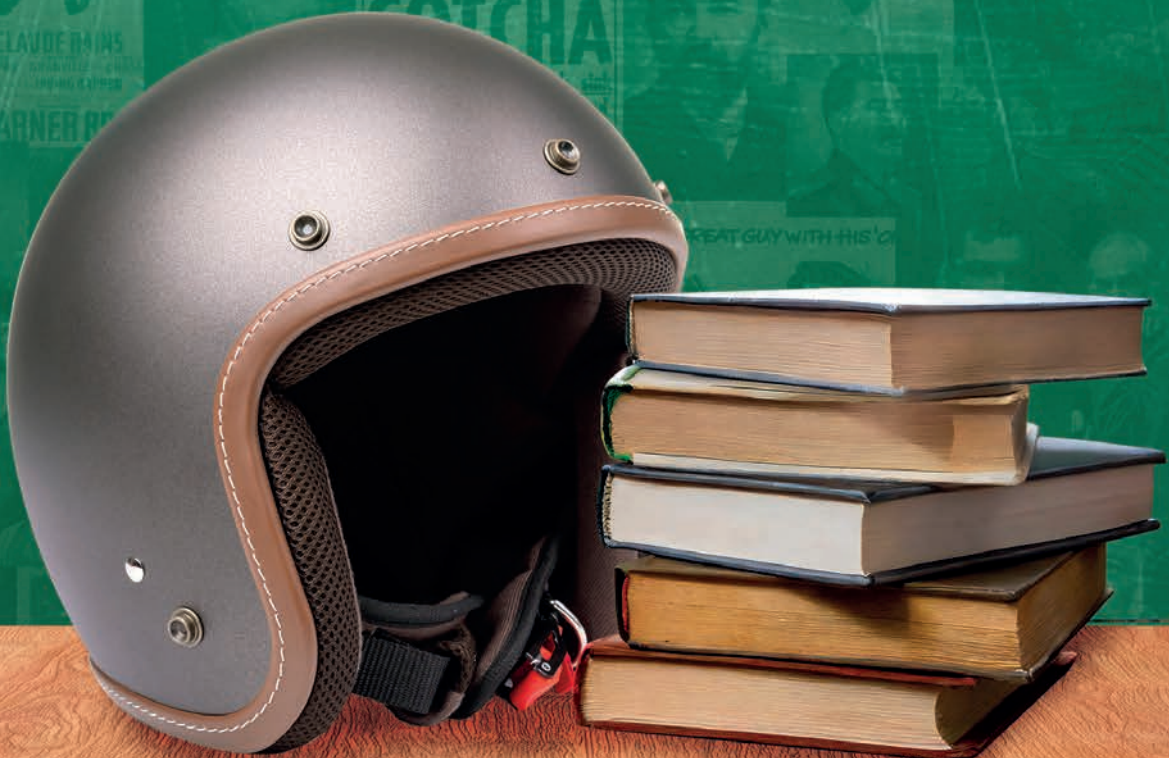


THE HISTORY BOYS



Monday 16 –
Saturday 21
September 2024

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playhouse

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Charlotte Brontë's

JANE EYRE

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Adapted by Polly Teale



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Matinée, Saturday 12 at 2:30pm

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An Irish tale of love and loss, with a bit of madness in between...



THE BEAUTY QUEEN OF LEENANE

by Martin McDonagh

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The Wizard of Oz

The Wizard of Oz
L. Frank Baum
Harold Arlen & E.Y. Harburg
Harbert Swarth



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Mon 28 October – Sun 5 November

Evenings 7:30pm (weekends)
Matinée Saturday 2 at 2:30pm
Sunday 3 at 4:00pm

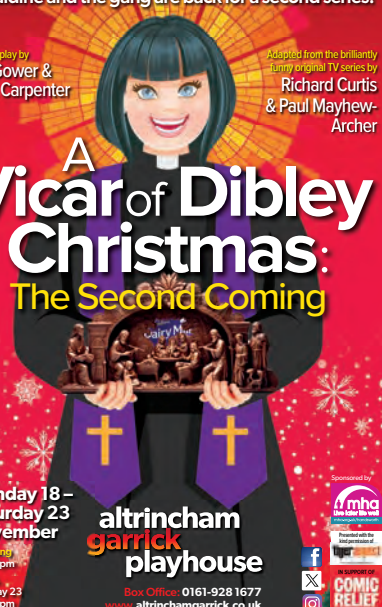
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Geraldine and the gang are back for a second series!

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Adapted from the brilliantly funny original TV series by Richard Curtis & Paul Mayhew-Archer

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Evenings at 7:30pm
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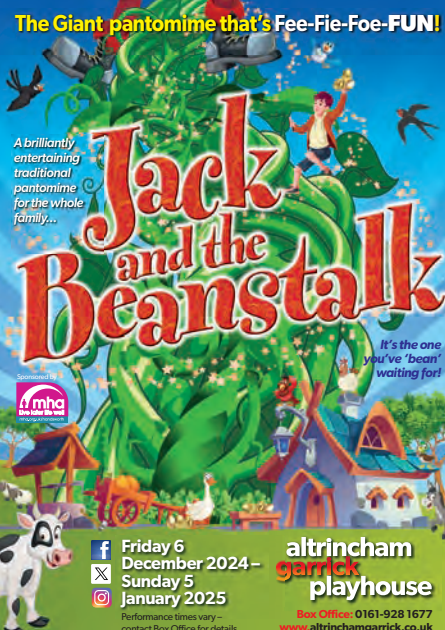
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Brilliantly entertaining traditional pantomime for the whole family...

