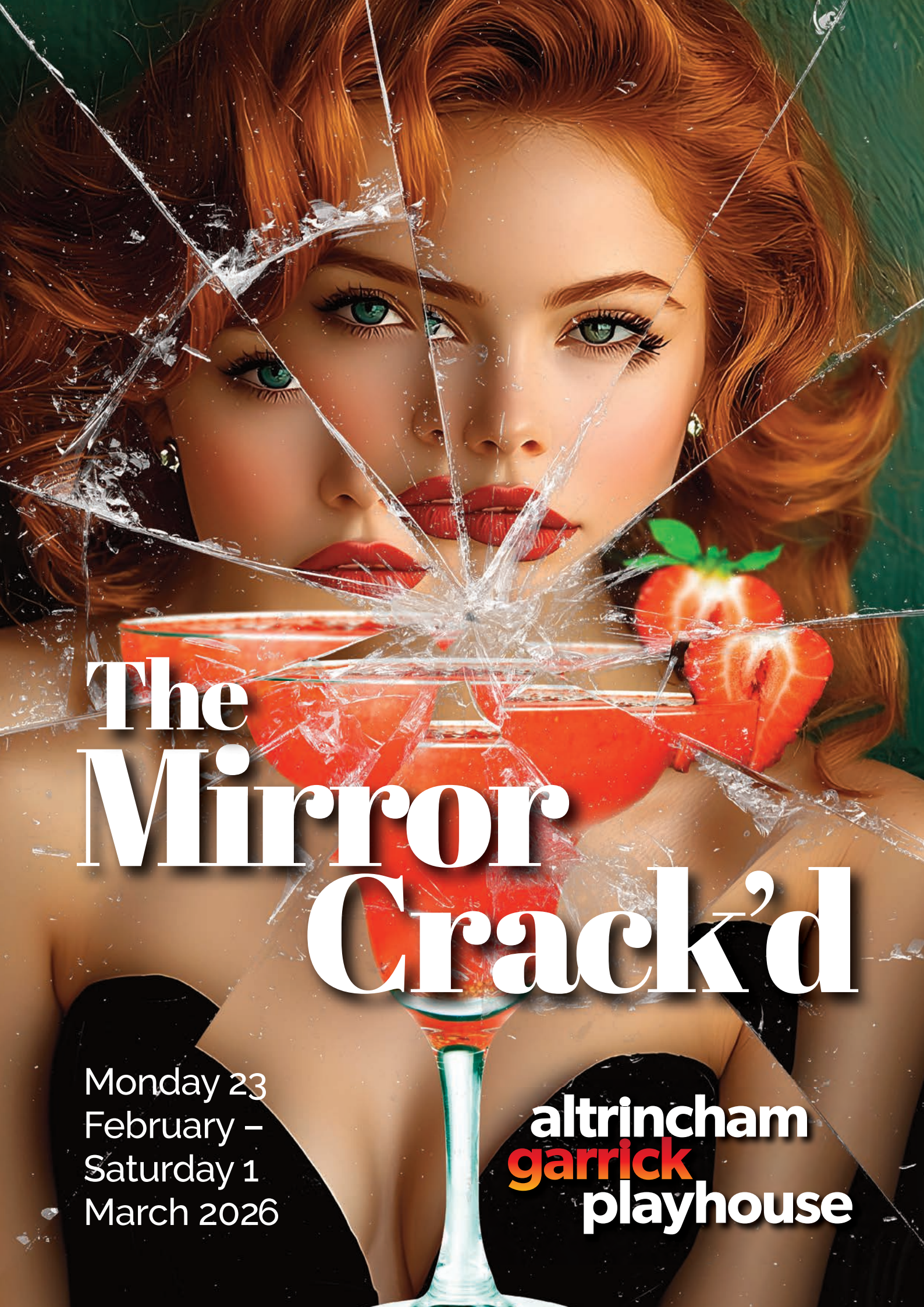


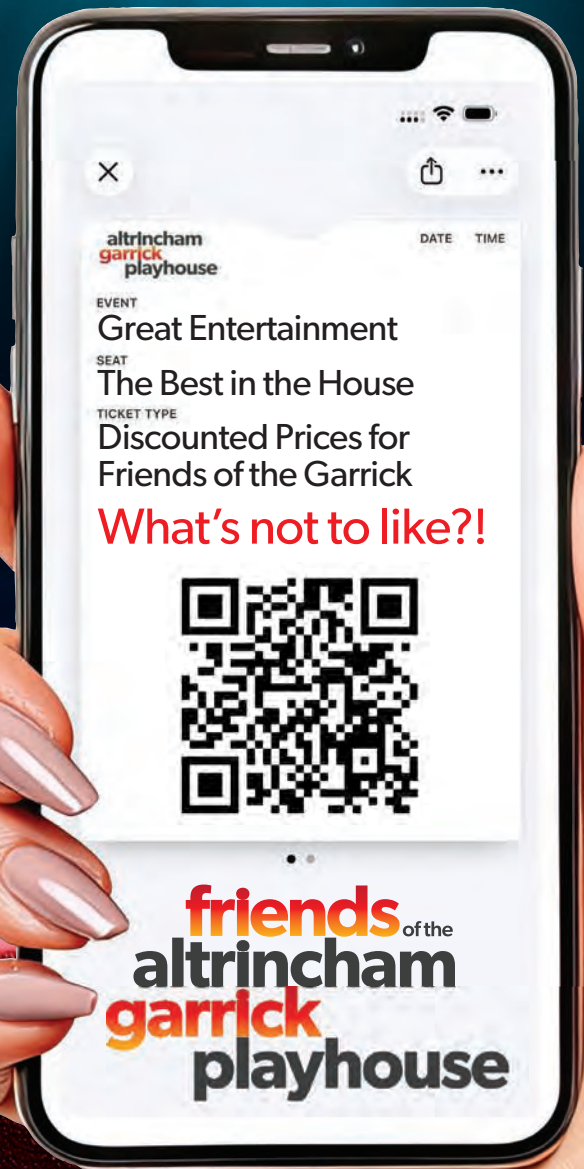
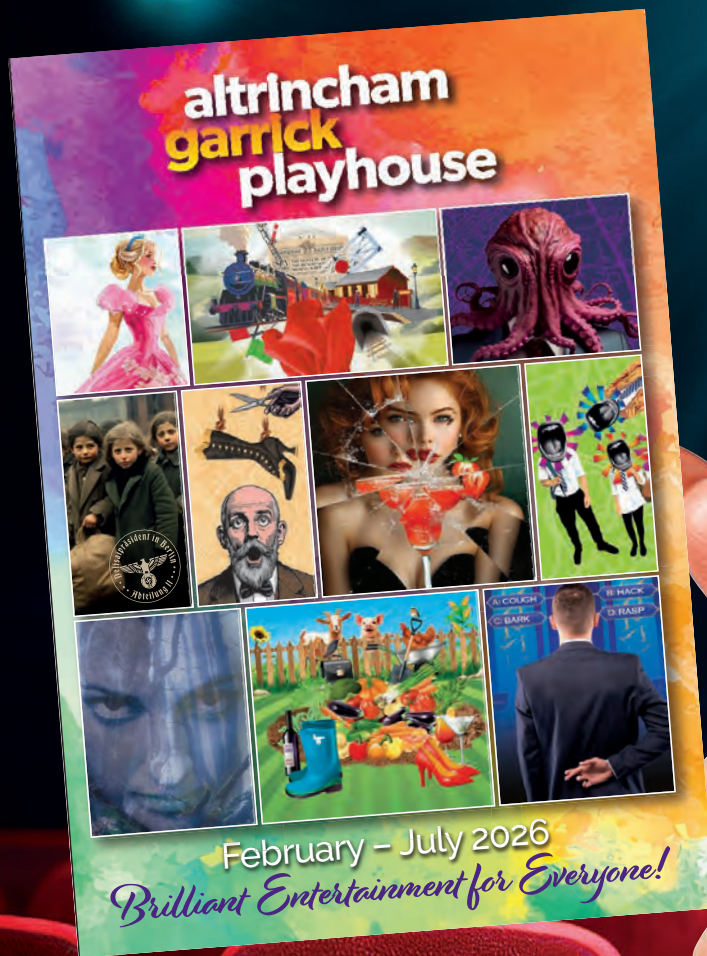


The Mirror Crack'd

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Welcome

...to Altrincham Garrick Playhouse, and tonight's performance of Agatha Christie's compelling thriller **The Mirror Crack'd**.

Agatha Christie's career as a playwright included writing over 20 stage plays, many of which are still performed around the globe today. She has broken two records in the theatre world. The first is for the longest running play with **The Mousetrap**, which opened in London's West End in 1952 and has been running continuously since - even though it is by no means her best play. When the play moved from The Ambassadors Theatre to St. Martins Theatre in 1974, it did so without missing a single performance! Her second record is for being the first female playwright to have three plays running simultaneously in London's West End. Along with **The Mousetrap** the plays included were **Spider's Web** and **Witness for the Prosecution**.