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A tragedy in two acts.



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Winner of 5 TONY Awards



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Matinée, Saturday 8 at 2:30pm

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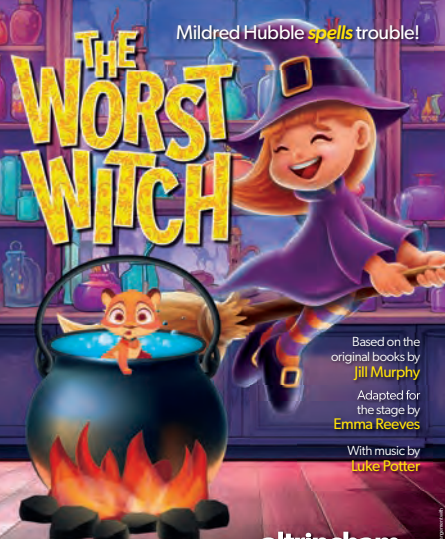
Mildred Hubble spells trouble!

THE WORST WITCH

Based on the original books by Jill Murphy

Adapted for the stage by Emma Reeves

With music by Luke Patter



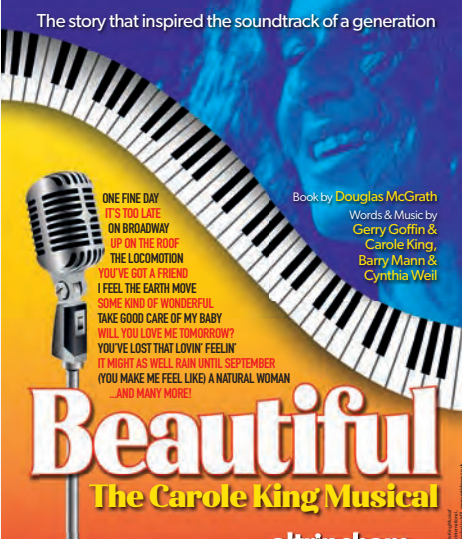
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Friday 4 – Thurs 17 April 2025

Please contact the Box Office for full dates and times of performances.

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Beautiful

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Matinée at 5:00pm, Sun 29 June

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Hello and Welcome

... to **Altrincham Garrick Playhouse**, and our first production in what promises to be a fabulous 2024-25 Season.

At some time in their lives, most people involved in theatre will have either appeared in, or been involved in, a staging of a play by Alan Bennett. And when your first exposure to the work of this brilliant writer is in such a superb play as **The History Boys**, you know that you are involved in something rather special. In recent years before the pandemic, we produced unforgettable stagings of both **The Madness of George III** and **People** and, since becoming the Artistic Director of Altrincham Garrick Playhouse, we have added Bennett's **The Lady In The Van** and **The Habit of Art** to the list. I make no apologies for having chosen to put on **The History Boys** again to mark its twentieth anniversary. While we have staged this play twice before, it remains special to me as my own 'debut' onstage at the Garrick was as 'Crowther' in our unforgettable 2009 production of what has since been voted 'the nation's favourite play'. Later in this programme you'll find a photo of that cast, alongside one from our 2016 staging, and it's great to see that several other people who have been involved – onstage or backstage – for either production are still part of the Garrick family, and actively playing their parts in helping to keep this cultural jewel continuing to shine.

We are thrilled to announce that, for the next five main-stage productions including our panto, we have established a sponsorship arrangement with **MHA Handsworth Care Home**. MHA was founded 81 years ago, in 1943, in the time before the creation of the Welfare State, by a group of Methodists who wanted to improve the quality of life of older people. Since then they have become the largest charity care provider in Britain. We are delighted that they have chosen to become involved with us, and we sincerely hope that they and their guests thoroughly enjoy this production.

Simultaneously, we have also entered into an arrangement with **Star Feedback** where you can instantly contact us about anything at the Garrick - good or not

so good. By scanning the QR Code, you will be immediately re-directed to a secure site where you will be able to tell us... well, anything! See the panel on the inside back page of this programme, or look for the Code displayed around the theatre.



Following the brief summer break where a lot of essential maintenance was carried out on the theatre – including patching of the roof, so, hopefully, you won't be getting wet! – we're up and running again and there's just so much going on! From our own Main-Stage and Studio productions to screenings of National Theatre Live performances, concerts and musical theatre shows by Altrincham Garrick Cinema, the return of the Garrick

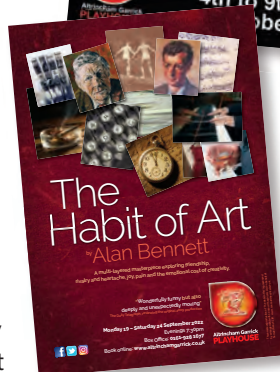
Show Choir (who will be performing their postponed concert this autumn - look out for details) to our hugely popular Play-Reading Group, and not forgetting GAPAs, our Young People's Theatre Company, as well as a host of brilliant concerts and comedy nights, there's absolutely something for everyone to enjoy. Simply pick up one of our Season Brochures today or visit our website for full details. We urge you to 'get involved' and join us, as either a fully-fledged member or as a 'Friend'. You won't regret it!

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.



**altrincham
garrick
playhouse**

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Programme written, designed and produced for the Altrincham Garrick Playhouse by Nick Sample Creative Graphic Design 07950 332 645 njcsample1@mac.com www.nicksample.co.uk

Making History: Alan Bennett,

Alan Bennett is one of the most celebrated British playwrights, known for his sharp wit, insightful observations of society, and ability to infuse humour into serious themes. His works span multiple genres, including plays, television dramas, essays, and autobiographies. Among his many successful works, *The History Boys* stands out as one of the most critically acclaimed and beloved stage plays, which has left a significant impact on modern British theatre.

Première in May 2004 at the National Theatre and enjoying an extended run in the National's repertoire, followed by two seasons in the West End, an international tour, and an all-conquering visit to Broadway, where it won six Tony Awards, *The History Boys* has become the most commercially successful of Alan Bennett's dozen or so works for the theatre.

Bennett's inspiration for *The History Boys* came from a variety of sources, but the play had been quietly maturing in Bennett's creative imagination for nearly 60 years, ever since 1951 when he and seven schoolfellows were directed by the ambitious headmaster of his secondary school to apply for Cambridge.

"I went to Leeds Modern, a state school, and they didn't normally send students to Oxford or Cambridge, although it did often send pupils to Leeds University. I think we were regarded as a rather seedy lot... But we did have some good teachers, and one or two were inspiring. They were teaching history, and I did find that fascinating. The headmaster happened to have gone to Cambridge and half a dozen of us tried, and we all eventually got in."

"Leeds back then was very black and sooty. These days, students love Leeds for its clubs and its nightlife but I'd lived in the city and I wanted to get away from it".

Bennett would satisfy the head's aspirations by winning a place, firstly at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, and then at Exeter College, Oxford, with national service sandwiched between these twin achievements. He was thus brought into contact for the first time with the ex-public schoolboy, a breed he regarded with some distaste, but who talked about the eccentric maverick schoolmasters they had known at their ivy-covered alma maters.

Connections to Bennett's Earlier Works

The History Boys is not an isolated work in Alan Bennett's oeuvre; it is connected thematically and stylistically to his earlier plays, particularly *Forty Years On* (1968). In *Forty Years On*, Bennett explores similar themes of education, history, and the passage of time, albeit in a more overtly satirical manner.

Forty Years On is set in an English public school and revolves around the retirement of the school's headmaster. The play is structured as a play within a play, with the school's staff and students performing a revue that satirises British history and culture. The headmaster, played by John Gielgud in the original production, represents the old guard, clinging to traditional values and resisting change.

Like *The History Boys*, *Forty Years On* explores the tensions between tradition and modernity, between different approaches to education, and between different interpretations of history. Both plays are deeply concerned with the ways in which history is taught and remembered, and both use humour and satire to critique the British education system.

Bennett's interest in history as a subject and as a narrative device is evident in both plays. In *Forty Years On*, the school's revue offers a kaleidoscopic view of British history, with scenes ranging from the First World War to the swinging sixties. In *The History Boys*, history is not just a subject to be studied, but a battleground for competing ideologies and interpretations.

Another connection between the two plays is Bennett's use of language. Both plays are filled with witty dialogue, sharp observations, and memorable speeches that reflect Bennett's mastery of language and his deep understanding of human nature.



and the genesis of The History Boys

As a man who managed the considerable feat of winning places at both Oxford and Cambridge, Bennett might be expected to celebrate the hallowed grounds on which he trod as both undergraduate and teacher. Bennett's feelings are more complex, however. Unlike the characters in his play, Bennett couldn't have cared less about Oxbridge.

"What impressed me about Oxford and Cambridge was less the academic aspect than the architecture. I like old buildings and Leeds had nothing to compare with what I'd seen. When I first went to Cambridge, it just seemed like something out of a fairy story. It just looked so wonderful."

Themes and Characters in *The History Boys*

The History Boys is a complex and multi-layered play that explores a variety of themes, including education, history, identity, and the passage of time. The characters in the play are richly drawn, each representing different aspects of the educational experience and the human condition.

However, it would be a mistake to interpret *The History Boys* as Bennett pitting the loveably eccentric Hector against the forces of darkness, represented by Irwin and the Headmaster, in the struggle for the minds – and the hearts – of the eight Oxbridge candidates in the play. He argues that there is a good deal to be said in favour of Hector's idiosyncratic teaching methods while acknowledging their inherent disadvantages.

"I was taught history in a straightforward, factual way, the method used by Mrs Lintott in the play. Then I had to school myself in the technique for passing exams, which Irwin exemplifies in the play, which I'd argue is more a flashy type of journalism rather than a true understanding of the subject."

At the same time, Bennett recognises that in practice most parents would prefer their offspring to be educated by a more orthodox figure than Hector, who has such a lofty disdain for the sitting and the passing of exams. Yet when these same parents are gathered together in an auditorium and they are drawn into a performance of *The History Boys*, their opinions, Bennett maintains, undergo something of a change.

"The audience is on Hector's side", he says. *"I suppose that the best solution would be a teacher who was a mixture of Hector and Irwin and when I first started to work on the play, they were indeed the same character. I think I'm probably trying to reconcile the incompatible but this is surely one of the functions of drama – to bring opposites together. You can often resolve things by writing a play about them."*

It is a measure of Bennett's skill in the building of the character of Hector that the less attractive aspects of the charismatic teacher are somehow forgiven by an audience.