Rachel Wagstaff is known for adapting Agatha Christie in a way that keeps the pleasure of the puzzle while sharpening the human stakes for a live audience. Rather than treating Christie as purely "cosy," her scripts often bring the emotional subtext to the surface: private grief behind polite conversation, and moral consequences that linger long after the final reveal. That approach suits **The Mirror Crack'd** particularly well, because this is one of Christie's most poignant Marple stories – where the mystery turns on tragedy and vulnerability as much as motive.

When Christie wrote **The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side** (published in 1962), Miss Marple was already a familiar figure – but in later novels she becomes something deeper than a "village sleuth." She is, increasingly, a quiet moral intelligence: someone who listens acutely, understands hidden pain, and recognises that the truth is not always comforting.

That matters here because Miss Marple begins the story confined after an accident, watching St Mary Mead change around her: a new housing estate unsettles old certainties, and the purchase of the Manor House by a glamorous American film star brings sudden publicity to a place built on privacy. Marple's reduced physical freedom becomes a strength on stage: she observes, questions, and connects human patterns rather than chasing clues.

Theatrically, Rachel Wagstaff's adaptation tends to favour momentum and clarity: scenes flow swiftly, information is released with a deliberate rhythm, and the audience is invited to become active "detectives," assembling the truth from shifting perspectives. In this

production, that propulsion meets Christie's 1960s "wind of change" setting – new housing, new money, and a film star's arrival in St Mary Mead – so the play becomes not only a whodunnit, but a story about image, intrusion, and what happens when the public and private worlds collide. The play's mystery is gripping, but its real force is reflective: it asks what "change" costs, who gets hurt when boundaries are crossed, and how a seemingly ordinary village can become the setting for extraordinary consequences. In this late-career Marple story, solving the crime restores order – but not innocence.



One person who would have loved being involved in this production was **Pat Williamson**, a long-standing and much-loved member of the Garrick family, who sadly passed away last month after a long illness.



Pat's ultimate stage appearance with us was in Agatha Christie's **Towards Zero**, where she played Lady Tressilian. Her performance was both unforgettable and hugely entertaining, bringing the character's ruthless bluntness vividly to life. She was an incredibly accomplished actress who could shine in serious dramatic roles, comedies and farces, and even pantos!

Pat had a long, committed and deeply valued association with the Garrick. She was an incredible actor in a wide variety of roles, a much-respected supporter of the theatre, and also generously gave her time volunteering front of house. Above all, she was a dear friend to many. Pat was a huge personality within our community, warm, forthright, generous and utterly passionate about theatre and she will be missed terribly. Her contribution to the life of the theatre will never be forgotten. Our thoughts are very much with her daughters, Cathy and Helen and all of her family and friends at this difficult time.

I sincerely hope that you enjoy tonight's production. Many thanks for supporting us, have a safe journey home afterwards, and we look forward to welcoming you back here very soon!

Joe

Joseph Meighan

Artistic Director, Altrincham Garrick Playhouse.

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Barrington Rd, Altrincham WA14 1HZ

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A village, a movie star, and a crack that runs

Agatha Christie's *The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side* (1962) arrives late in the Miss Marple canon, yet it feels deliberately "about" lateness: ageing bodies, fading glamour, the dwindling certainty of an older England, and a village that has begun to change its face. It is also one of Christie's most emotionally charged mysteries, because beneath the smooth mechanics of clue and deduction sits something rawer – maternal grief, moral fury, and a single irreversible act that cannot be tidied away by a neat solution. It's no accident that, when playwright Rachel Wagstaff adapted the novel for the stage, she leaned into its psychological core as much as its puzzle-box pleasures.

The title: a poetic omen

Christie's original title comes from Tennyson's *The Lady of Shalott*: "Out flew the web and floated wide; / The mirror crack'd from side to side..." – a line that suggests a sudden fracture in perception, a curse made visible, and a world that can't be safely observed at a distance any longer. Christie doesn't use the reference as decoration: in *The Mirror Crack'd*, the notion of reflections – public image versus private truth, performance versus lived suffering – haunts the narrative.

St. Mary Mead in transition: the Development

The novel opens not simply with murder, but with change. St Mary Mead – Christie's archetypal "sleepy village" – has acquired a postwar housing estate known pointedly as "the Development," and Miss Marple tours it as if she's crossed into a new country. This is more than scene-setting. The novel was written in 1962, when Britain's landscape and class structure were visibly shifting: country-house life was in decline, estates were sold or repurposed, and commuter villages changed as new builds and new populations arrived. In the story, the social "centre" of the village – the grand Manor House – has been bought by a glamorous outsider, American film star Marina Gregg, who brings publicity, fans, journalists, and a whiff of transatlantic celebrity into an English world of fêtes and drawing rooms.

Crucially, Christie ties this upheaval to Miss Marple herself. Marple is temporarily house-bound after an accident – physically constrained while her village evolves beyond her window. The effect is poignant: the detective famed for noticing everything must rely on visitors, gossip, and careful listening. It's a neat dramatic device, but also a

thematic one: old forms of authority (age, status, tradition) are being "confined," and observation must become even sharper to compensate.

Christie's own life: watching villages modernise

The novel's attention to housing estates isn't generic "modernity panic"; it's specific. The Agatha Christie estate's own story notes that Christie had long been fascinated by the look and taste of new "developed" houses on the estates around her home in Wallingford, and saw an opportunity to explore that world in *The Mirror Crack'd*.

There's an additional biographical echo in the way St Mary Mead can feel like a composite of places Christie knew. One local history report has even claimed that Winterbrook (near Wallingford) – where Christie lived for decades – has been thought a model for "Danemead," Miss Marple's house in St Mary Mead.

A murder rooted in celebrity – and something darker

At the plot's centre is an event with the tidy surface of a classic Christie set-piece: a village fête and a party at the Manor House, staged partly as a publicity gesture for Marina Gregg's new film. There are photographers, autograph-seekers, a gathering of villagers and outsiders – and then a sudden death: a woman collapses after drinking a cocktail intended, it seems, for Marina.

The "mirror crack" moment is not the death itself, but what it reveals. Christie's trick is to make the murder-mystery engine run on a fuel more volatile than greed or inheritance. The story draws in

Gene Tierney – The inspiration for Marina Gregg?

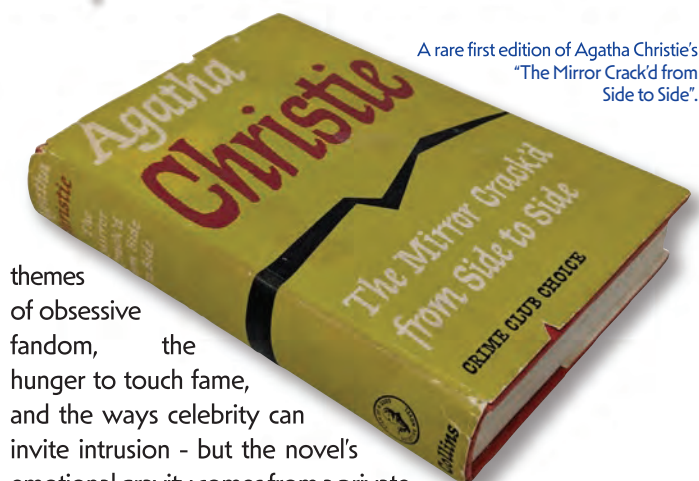


Gene Tierney made her film debut at age 20, and her star ascended rapidly with the success of the 1945 film "Leave Her To Heaven", which earned her an Academy Award nomination for Best Actress. She married for the first time in 1941, eloping with future fashion star Oleg Cassini. The couple had two children, the first of whom – Daria Cassini – was born deaf and severely mentally handicapped, requiring lifelong institutionalisation. The couple separated in 1946 and finally divorced in 1952. After separating from Cassini, Tierney had a romance with John F. Kennedy in 1947, though she said he eventually broke it off because she would not fit in with his political ambitions (and coincidentally, when JFK became President, it was Tierney's ex-husband, Cassini, who famously designed dresses for Jackie Kennedy).

The collapse of her marriage put Tierney over the edge, and she had to withdraw from the cast of 1953's "Mogambo"; her part went to up-and-comer Grace Kelly. By the time she made "The Left Hand Of God" opposite Humphrey Bogart in 1955, Gene's fragile emotional state made it difficult to remember her lines. Bogie tried to help her on-set, but counseled her privately to seek help. Unfortunately, she got the wrong kind of help, submitting to a series of shock treatments that would severely impair her memory. In 1957, Gene reached her nadir when she had to be talked off the ledge of her mother's apartment building, fourteen floors up. A lengthy stay at the Menninger Clinic in Topeka, Kansas, followed.

With her mental health finally stabilised by the early '60s, she made a brief comeback, but retired from films shortly thereafter. She'd married oilman W. Howard Lee in 1960, and they moved to Texas. Gene outlived her second husband by ten years, dying in Houston of emphysema in 1991.

deep: **The Mirror Crack'd** from page to stage



A rare first edition of Agatha Christie's "The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side".

themes of obsessive fandom, the hunger to touch fame, and the ways celebrity can invite intrusion - but the novel's emotional gravity comes from a private tragedy that the public has never understood.

Where Christie found her inspiration

The most discussed real-life parallel is to American actress Gene Tierney. The Christie estate explicitly notes that the plot was influenced by Tierney's real-life tragedy and by Christie's reflections on a mother's feelings for a child born with disabilities. In the Tierney story (see panel below, previous page), the actress contracted rubella during pregnancy after contact with someone who should have been in quarantine; the child was born with severe disabilities, and later Tierney learned - devastatingly - that the illness may have been passed on by a woman who had knowingly broken quarantine to attend a celebrity event and meet her.

Christie transposes this into fiction with chilling moral focus. In *The Mirror Crack'd*, the central "why" is bound up with a mother's rage and grief - and the idea of harm done through thoughtlessness rather than malice.

St Mary Mead as a pressure cooker

Why set such a Hollywood-adjacent tragedy in St Mary Mead? Because the village, for Christie, is a microscope. It's a place where everyone is watched, where histories accrete, where reputations can be manufactured or demolished in a single afternoon. By dropping Marina Gregg into a community that specialises in private knowledge, Christie sets up an elegant collision: a star who survives on illusion meets a village that lives on disclosure.

And because St Mary Mead is changing, the collision is sharper. The villagers are not only "quaint"; they're negotiating a new social map: new houses, new money, new manners, new people who don't fit the old hierarchies. In that sense, Marina's arrival isn't an isolated disturbance; she's the most flamboyant symptom of a wider transformation already under way.

What changes in the stage adaptation?

A novel can linger in Miss Marple's interiority - her quiet deductions, her observations on human nature, her private comparisons between present behaviour and past village scandals. On stage, that material must become action: who enters, who overhears, who freezes mid-conversation when a name is spoken.

Rachel Wagstaff's adaptation tends to make the story more overtly kinetic - using ensemble movement, quick shifts in time and perspective, and a stronger "procedural" energy as Marple and Inspector Craddock piece testimonies together. Reviews frequently

note this pace and the way the staging helps the narrative jump between moments and memories. Yet the best stagings preserve what makes *The Mirror Crack'd* distinctive: the sense that the solution is less a triumph than an exposure of pain.

Christie's late-period strength: sympathy without sentimentality

One reason *The Mirror Crack'd* endures is that it is, in a quiet way, compassionate. Christie is sometimes caricatured as the grand engineer of plot, but here she writes with unusual tenderness about vulnerability: ageing, regret, the weight of public scrutiny, the ache of having one's private catastrophe turned into gossip.

And that returns us to St Mary Mead, Christie's laboratory for observing how societies process transgression. In the village, everything becomes a story. The "mirror" is the community itself, reflecting and distorting; the "crack" is the moment the polished surface fractures and reveals what the village can never fully repair.

A final parallel: the English village, then and now

When modern audiences meet St Mary Mead, whether on page or in Wagstaff's adaptation on stage, they often recognise something familiar: the tension between heritage and development, the clash between locals and incomers, the nostalgia for an older social order alongside the knowledge that it was never as innocent as memory pretends. Christie wrote *The Mirror Crack'd* while watching English places modernise around her, and she transformed that observation into drama: a village remade by new houses and new fame, yet still governed by the oldest force of all: human nature.



A poster for Guy Hamilton's 1980 star-studded movie.

The Marple Mysteries



THE THIRTEEN PROBLEMS
THE MURDER AT THE VICARAGE
THE BODY IN THE LIBRARY
THE MOVING FINGER
SLEEPING MURDER
A MURDER IS ANNOUNCED
THEY DO IT WITH MIRRORS
A POCKET FULL OF RYE
4.50 FROM PADDINGTON
THE MIRROR CRACK'D
FROM SIDE TO SIDE
A CARIBBEAN MYSTERY
AT BERTRAM'S HOTEL
NEMESIS
MISS MARPLE'S FINAL CASES

JANE MARPLE

A Surprising Detective

For a woman who has spent her life in the small village of St Mary Mead, Miss Marple is surprisingly worldly. She has every opportunity to observe human nature – as she often points out, “There is a great deal of wickedness in village life.”

What makes Miss Marple so effective as a detective is her ability to blend into the background, and for her shrewd intelligence to be hidden behind her love of knitting, gardening and gossip; unassuming and often overlooked, she has the freedom to pursue the truth. Criminals and murderers fail to realise that with every stitch she is not only making a cardigan, but solving a crime. “The finest detective God ever made. Natural genius cultivated in suitable soil.” (Sir Henry Clithering, *The Body in the Library*)

The Creation

Miss Marple first came into being in 1927 in *The Tuesday Night Club*, a short story pulled together into the collection *The Thirteen Problems*. It was first published in the December 1927 issue of *Royal Magazine*. Christie never expected Miss Marple to rival Poirot in the public's affections but since the publication of *The Murder at the Vicarage* in 1930, Marple's first full length novel, readers were hooked.

While Agatha Christie acknowledged that her grandmother had been a huge influence on the character, she writes that Miss Marple was “far more fussy and spinsterish than my grandmother ever was. But one thing she did have in common with her – though a cheerful person, she always expected the worst of everyone and everything, and was, with almost frightening accuracy, usually proved right.” Mellowing with appearances (if not with age) Miss Marple graced twelve novels and twenty short stories during her career as an amateur detective, never paid and not always thanked. The Miss Marple of *The Thirteen Problems* is decidedly more shrewish and Victorian than the later character, who is often more forgiving. She certainly changes with the times, even down to wearing plimsolls in 1964's *A Caribbean Mystery*.

Miss Marple never married and her closest living relatives are her nephews and nieces. Her nephew, the well-known author Raymond West and his wife Joan (initially Joyce) crop up most commonly in her stories. Marple also employs a selection of maids, all young women from the nearby orphanage, training them in her Victorian way.



Acting Miss Marple (above, left to right):

Margaret Rutherford
Helen Hayes
Angela Lansbury
Joan Hickson
Geraldine McEwan
Julia McKenzie

Playing Miss Marple

Many great actors have taken on the role of Marple. The 1960s saw four MGM film adaptations starring friend of the family Margaret Rutherford, although many of these were only loosely based on Agatha Christie's novels (and two originally involved Poirot). Angela Lansbury played the role in the 1980 film of *The Mirror Crack'd*, while the 1980s also saw Helen Hayes in three Miss Marple TV films, as a sprightlier sleuth. Joan Hickson gave what many fans have described as the definitive portrayal in a series of BBC TV dramatisations, which made it more difficult for Geraldine McEwan and Julia McKenzie, who followed in the role.

Where is **St Mary Mead**?

Agatha Christie first described a quaint, sleepy village named St Mary Mead prior to Miss Marple's introduction, in the 1928 Hercule Poirot novel **The Mystery of the Blue Train**. In that novel, St Mary Mead is in Kent, and is home to the book's protagonist, Katherine Grey. It is not the same village as Miss Marple's home, being in a different county. The village was first mentioned in a Miss Marple book in 1930, when it was the setting for the first Marple novel, **The Murder at the Vicarage**. It was then in the fictional county of Downshire, but in the later novel **The Body in the Library** Downshire had become Radfordshire. In the BBC Miss Marple TV adaptation of **Nemesis**, a letter from Mr Rafiel's solicitors indicate that St Mary Mead is located in the (also fictional) county of Middleshire.