"I thought that this was the right way to imagine Hector," he reveals. *"It is the magic of the theatre that an audience who would be expected to disapprove strongly of Hector's behaviour in real life can be made to sympathise with his situation. It is almost as if they have left their prejudices in the foyer. A lot of audience reaction to any play comes as a surprise and it often takes the actors to show you what you've written. For example, neither Hector nor Posner, the gay History Boy, comes to*



Opposite page, top: A first edition script for Bennett's *"Forty Years On"*.

Opposite page, bottom: An aerial view of Cambridge University.

Above: The Bodleian Library at Oxford University, to where Alan Bennett has donated all of his papers and research work.

a happy ending. Somebody commented that I was therefore punishing them for their sexuality. But such a thought had never entered my head. I'd like to have punished Dakin, though, had it been possible."

Bennett revealed that, amid the heightened sensitivity about child abuse in the wake of the Jimmy Savile scandal, he had been asked about re-writing the role of Hector in a less affectionate light.

"I just said no. It never occurred to me. It's a ridiculous idea that I might rewrite it and I said so, kindly, it was never on the cards,"

Cultural References

Much of the fun of *The History Boys* in performance is generated by the various re-enactments of scenes from classic weepies such as *Now, Voyager* (1942) and *Brief Encounter* (1945). Hector is unlikely to be so well-informed about the icons of today's popular culture – or what was in vogue in 2004 – although Bennett shows an unexpected familiarity with some of them.

"I'm not fond of The X Factor and I was a bit shocked by the level of interest in the programme at the National while we were rehearsing The Habit of Art. But I am very partial to Come Dine With Me, especially when people try to cook enormously complicated and ambitious meals with very little knowledge of what to do. It's fascinating."

Bennett is a past master at assembling the ingredients for a profound comedy that is both deeply serious and wonderfully funny. Even after twenty years, *The History Boys* remains a feast that has lost none of its unique flavour.

Throughout his career, Bennett has been known for his keen observational skills, his ability to capture the nuances of British life, and his exploration of themes such as class, education, and the passage of time. His works often reflect his deep understanding of human nature and his empathy for the complexities of the human experience.

Now that Bennett has turned ninety, there is so much to celebrate in his long and productive career. But we shouldn't simply reduce his plethora of work to warm nostalgic cosiness. Introducing a South Bank Show on Bennett, Melvyn Bragg described him as *"not only one of our funniest playwrights but also a uniquely acute and compassionate observer of England and the English."*

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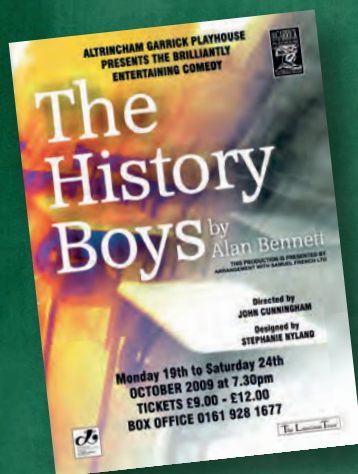
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The History Boys at the Garrick

This week's 20th Anniversary production of Alan Bennett's brilliantly entertaining play marks the third time that we will have staged **The History Boys**.

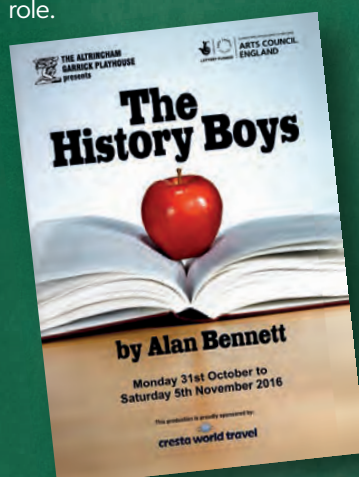
Our 2009 production was directed by **John Cunningham** and designed by **Steph Niland**. Alongside the vastly experienced **Val Watkinson** and **Duncan Battman**, and **Nick Sample** in his second role at the Garrick, the company included two young actors who would go on to enjoy great success, both here at the Garrick – and also in the West End!



2009: *Back row, l to r:* Sam Steiner (Lockwood), Rory Sherlock (Timms), Joe Meighan (Crowther), Sean Gonet (Scripps); *Middle row, l to r:* Nick Sample (Hector), Val Watkinson (Mrs Lintott), Duncan Battman (Headmaster), Mark Dawson (Irwin), Hugh Draycott (Dakin); *Front row, l to r:* Alexander Warden (Posner), Ryan Al-Hakim (Akthar), Will Finlason (Rudge).

Seven years later, the Garrick's second staging was directed by **Nick Sample** and designed by **Juliet Jones**, with Musical Direction by **Peter England**.

Alongside **Celia Bonner** and **Richard Sails**, faces already well-known to Garrick audiences, several of the company of 'Boys' have continued to appear (and direct) at the theatre since then. In a link to the original National Theatre production, **Karun Comar** (Akthar) is a cousin of Sacha Dhawan, who created the role.