Miss Marple lives in Danemead Cottage, the last cottage in Old Pasture Lane. Her telephone number is "three five" on a manual exchange. However, Miss Marple's phone number changes over the course of the movies. In **The Body in The Library** her number is St Mary Mead 35. In **The 4:50 From Paddington** her number has become St Mary Mead 236

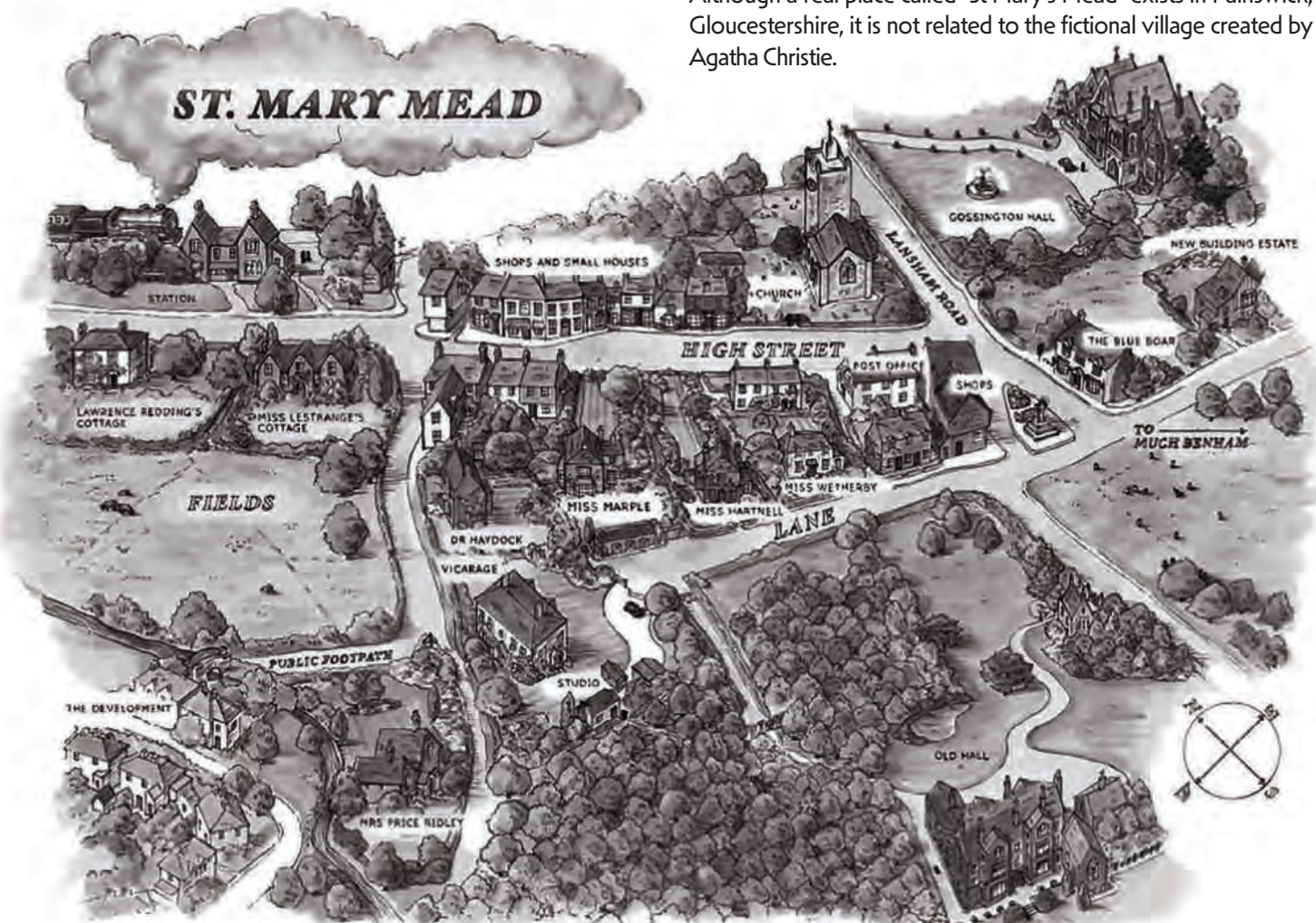
Once it has been fully established as Miss Marple's home village, St Mary Mead is supposed to be in Southern England, 25 miles from London and 25 miles from Alton in Hampshire. It is just outside the town of Much Benham and is close to Market Basing (which appears as a name of a town in many of Agatha Christie's novels and short stories), 12 miles from the fashionable seaside resort of Danemouth, and also 12 miles from the coastal town of Loomouth. Using the distances from Alton and London gives a narrow possible location which, unfortunately, is at least 25 miles from the coast. Other towns

said to be close by include Brackhampton, Medenham Wells, and Milchester.

The neighbourhood of St Mary Mead is served by trains arriving at Paddington railway station, indicating a location west or south-west of London. It has been suggested that Market Basing is Basingstoke and Danemouth is Bournemouth.

In the BBC Miss Marple television adaptations (1984 – 1992), the Hampshire village of Nether Wallop was used as the setting for St Mary Mead. Hambleden in Buckinghamshire was used for the 2004 *Murder at the Vicarage* production, while some scenes for the star-studded film version of **The Mirror Crack'd** were filmed in Smarden and Shoreham in Kent.

Although a real place called "St Mary's Mead" exists in Painswick, Gloucestershire, it is not related to the fictional village created by Agatha Christie.



The CAST

MISS JANE MARPLE

CHERRY BAKER

HEATHER LEIGH

DOLLY BANTRY

MARINA GREGG

ELLA ZIELINSKY

LOLA BREWSTER

CHIEF INSPECTOR

DERMOT CRADDOCK

CYRIL LEIGH

JASON RUDD

GIUSEPPE RENZO

FIRST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR



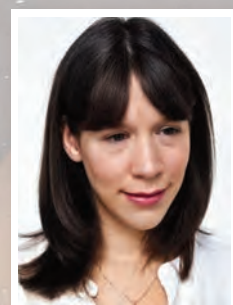
Mike Shaw
Director

Mike has been with the Garrick for approaching 50 years, and fellow members say that the theatre runs through his veins. During this time, he has been involved on-stage as well as backstage for all of their productions.

Mike is delighted to be directing **The Mirror Crack'd**, having previously directed Agatha Christie's **Towards Zero**, **A Murder Has Been Arranged**, **Go Back For Murder** and **Witness for the Prosecution**, as well as Emily Williams' **Whodunnit** and the Inspector Morse murder-mystery **House of Ghosts**. His acting roles have included **Privates on Parade**, **Arsenic and Old Lace**, **La Cage Aux Folles**, **Dick Whittington**, **When We Are Married!**, and he won a NODA Best Actor award for his portrayal of 'Dr. Hubert Bonney' in **It Runs In The Family**. Having played one of the Alan Bennetts in **The Lady In The Van**, Mike's most recent appearance on the Garrick's stage was as The Child Catcher in **Chitty Chitty Bang Bang**.

When not treading the boards, Mike and his team have been the mainstay of the wardrobe department for over 38 years. They have picked up critical acclaim and recognition for their understated or awe inspiring creations, especially for the fantastic, ornately detailed costumes that won a NODA Award for costumes in the production of **Wolf Hall**.

He hopes you enjoy this performance of **The Mirror Crack'd** as much as he has, working with a truly talented team of people both on-stage and the unsung heroes behind the scenes who, with their dedication and commitment, have made this production come to life.



Rachel Wagstaff
Adaptation

Rachel's first play, **The Soldier**, was staged at the Edinburgh Festival in 2004, receiving five star reviews. Her second play, **Night Sky**, was staged at the Old Vic, for Index on Censorship. **Only the Brave**, a musical for which she wrote the book, was staged at the Edinburgh Festival in 2008, and later in the same year her play for Y Touring, **Full Time**, toured Britain. Rachel adapted Sebastian Faulks' **The Girl**

at the Lion d'Or for a five part series for Woman's Hour on BBC Radio Four, which was transmitted in 2009, and the following year her musical, **Moonshadow**, co-written with Yusuf Islam (Cat Stevens), was previewed at the Royal Albert Hall and then was produced at the Princess Theatre in Melbourne in June 2012. Rachel's adaptation of Sebastian Faulks' bestselling novel **Birdsong** was staged at the Comedy Theatre, West End, 2010-11, directed by Sir Trevor Nunn, and **That Girl** was produced at the Soho Theatre in June 2012. Rachel also wrote the book for the original musical **Only the Brave**, which opened at the Wales Millennium Centre in March 2016 with music composed by Matthew Brind.

Her Afternoon Play **When I Lost You**, co-written with Duncan Abel, was transmitted on BBC Radio Four in July 2013. With Duncan Abel, Rachel subsequently adapted Paula Hawkins' **The Girl on the Train**, which had a record-breaking UK tour and West End run in 2019, and again last year, and Dan Brown's **The Da Vinci Code**, which toured the UK in 2022 and was also staged last year in a co-production between Salisbury Playhouse and the Mercury Theatre, Colchester.

Rachel Wagstaff wrote the book for multi-award winning musical, **Flowers for Mrs Harris** (Best Musical, UK Theatre Awards 2016), which transferred to Chichester Festival Theatre, directed by Daniel Evans, in September 2018, after a run at the Sheffield Crucible. Her critically acclaimed adaptation of **Birdsong** originally in the West End in 2010-11, enjoyed four UK tours with the Original Theatre Company and Birdsong Productions, before its award-winning online release in 2020.

Rachel's adaptation of Agatha Christie's **The Mirror Crack'd** toured the UK in 2019, produced by the Wales Millennium Centre and Wiltshire Creative; an Indian version was produced at NCPA in 2020. Most recently, her co-adaptation with Duncan Abel of P.D. James' **Death Comes To Pemberley** toured the U.K. last year.



The CREATIVES

Director	Mike Shaw	
Designers	Barry Purves	
.....	Mike Shaw	
Original Music Composition	Alexander Day	
Heads of Stage	Mark McEwan	
.....	Paul Simpson	
Stage Manager	Christine Mills	
Assistant Stage Managers	Sue Duffy	
.....	Claire Corneill	
Stage Crew	Alistair Duffy	
Lighting & Sound	James Merrington	
Properties	Christine Chrystal	
.....	Evie Tinsley	
.....	Claire Eddleston-Rose	
Rehearsal Prompt	Anne O'Reilly	
Costumes	Mike Shaw	
Assisted by	Stella Blackburn	Julie Shaw
.....	Betty Farmer	Lynne Saleh
.....	Catherine Phillips	Helen Phillips
.....	Sarah Steer	Noel Watson
.....		Jen McAvoy
Production Carpenters	Steve Cox	
Assisted by	Trevor McKie	
Scenic Artist	Mandy Cooke	
Assisted by	Rob Robinson	
.....	Jane Milner	Charlotte Leigh
.....	Faith Edwards	Ruth Hetherington
.....	Holly Cooper	Barry Purves
Set Construction	Paul Simpson	
.....	Trevor McKie	Alan Jones
.....	Barry Borgen	Mark McEwan
.....	Nick McKie	Andy McHugh
.....	John Murphy	Cliff Mills
.....	Dave Bailey	Bob Green
.....	Steve Cox	Drew Lightfoot
.....		Alistair Duffy
Rehearsal & Show Photography	Martin Ogden	
Publicity & Programme Design	Nick Sample	

The details above were believed to be correct at the time of going to print, but could have been subject to change...

The COMPANY



Sarah Kirk Miss Jane Marple

Sarah's theatre credits include Tzeitel in **Fiddler on the Roof**, **Scrooge the Musical**, Laurey in **Okla-homa**, Katie Brown in **Calamity Jane**, Guinevere in **Camelot**, Nancy in **Oliver!**, Anna in **The King and I**, Sarah Brown in **Guys and Dolls**, Nellie Forbush in **South Pacific**, Sally Durant in **Follies**, **Saturday Night at the Crown**, **In Praise of Love**, **Allo Allo**, **The Importance of Being Earnest**, **An Englishman Abroad**, **Abigail's Party**, **Teechers**, **Salt of the**

Earth, **An Evening with Victoria Wood**, **The Complete Works of William Shakespeare**, **A Chorus of Disapproval**, **The Deep Blue Sea**, **Bette and Joan**, **A Different Way Home** and **Dick Barton and the Curse of the Pharaoh's Tomb**.

For the Garrick, Sarah has appeared in **Corriel**, **Curtain Up**, Annie in **Calendar Girls - The Musical**, **The Habit of Art**, **Queers**, Lady Bracknell in **The Importance of Being Earnest**, **The Laramie Project**, **Into the Woods**, **A Christmas Carol - A Ghost Story**, **Treasure Island** and **Merrily We Roll Along**. Last season, Sarah gave a compelling performance as Mag Folan in **The Beauty Queen of Leenane** in the Studio.

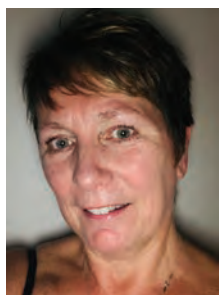
Sarah is thrilled to be a part of this production, and to be working alongside such a brilliant company.



Isabelle Mead Cherry Baker

Isabelle's love for theatre – especially musicals – began at the age of five, and she has enjoyed performing ever since. A graduate of Edge Hill University with a degree in psychology, Isabelle maintained her passion for musical theatre as an active member of the university's musical theatre society, as well as embracing numerous opportunities with local societies, including Urnston Musical

Theatre and Sale and Altrincham Musical Theatre. Some of her favourite roles have included Sleeping Beauty in **Sleeping Beauty** and Ms. Darbus in **High School Musical**. Having performed in the ensemble of Sale and Altrincham Musical Theatre Company's production of **Sweeney Todd**, Isabelle made her debut with Altrincham Garrick as part of the company in last season's **The Wizard Of Oz**.



Adele Higson Heather Leigh

Adele has been a Garrick member for over 25 years, the first production being **Guys and Dolls**. Since that time she has appeared in numerous productions from musicals to plays. Along the way Adele has also Assistant-Stage-Managed and helped out backstage.

Favourite productions have been **Daisy Pulls It Off**, **'Allo 'Allo**, **Acorn Antiques the Musical**, **Return to**

the Forbidden Planet, **Corriel**, and the amazing **La Cage Aux Folles**. Following a break for the pandemic, she returned to portray Grace Friel in the Inspector Morse murder mystery **House of Ghosts** and subsequently played Janet Mackenzie in **Witness for the Prosecution**. Most recently, Adele was part of the company for Mike Shaw's unforgettable staging of **The Audience** in 2024.

Adele is delighted to be back on the Garrick's main stage again, and working with Mike Shaw once more on another Agatha Christie favourite!



Ros Greenwood Dolly Bantry

Ros has been involved in many Garrick productions both onstage and behind the scenes. Favourite roles over the seasons have been Pattie in **Brimstone and Treacle**, Amanda in **Private Lives**, Maggie in **Outside Edge**, Monica in **Daisy Pulls it Off**, Belinda in **Noises Off**, Gail in **Teechers**, Elizabeth Law in **When the Rain Stops Falling**, Queen Belladonna in **Snow White**, Miss 'Tea' Wilson in **Calendar Girls - The Musical**, Queen Elizabeth II in Mike Shaw's

glorious production of **The Audience** in 2024, and multiple roles in **Jane Eyre**. Ros last appeared as Agnes Bin & Flora Dies-Early in this season's bonkers production of **Bleak Expectations**, and is also a member of the **Altrincham Garrick Show Choir**.

Garrick Studio credits include Fay in **Iron**, Katurian in **The Pillowman**, Joan Crawford in **Bette and Joan** and, more recently, Kitty in **Last Summer at Bluefish Cove**.

Ros has also directed and designed our productions of **And Then There Were None**, **Gaslight**, and **The Jungle Book**, and she's looking forward to being back in the director's chair for our Garrick Studio staging of **Hobson's Choice** in April/May.



Steph Niland Marina Gregg

Growing up, Steph was surrounded by music and creativity, so it was no surprise when she embarked on such an enduring hobby, at the tender age of 10. This hobby has seen her treading the boards in many guises from principal boy to Mary Queen of Scots, from German spy to Mama Morton. Her favourite roles include Amneris in **Aida**, Angela in **Abigail's Party**, Marta in **Company**, Desiree Armfelt in **A Little Night Music** and Mrs Lovett in

Sweeney Todd. Alongside the on-stage work, she has directed, designed and stage managed an assortment of plays, musicals and pantomimes. Her love for the performing and creative arts lead her to pursue it educationally and she has dipped her toe into the professional world of acting a few times and loved every moment! Steph is currently a Drama and Music practitioner working in many different educational and non-educational establishments. She also managed a couple of beautiful and wonderful personal productions...2 sons! She is a huge Christie fan and is delighted to be involved in this production.



Gary Ford Cyril Leigh

Gary is absolutely delighted to be returning to Altrincham Garrick Playhouse, having made his stage debut last season in the production of **Jane Eyre**, playing the main roles of Lord Ingram and a Clergyman plus various other supporting roles.

Being involved in **The Mirror Crack'd** continues to support his long held ambition to be involved in the performing arts.

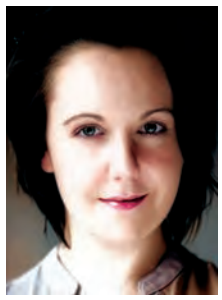
Prior to the Garrick, Gary co-wrote, directed and performed in 2 plays and a number of short sketches for a local community club.



Without our incredibly dedicated, enthusiastic team of **Volunteers and Staff**, whose sheer hard work often goes unnoticed, Altrincham Garrick Playhouse would simply be unable to continue providing such a range of top-quality productions for everyone enjoy.

Thank
You!

With their continuous commitment to excellence, we owe them all a huge debt of gratitude. Thank You!



Kathryn Worthington Ella Zielinsky

Having previously appeared at the Garrick in 2019 as Jackie in **My Mother Said I Never Should**, Kathryn was thrilled to have the opportunity to finally perform the role of Blanche Dubois in John Cunningham's compelling production of Tennessee Williams' **A Streetcar Named Desire** on our main stage in 2021. Since then, Kathryn's appearances at the Garrick Playhouse have been as Miss Blake in **Blue Stockings**, and as Maureen Folan in **The**

Beauty Queen of Leenane and as Lorraine in last season's Studio production of **Little Gem**.