2016: *Back row, l to r:* Pete Brassington (Rudge), Daniel Ellis (Lockwood), Jacob Taylor (Scripps), Gabriel Walker (Dakin); *Middle row, l to r:* Celia Bonner (Mrs Lintott), Richard Sails (Hector), Paul Reid (Headmaster), Anthony Morris (Irwin); *Front row, l to r:* Karun Comar (Akthar), David Beeby (Posner), Charlie Gallagher (Crowther), Liam Dodd (Timms).

Alan Bennett

Alan Bennett has had a long and successful career. This timeline highlights some of the key milestones in his life.

1934: Alan Bennett is born on 9 May in the Armley district of Leeds. A son for Walter, a violin-playing Co-op butcher, and his wife, Lilian Mary (née Peel).

1938: Alan attends Christ Church, Upper Armley, Church of England School, where he is in the same class as another pupil who will go on to make their fame and fortune as a writer – Barbara Taylor Bradford.

1945: Bennett is sent to Leeds Modern School, where he excels and eventually wins a scholarship to read medieval history at Exeter College, Oxford.

1952: He is required to do National Service, during which he studies Russian at the Joint Services School for Linguists.

1954: Bennett goes up to Exeter College, Oxford, having successfully applied for a Scholarship..

1957: He graduates with a first class degree in history, after which he starts an academic career as a junior lecturer in history at Magdalen College, Oxford. However, Bennett's involvement with fledgling comedy troupe The Oxford Revue will soon take his career in a different path.

1960: Alongside Dudley Moore, Peter Cook and Jonathan Miller, Bennett appears in the satirical show *Beyond The Fringe* in Edinburgh in August. The show is a huge hit, and transfers to London the following year, where it wins an Evening Standard Award.

1962: *Beyond The Fringe* opens in New York, where it wins a Tony Award. Bennett finally gives up a career in academia, and starts writing for radio, TV and the stage.

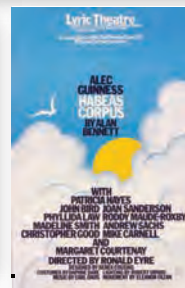
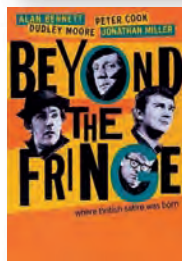
1968: Bennett's first West End play, *Forty Years On*, is staged in London. Directed by Patrick Garland and starring John Gielgud, it is part revue, part play, and is set in a boys' public school called Albion House. Evening Standard Award for Best Play.

1972: *A Day Out*, Bennett's first play for television, is broadcast. It will be followed by *A Little Outing* (1977), *Intensive Care* (1982), *An Englishman Abroad* (1983) and *A Question of Attribution* (1991), amongst others.

1980: Bennett's play *Enjoy*, directed by Ronald Eyre and with a stellar cast including Joan Plowright, Colin Blakeley and Liz Smith, lasts just 7 weeks in the West End. The 2008 revival with David Troughton and Alison Steadman did rather better, with over £1m in advanced ticket sales for the West End following an acclaimed National Tour.

1982: *A Woman of No Importance*, starring Patricia Routledge, is screened by the BBC. It is a forerunner to the phenomenally successful series *Talking Heads* that will make Bennett a household name.

1984: Maggie Smith and Michael Palin feature alongside a scene-stealing Pig in *A Private Function*, a quintessentially English tale about an attempt to defy post-war rationing in late-1940s Yorkshire.



1987: The first series of *Talking Heads* is broadcast. Starring Julie Walters, Maggie Smith, Stephanie Cole, Thora Hird, Patricia Routledge and Bennett himself, the series of six monologues are a huge hit and win numerous awards.

1988: Bennett writes the screenplay for *Prick Up Your Ears*, a biopic about the tragic romance between British playwrights Joe Orton and Kenneth Halliwell, which was conducted at a time when homosexuality was still illegal in the U.K. Alfred Molina and Gary Oldman give terrific performances as the two writers, supported by an equally impressive Vanessa Redgrave as Orton's formidable agent Peggy Ramsay.

1994: The film *The Madness of King George*, based on his brilliant 1991 play *The Madness of George III*, is released. Starring Nigel Hawthorne and Helen Mirren, it earns Bennett an Oscar nomination for his screenplay.

1997: Although he will not reveal it until many years later, Bennett is diagnosed with colon cancer and he is given a less-than 50 per cent chance of surviving. He is treated and makes a full recovery.

1999: *The Lady in the Van* opens in the West End, starring Maggie Smith as the eccentric Mary Shepherd who parked her van and lived in Bennett's driveway for 15 years.

2004: *The History Boys* has its premiere at the Royal National Theatre in London, and goes on to win many awards, including the 2005 Laurence Olivier Award for Best New Play and the 2006 Tony Award for Best Play. It is made into a film directed by Nicholas Hytner in 2006.

2005: Bennett publishes his highly revelatory memoirs, *Untold Stories*, in which he talks about his mother's senility and depression, his battle with cancer, and his bisexuality. The book wins the prestigious J.R. Ackerley Prize for Autobiography.

2009: Bennett's play *The Habit of Art*, about the relationship between the poet W. H. Auden and the composer Benjamin Britten, premieres at the National Theatre to warm reviews.

2012: *People* opens at the National Theatre. In December, *Cocktail Sticks*, an autobiographical play by Bennett, premieres at the National Theatre as part of a double bill with the monologue *Hymn*.

2015: The film *The Lady in the Van* is released.

2018: *Allelujah!*, a comic drama about an NHS hospital threatened with closure, opens at London's Bridge Theatre to critical acclaim.