Kathryn's other work highlights include: **Something Hidden** (for the Larkin 25 Festival in Hull); **Emmerdale** (ITV), and her time as Festival Director at the 24:7 Theatre Festival, a platform for new writers and theatre makers.



Jonathan Black Chief Inspector Dermot Craddock

After appearing in last seasons **Translations**, making his Altrincham Garrick Studio debut, Jonathan is delighted to be back on the main stage.

"It's Agatha Christie time again and Miss Marple is calling! I am delighted to be cast as Chief Inspector Craddock in this production of **The Mirror Crack'd** here at the Altrincham Garrick Playhouse. It has it

all! Lies, tragedy, danger, revenge and dark secrets!"

Jonathan started his Garrick journey back in 1981 appearing in **Privates On Parade**. Through the years other appearances have included **Juno and The Paycock**, **A View from The Bridge**, **Whipping It Up**, **Out of Order**, **Shady Business**, **Anne of A Thousand Days**, **Pack of Lies**, **Run for Your Wife**, **And Then There Were None**, **Noises Off**, **Two into One**, **Gaslight**, **It Runs in the Family**, **Wolf Hall**, **Business Affairs**, **The Lady in the Van**, **House of Ghosts**, **Witness for the Prosecution**, **A Christmas Carol – A Ghost Story** and, most recently, as Sir Anthony Eden in **The Audience**. He has also been lucky enough to experience working in TV productions such as **The Falklands Play**, **Brookside**, **Emmerdale**, **Hollyoaks**, **Coronation Street**, **Cold Feet**, **Clocking Off** and **A Touch of Frost**.

"As I have said many times before, with any production at the Garrick, whether it be, drama, comedy or musical musical we always have tremendous fun rehearsing and once again, this production has been no exception. Hope you enjoy it!"



Andrew Higson Giuseppe Renzo

Andrew has been a member of the Garrick Playhouse since 1995 and appeared in numerous productions on main stage. Favourites include **The Vicar of Dibley**, **Abigail's Party**, **The Ritz**, **Return to the Forbidden Planet**, **La Cage aux Folles**, **Bronte** and **Jeeves and Wooster**. And in the Garrick Studio, plays include **Greek** by Steven Berkoff and **The Visitor**. More recent appearances on our main stage have been as Chief Inspector

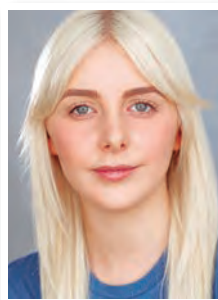
Morse's partner, Detective Sergeant Lewis in 2022's **House of Ghosts**, the Narrator in June 2023's **Into The Woods** by Stephen Sondheim, the Archbishop of Canterbury in **The Audience**, and as Owen Newitt in both **The Vicar of Dibley** and it's follow-up, **A Vicar of Dibley Christmas** - the third time he's played the part. Most recently, he played Slim in **Of Mice And Men** last year. Andrew was also one of the first to perform in **JB Shorts**, now established as a major highlight of acting entertainment in Manchester.



John Keen Jason Rudd

John's first role at the Garrick was in **Sinbad** as a chorus member in 1990 and since then he has been involved in all manner of shows. Memorable productions include **Brimstone and Treacle** (Martin), **The Crucible** (Proctor), **'alf a Sixpence** (Kipps), **A Midsummer Night's Dream** (Lysander and Demetrius) and **Death of a Salesman** (Happy). John has also appeared with various other theatre companies around the northwest, notably at The

Wilmslow Green Room in **Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf** (George). John has also taken on just about all roles within the Garrick, both front and back of house as well as many different committee positions, he says, 'Join the Garrick, it's got something for everyone'.



Alexandra Hulston Lola Brewster

This marks Alexandra's debut at the Altrincham Garrick Playhouse, a venue where she has long admired watching many previous productions.

Alexandra trained at East 15 Acting School and has since written and performed in her own solo show, **The Tale of Little Blue Girl** at the Clifftown Theatre, and the dark comedy **The Funeral Parlour** at the Royal Exchange, Manchester. She has also taken part in various projects for Manchester International

Festival, notably the award-winning film **Curing Albrecht**, created in association with the English National Ballet.

She is grateful for the opportunity to perform here, as it feels especially meaningful to be part of a theatre she has admired for so long. She looks forward to sharing the evening with audiences – it's sure to be a night to die for!

BEHIND THE SCENES



Alexander Day Music Composition

Alexander has been performing in Garrick productions since 2023. **The Mirror Crack'd** marks his debut as part of the creative team, composing original score for the play which features after 'Theme from Agatha Christie's Marple' by Dominik Scherrer (from the ITV series).

Previous scores by Alexander include the detective web series **'Wenlock & Jones'** and the short films **'Swan Song'** and **'Twenty Nothing'**. Soundtrack albums for these are available on music streaming platforms.



Anne O'Reilly Rehearsal Prompt

Anne has been involved with The Garrick for nearly twenty years. Lately she has gone 'on the book' prompting a large range of actors and supporting them in recalling the lines and saying everything in the right order. She has been involved in a wide range of performances, most recently the memorable **The History Boys**, the powerful **Oppenheimer**, the hilarious **Bleak Expectations** and the emotional roller coaster **It's A Wonderful Life**. Anne is particularly happy to be working on an all-time favourite Agatha Christie with all its twists, turns and red herrings.



Dame Agatha Christie —



DID YOU KNOW?

- Her prolific writing career spanned five decades, with 66 crime novels, 6 non-crime novels and 150 short stories.
- With more than 2 billion books published, she is outsold only by the Bible and Shakespeare.
- Her books have been published in over 100 languages, making her the most translated writer of all time.
- Two of her pet hates were marmalade pudding and cockroaches. Her dislikes also included "crowds, being jammed up against people, loud voices, noise, protracted talking, parties, and especially cocktail parties, cigarette smoke and smoking generally, any kind of drink except in cooking, marmalade, oysters, lukewarm food, grey skies, the feet of birds, or indeed the feel of a bird altogether. Final and fiercest dislike: the taste and smell of hot milk."
- Christie's likes included "sunshine, apples, almost any kind of music, railway trains, numerical puzzles and anything to do with numbers, going to the sea, bathing and swimming, silence, sleeping, dreaming, eating, the smell of coffee, lilies of the valley, most dogs, and going to the theatre."

Agatha Mary Clarissa Miller was born on 15 September 1890 in Torquay, Devon, South West England into a comfortably well off middle class family. What made her upbringing unusual, even for its time, was that she was home schooled largely by her father, an American. Her mother, Clara, who was an excellent storyteller, did not want her to learn to read until she was eight but Agatha, bored as the only child at home (she was a much loved "afterthought" with two older siblings) taught herself to read by the age of five.

At the age of eleven there was a shock. Her father, not well since the advent of financial difficulties, died after a series of heart attacks. Clara was distraught and Agatha became her mother's closest companion. Despite money worries, Clara and Agatha found a way forward and from the age of 15 Agatha boarded at a succession of pensions and took piano and singing lessons. By the age of 18 she was amusing herself with writing short stories – some of which were published in much revised form in the 1930s.

Clara's health and the need for economies dictated their next move. In 1910 they set off for Cairo and a three month "season" at the Gezira Palace Hotel. There were evening dresses and parties, and young Agatha showed more interest in these than the local archaeological sites. The friends and young couples she met in Cairo invited her to house parties back home on her return. Various marriage proposals followed.

It was in 1912 that Agatha met Archie Christie, a qualified aviator who had applied to join the Royal Flying Corps. Their courtship was a whirlwind affair; both were desperate to marry but with no money. According to her autobiography, it was the "excitement of the stranger" that attracted them both. They married on Christmas Eve 1914 after both had experienced war – Archie in France and Agatha on the Home Front now working with the Voluntary Aid Detachment in a Red Cross Hospital in Torquay. They spent their honeymoon night in The Grand Hotel, Torquay and on the

27th December Archie returned to France. They met infrequently during the War Years and it wasn't until January 1918 when Archie was posted to the War Office in London that Agatha felt her married life truly began.

It was during the First World War that Agatha turned to writing detective stories. Her debut novel **The Mysterious Affair at Styles** took some time to finish and even longer to find a publisher. She started writing partly in response to a bet from her sister Madge that she couldn't write a good detective story and partly to relieve the monotony of the dispensing work which she was now doing. She first worked out her plot and then "found" her characters on a tram in Torquay. She finished the manuscript during her two week holiday which she spent at the Moorland Hotel at Haytor on Dartmoor. Her new found expertise in poisons was also put to good use. The murderer's use of poison was so well described that when the book was eventually published Agatha received an unprecedented honour for a writer of fiction – a review in the *Pharmaceutical Journal*.