2020: During the Covid-19 pandemic, a new series of *Talking Heads* is produced by the BBC, with new versions of the much-loved monologues being performed by (amongst others) Imelda Staunton, Harriet Walter, Sarah Lancashire, Martin Freeman, Kristin Scott-Thomas & Jodie Comer.

Cast & Production Team

The Staff

Hector Ivor Farley
Irwin Ben Walsh
Mrs Lintott Lindsey Barker
Headmaster William Teller

The Boys

Dakin Martin Fisher Jr.
Posner Myles Ryan
Scripps Luke O'Hara
Rudge Paul Harrison
Timms Luke Grewer
Akthar Advait Chorghade
Crowther Charlie Gallagher
Lockwood Daniel Hickman

Non-school characters

TV Producer Barry Purves

Director Su Mowat
Composer Mark Goggins
Set Design Mandy Cooke
Stage Manager Alan Jones
Asst. Stage Managers Dave Jones
Tracey Mitchell
Rehearsal Prompt Anne O'Reilly
Lighting Design & Operation Geoff Scullard
Sound Design Mark Goggins
Properties Claire Eddleston-Rose
Costume Design & Production Mike Shaw
Assisted by Stella Blackburn
Julie Shaw Betty Farmer
Lynne Saleh Catherine Phillips
Helen Phillips Sarah Steer
Noel Watson Jen McEvoy
Production Carpenter Steve Cox
Scenic Artist Mandy Cooke
Assisted by Barry Purves Trevor McKie
Jane Milner Charlotte Leigh
Rob Robinson Ruth Stocks
Set Construction Paul Simpson Steve Cox
Trevor McKie Alan Jones
Barry Borgen Mark McEwan
Nick McKie John Murphy
Andy McHugh John Ross
Cliff Mills Dave Bailey
Bob Green Drew Lightfoot
Rehearsal & Production Photography Martin Ogden
Publicity & Programme Design Nick Sample

Information believed to be correct at the time of going to print, but some names and designations could be subject to change.

We would like to politely remind you to switch off all mobile phones for the duration of the performance, and that the taking of photographs, or any kind of filming or recording of the production is strictly prohibited. Thankyou.

Thank You
VERY MUCH

Without our incredibly dedicated, enthusiastic team of **Volunteers** and **Staff**, whose sheer hard work often goes un-noticed, Altrincham Garrick Playhouse would simply be unable to continue providing such a range of top-quality productions for you everyone enjoy.
With their continuous commitment to excellence, we owe them all a huge debt of gratitude. Thankyou all so much!

The Company

The Staff

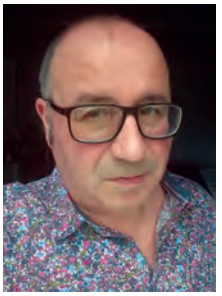


Lindsey Barker – *Mrs Lintott*

Lindsey is thrilled to be playing *Mrs Lintott* in **The History Boys**, and she has thoroughly enjoyed the rehearsal process with this incredibly talented cast. This is her third Alan Bennett play with Altrincham Garrick; the first was **People** (2019) and the second was **The Lady in the Van** (2021).

In the play, Mrs Lintott states Hector is “trying to be the kind of teacher pupils will remember”. As

Mrs Lintott is a history teacher, Lindsey wishes to dedicate this show to the two teachers she remembers the most from school, Mrs Freer and Mrs Saunders, who brought history to life through their passion for the subject.



Ivor Farley – *Hector*

This will be Ivor's 9th production with Altrincham Garrick after having first played the part of *Wilbur* in **Hairspray** in 2016 and then *Bob (the mechanic)* in our hugely successful production of **Priscilla, Queen of the Desert** in 2018, and *Grandpa Potts* in last year's sold-out production of **Chitty Chitty Bang Bang**.

Other Garrick appearances for Ivor include principal roles as *Chef Louis* in **The Little Mermaid**

in 2021, *Calendar Girls* – The Musical in 2022 and as *Jordan Dawkins* in the highly successful and critically acclaimed 2023/24 season opening production of **The Shawshank Redemption**.

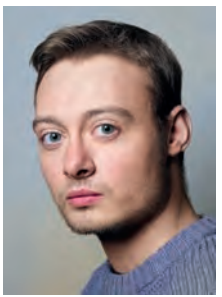
Ivor is delighted to have been cast as *Hector* in **The History Boys** which (as well as being the Nation's favourite play) is one of Ivor's all time favourite plays also!! Ivor has particularly enjoyed the rehearsal process and working alongside this highly talented cast of all ages...



William Teller – *Headmaster*

The History Boys is William's second production for Altrincham Garrick Playhouse, having joined to be part of the *ensemble* for **Merrily We Roll Along** earlier this year. Other drama productions in William's portfolio include the thriller **The Business of Murder**, **Rumours**, **Salt of the Earth**, **Rattle of a Simple Man** and **Sidney Buel** in **Deathtrap**. William's musical experience includes **South Pacific** in 2004 for Preston Musical Comedy. This was quickly followed by **Godspell**,

Kiss Me Kate and **Oklahoma**. William has played some featured roles such as *Francis, the stage manager*, in **La Cage Aux Folles**, the stern *Captain Von Trapp* in **The Sound Of Music** and *John Wilkes Booth* in Stephen Sondheim's **Assassins**. Other productions include **Sweet Charity**, **The Pirates of Penzance** and **The Producers**.