The young Agatha Christie.



Murders, she wrote

With the end of the war, Archie had found a job in the City and they had just enough money to rent and furnish a flat in London. Later that year, on the 5th August, Agatha gave birth to their only daughter, Rosalind. It was also the year that a publisher accepted **The Mysterious Affair at Styles** for publication and contracted Agatha to produce five more books.

Following the war Agatha continued to write – experimenting with different types of thriller and murder mystery stories, creating first **Tommy and Tuppence** and then **Miss Marple** in quick succession. In 1922, leaving Rosalind with her nurse and her mother, she and Archie travelled across the then British Empire, promoting The Empire Exhibition of 1924, during which she became the first British woman ever to surf standing up.

Having returned from the Grand Tour, it was a difficult time for Agatha as her mother had died, and she was often alone clearing out the family home in Torquay and struggling to write the next novel. Archie and Agatha's relationship, strained by the sadness in her life, broke down when Archie fell in love with a fellow golfer and friend of the family, Nancy Neale. The couple subsequently divorced in 1928, and Agatha then fulfilled one of her lifelong ambitions: to travel on the Orient Express to the Middle East. This and future trips are recognised in books such as **Murder on the Orient Express**, **Death on the Nile**, **Murder in Mesopotamia**, **Appointment With Death** and **They Came to Baghdad**, as well as many short stories.

During a trip to the excavations at Ur in 1930, Agatha met archaeologist Max Mallowan – the man who became her second husband, and who was fourteen years her junior. Agatha accompanied Max on his annual archaeological expeditions for nearly 30 years.

World War II saw Max get a wartime job in Cairo, using his languages to assist the war effort, while Agatha remained in England, writing and also volunteering at the Dispensary at University College Hospital in London. Agatha was focused and prolific during this period. Missing Max and with external entertainment more limited in wartime, she wrote and/or published such classics as **N or M?**, **And Then There Were None**, **Evil Under the Sun**, **The Body in the Library**, **Five Little Pigs** and **The Moving Finger**.

By 1945 and the return of Max with the end of the war, Agatha had realised the tax implications of writing so much. She became less prolific and, now in her mid 50s, enjoyed a slower pace of life; like the rest of the country the last years of the 1940s were full of shortages – a long, chilly, depressing haul. Food rationing did not end until 1954. The 1940s and 50s saw much time-consuming work with theatrical productions which also limited the time Agatha could devote to writing.

At the end of 1946, Agatha's cover as Mary Westmacott was blown by an American reviewer of **Absent in the Spring**. She was disappointed as she had enjoyed the freedom to write without the pressure of being Agatha Christie.

In 1971, Agatha was made a Dame of the British Empire. Her last public appearance was at the opening night of the 1974 film version of **Murder on the Orient Express** starring Albert Finney as Hercule Poirot. Her verdict: "a good adaptation with the minor point that Poirot's moustaches weren't luxurious enough".

After a hugely successful career and a very happy life Agatha died peacefully on 12 January 1976. She is buried in the churchyard of St Mary's, Cholsey, near Wallingford.



On 3 December, 1926, Agatha Christie disappeared, for eleven days, causing a national woman-hunt. Stories about the missing novelist were all over the papers.

At the end of the eleven days, she was discovered 200 miles from home, living under a false name in a hotel in Harrogate.

At the time, a lot of people believed that she'd disappeared deliberately. Perhaps to get more publicity for her books. Or, more excitingly, to frame her cheating husband with having murdered her.

When she was found alive and physically unharmed, the press turned on her. She was pilloried. It was almost like they were disappointed that she hadn't been murdered!

Eighteen months later, in 1928, she gave a really long interview explaining her disappearance to The Daily Mail.

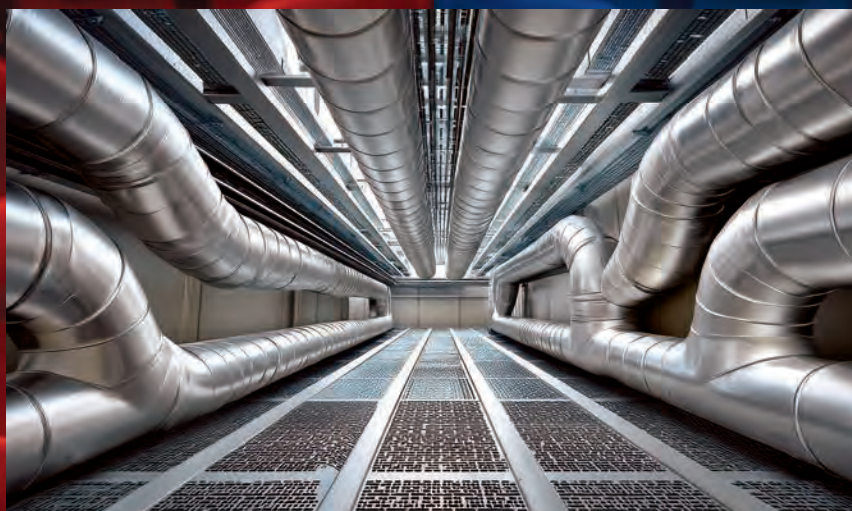
She explained that she'd been so unwell that she'd made an attempt on her own life. Having survived it, she'd fallen into what psychiatrists call a 'fugue state' – a form of mental distress where you can do quite normal things (like go to Harrogate and check into a hotel), but you can't tell anyone who you are, or what your name is. Hence the false name, and the erratic behaviour.

Agatha's mother's death, the pressure of producing her next bestseller, and her husband's affair had all become too much for her to cope with.

Having said nothing about the mystery for 18 months, by 1928 she was in the divorce court. She was desperate to get custody of her daughter. She wanted to make the point that she wasn't the 'bad mother' the judge had read about in the papers.

Agatha did get custody of her daughter. But after the court case, she became incredibly reluctant to give media interviews, and adopted a deliberate strategy of belittling herself, and downplaying her enormous achievements...

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In addition to raising funds through draws (see below), and our Theatre Open Days, those who wish to donate a more sizeable sum can have their contribution commemorated by placing a brick-sized plaque inside the theatre, with your choice of wording.

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£150 DONATION

GOLD PLAQUE

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BUSINESS GOLD PLAQUE

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The plaques will be placed in a prominent position within the theatre, and lit to draw attention to those who have supported the CHILI campaign. And remember, as Altrincham Garrick is a Registered Charity, your donation can be both Gift-Aided and offset against tax.

Simply scan the QR Code (left) to link to the Cool/Heat It, LOVE IT! campaign donation page on our website.



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We look forward to hearing from or seeing you!

**united
we stand
together
we soar!**

Altrincham Garrick Playhouse is a Registered Charity. All of the income we receive goes directly back into the work on our stages, and into our projects with the community.

Altrincham Garrick Playhouse receives no public funding from any official organisation, regional or local council. Therefore, all of our income is generated by ticket sales for our own productions, hiring of the theatre for concerts and one-night stands, and donations. We are incredibly grateful to everyone who has donated, funded, sponsored or become a Friend of the Garrick so far. You are all part of making amazing things happen, and bringing our communities closer together through the arts and creativity!

Just like all non-profit making charities, we fund-raise all year round to keep our work in the community going. Our projects include:

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Tuesday 3 March 7.30pm

National Theatre Live

HELEN MIRREN
as Queen Elizabeth II in
THE AUDIENCE
by Peter Morgan
directed by Stephen Daldry