Ben Walsh – *Irwin*

This is Ben's second show at the Altrincham Garrick Playhouse, having appeared as *Young Scrooge/Ensemble* in **A Christmas Carol: A Ghost Story** in 2023. Previous roles include *Victor* in Nick Dear's **Frankenstein**, *Ferdinand* in **The Duchess of Malfi**, *Dysart* in **Equus**, *Rupert* in **Rope**, *Fred* in **Saved**, *Private Gar* in **Philadelphia**, **Here I Come** (ADC Theatre, Cambridge); *Antigonus* in **The Winter's Tale** (OSO Arts Centre/Brighton Fringe) and touring

productions across Europe (**Twelfth Night**) and the USA (**As You Like It**).

The Boys



Advait Chorghade – *Akthar*

Advait is thrilled to be making his debut in **The History Boys** with Altrincham Garrick. A local lad and former student of Altrincham Grammar School for Boys, he discovered his passion for acting through school productions and is excited to bring his experience to the role.

In addition to his love for music and theatre, Advait is a mathematics graduate currently working as a quant. He's a keen chess and poker player and is always up for a game.

Advait extends his heartfelt gratitude to my director, cast, and production team for their support and guidance, as well as for the opportunity to be part of this esteemed production. He's eager to embrace this new experience and is looking forward to the performance.



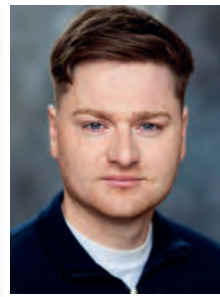
Charlie Gallagher – *Crowther*

Charlie is delighted that he still looks youthful enough to be able to re-create the role of *Crowther* in **The History Boys**, having played the same part in our 2016 staging of Alan Bennett's brilliant play.

Some of Charlie's previous Altrincham Garrick Playhouse appearances include roles in **The Laramie Project**, **Shakespeare In Love**, **One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest**, **The Lieutenant Of Inishmore**, **Beautiful Thing**, **The History**

Boys, **Corrie**, **Blackadder Goes Forth**, and last season he made his musical theatre debut as *An Inventor* and a *Vulgarian Soldier* in **Chitty Chitty Bang Bang**, before giving an unforgettably compelling performance as *Oskar* in the Garrick Ensemble's staging of **Let The Right One In**.

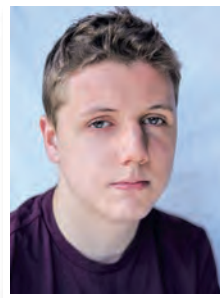
Charlie has loved the whole process working on this amazing play (again!) with such a talented Cast, Director & Crew. He hopes you enjoy the show!



Martin Fisher Jr. – *Dakin*

Making his debut at the Garrick, Martin has been in several productions in the North West since moving to Manchester 2 years ago from his hometown Nottingham. Most recently he appeared at the Salford Arts Theatre back in May for the production of Martin McDonagh's **Hangmen** - a play set in 1960s Oldham.

He has enjoyed greatly working with the wonderful cast and crew and the wider Garrick team who do so much behind the scenes.



Luke Grewer – *Timms*

The History Boys will be Luke's third production at the Altrincham Garrick, performing last year in **The Shawshank Redemption** as *Tommy Williams*, and as *George Gibbs* in **Our Town**. He's very much looking forward to being back on the Garrick stage for the first time in a year.

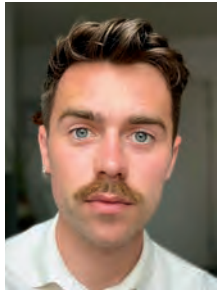
Luke has also trained at East 15 Acting School, performed at The Lowry, and featured in both commercials and TV shows. He is currently studying English & Theatre at the University of Warwick.

He has relished working with such a talented cast and creative team, and wishes to thank everyone involved for creating such a meaningful piece of theatre. He hopes you find the show as enjoyable as he, and *Timms*, definitely do.



Paul Harrison – *Rudge*

Paul is making his debut with the Altrincham Garrick Playhouse in **The History Boys**, and is delighted to be part of such an enjoyable production.



Daniel Hickman – *Lockwood*

Daniel Hickman is a new actor from Stockport. This is only his second role, having began acting in January of this year. His previous credit was for his role as *Billy Crocker* in **Anything Goes** at the Bramhall Brookdale Theatre this April, for which he received a GMDF nomination. He will appear later this year at the Stockport Plaza playing the role of *Freddy* in the Stockport Operatic Society's production of **My Fair Lady**. As of this show's run, Daniel will have just begun a foundation year

studying Musical Theatre at the Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts. He is thrilled to be making his Altrincham Garrick debut in one of his favourite plays of all time and considers Alan Bennett one of his literary idols.



Luke O'Hara – *Scripps*

Luke is a Manchester based actor who is delighted to be returning to the Garrick, having previously performed in **The Shawshank Redemption** (2023) and the Garrick Ensemble's 2024 production of **Let The Right One In**.

Luke's credits beyond the Garrick Playhouse include Richard Bean's **One Man Two Guvnors**, Tristan Bernays' **Boudica** and Timberlake Wertenbaker's **Our Country's Good**.