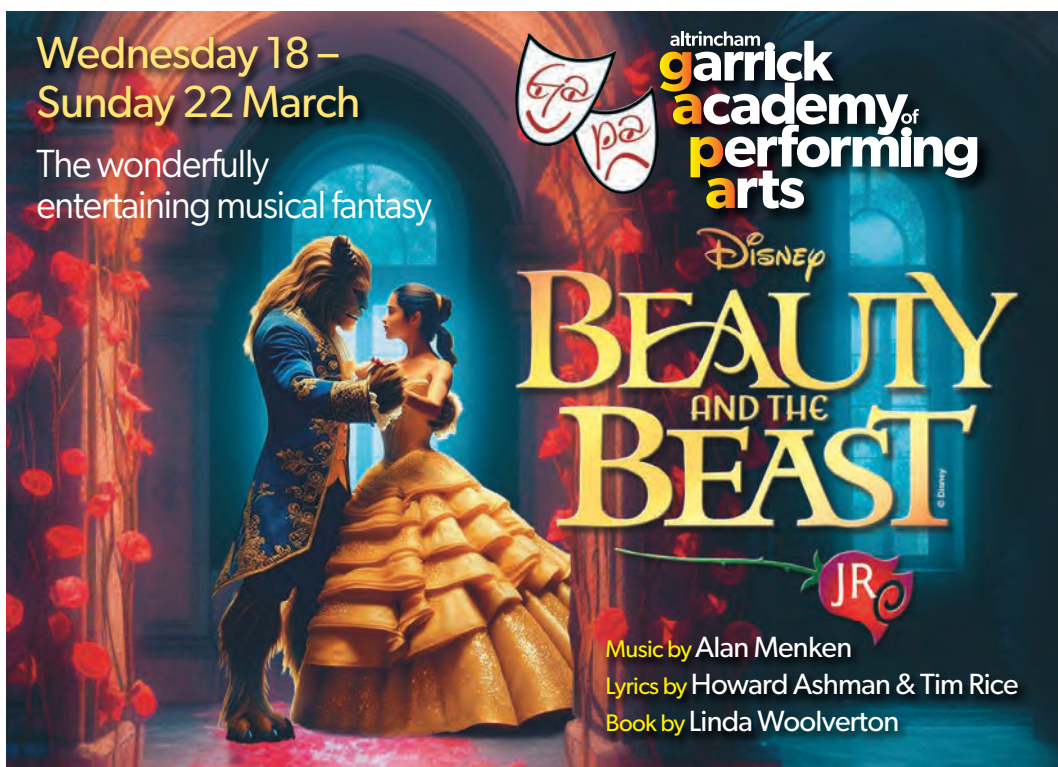
Wednesday 18 – Sunday 22 March

The wonderfully entertaining musical fantasy

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Disney BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

Music by Alan Menken
Lyrics by Howard Ashman & Tim Rice
Book by Linda Woolverton



Tuesday 24 – Sunday 29 March

pomona
by Alastair McDowall
Directed by Mark Goggins

Step into the haunting depths of Manchester's underbelly, where evil lurks and danger is around every corner. Welcome to Pomona – a place where dreams are overshadowed by darkness.

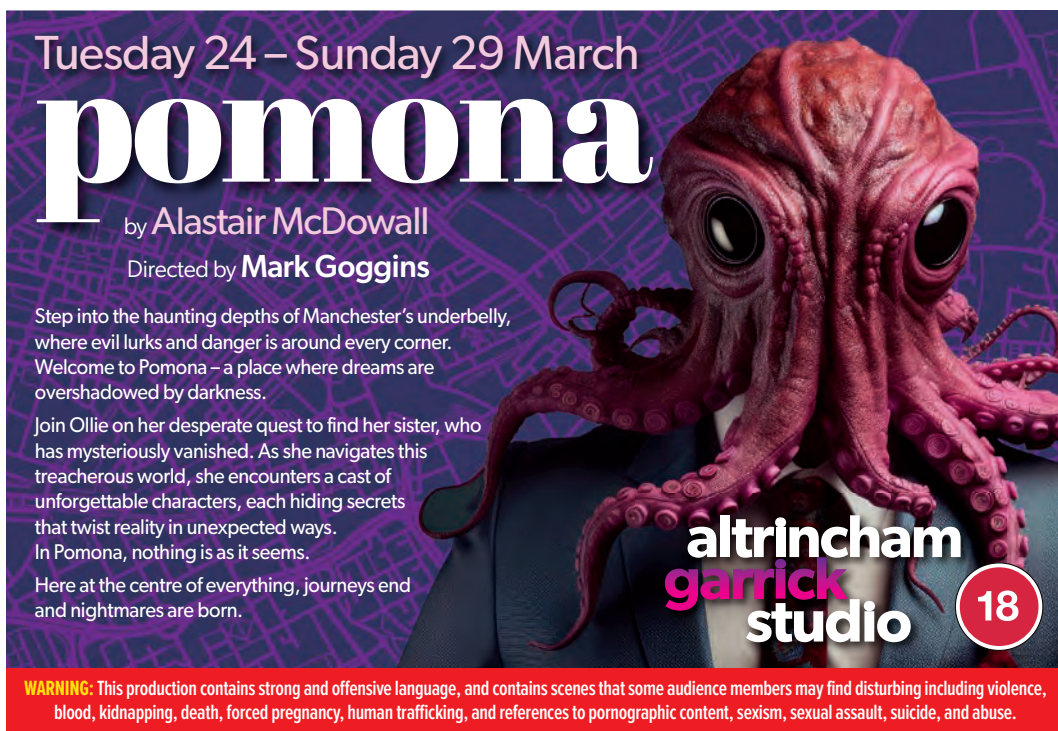
Join Ollie on her desperate quest to find her sister, who has mysteriously vanished. As she navigates this treacherous world, she encounters a cast of unforgettable characters, each hiding secrets that twist reality in unexpected ways. In Pomona, nothing is as it seems.

Here at the centre of everything, journeys end and nightmares are born.

altrincham garrick studio

18

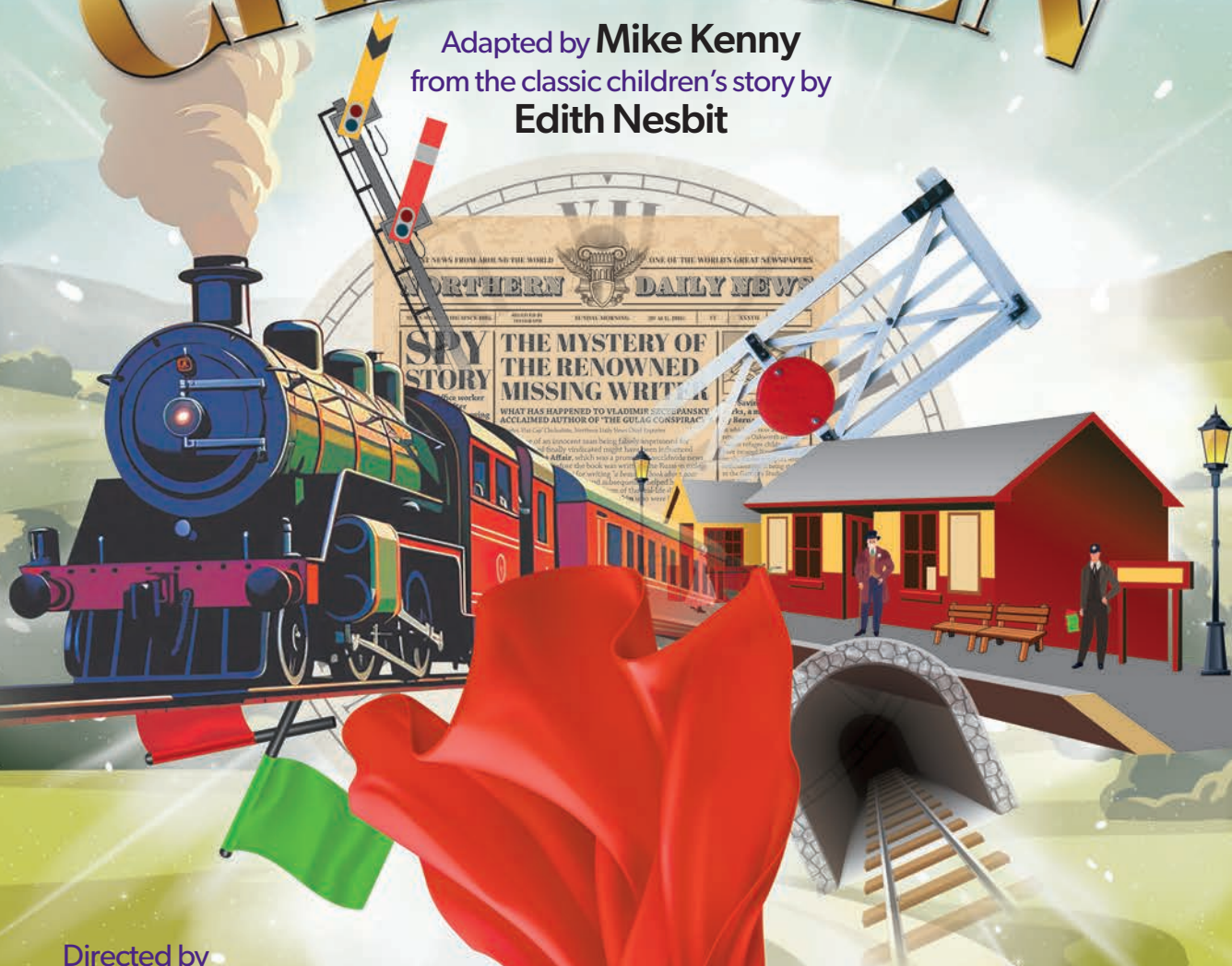
WARNING: This production contains strong and offensive language, and contains scenes that some audience members may find disturbing including violence, blood, kidnapping, death, forced pregnancy, human trafficking, and references to pornographic content, sexism, sexual assault, suicide, and abuse.



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THE RAILWAY CHILDREN

Adapted by **Mike Kenny**
from the classic children's story by
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Directed by
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