He previously earned an MA in English Literature and Theatre Studies from the University of Glasgow, and currently acts weekly with Manchester Television Workshops under the mentorship of practitioner Anthony Crank.

Luke would like to thank the whole cast and creative team for their enthusiasm and commitment to bringing this much-loved and acclaimed Bennett play to life!



Myles Ryan – *Posner*

This is Myles' fifth show with Altrincham Garrick, and he is incredibly excited to be a part of this fantastic Alan Bennett play. Myles has previously starred in Garrick productions as *Flotsam* in **The Little Mermaid** (2021), *Sam* in **Shakespeare in Love**, *Mowgli* in **The Jungle Book** and *Rapunzel's Prince* in **Into The Woods** (2023). He has also performed in a number of shows in the north west over the years, in roles such as *Eugene* in **Grease** (KMTC, 2019), *Dean Hyde* in **All Shook Up**

(KMTC, 2018), *Seymour Krelbourn* in **Little Shop of Horrors** (FPAC, 2022), *Jack* in **Into The Woods** (All Saints, 2019) for which he was nominated for Best Leading Actor at the final Manchester Musical Awards, and *Davy* in **Sunshine on Leith** (Mid Cheshire Musical Theatre, 2021), for which he received the Act Award in 2022 for Most Accomplisher Actor.

Myles has gained several years of theatre experience from a young age as part of Stagecoach, performing in shows such as **A Christmas Carol**, **The Wiz** and **The Jungle Book**. He was thrust into the limelight in 2010 as he appeared in the 4th series of **Britain's Got Talent** as part of boyband **Connected**, making it to that year's final. Along with twin brother Connor, he has also performed at events such as the Blackpool Illumination Switch On and the Bury Olympic torch relay event. Myles has also presented and produced his own panel show '**Student Speak**' on local TV station That's TV. Myles wants to thank the entire cast and production team for their hard work and is really excited to be returning to the Garrick stage and heading 'back to school'.

Non-School Characters



Barry Purves – *TV Producer*

Barry is delighted to follow a season of cameo appearances with another one in this masterpiece of a play by Alan Bennett. Barry has previously directed Bennett's **Habeas Corpus**, and designed both **The Lady in the Van** and **The Habit of Art**.

Barry has been with the Garrick for twenty five years, mainly directing and designing such recent productions as **Frankenstein**, **Love! Valour!**

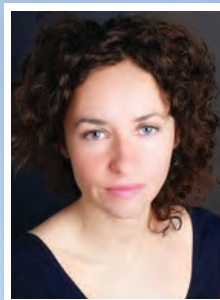
Compassion! and **A Christmas Carol – A Ghost Story**. He is currently Head of Design and will be directing the tender musical **A Man of No Importance** in the Garrick Studio next spring.

Away from the Garrick Barry is an Oscar and BAFTA nominated film maker, working on both children's series such as **The Wind in the Willows** and **Twirly-woos**, as well as his own darker films such as **Achilles** and **Tchaikovsky – an Elegy**, and also being involved with **Mars Attacks** and **King Kong**. The career has certainly been varied, from spending a week down George Harrison's trousers for a music video, to presenting the final of the Chinese equivalent of 'The X Factor', speaking in Cantonese.

Barry will be missing this Friday's performance due to having a retrospective at the National Film Theatre.

Barry also has his own weekly radio show on **radioalty.co.uk**, called *Bedtime with Barry* featuring an hour of musical massage.

The Director



Su Mowat

Su is a Senior Lecturer on the BA (Hons) Music Theatre degree course at UCLan where she teaches acting and yoga. She trained as an actor at the Oxford School of Drama and studied Physical Theatre at Royal Holloway, University of London.

Su has directed many musical theatre productions including **Oklahoma!**, **Guys and Dolls**, **RENT**, **H.M.S. Pinafore**,

Sweeney Todd, **Children of Eden**, **Just So**, **Sweet Charity**, **Weird Romance**, **Bad Girls**, **Honk!**, and, most recently, **The Tales of Hoffmann** for Preston Opera. Su has also directed **Blue Stockings** and **Home, I'm Darling** for the Altrincham Garrick Playhouse.

Su would like to thank everyone on the Creative Team for their support, resourcefulness and talent, and the Cast who have made the process a total pleasure!

Not forgetting, behind the scenes



Anne O'Reilly – *Prompt*

After several years as an ASM, managing quick changes, hiding in a Triffid (**Little Shop of Horrors**) providing cakes and Bath buns (**Brief Encounter**) producing wine, beer, whisky, tea and Champagne (**Fur Coat No Knickers**) blood, bodies not to mention a live cat (**The Lieutenant of Inishmore**) and draping actors in mouldy vegetables (**Carry On Cleo**). Anne decided to opt for a more

sedate role in the Garrick team and took over duties 'on the book' for **The Lady in the Van**, **All My Sons** and **A Christmas Carol – A Ghost Story**, and more recently **The Audience**. Anne has thoroughly enjoyed supporting the cast of boys and staff in bringing their characters to life in yet another fabulous Alan Bennett play.

Education in 1980's England

Secondary Education after 1944

With the exception of the major public schools, English secondary education was erratic prior to World War II.

It depended largely on individual communities and local churches. Then, in 1944, the Butler Education Act introduced free education for everyone, especially those unable to afford private education. They converted many of the old community and church schools and introduced others to underserved areas. The Act established the Tripartite System of education in which students in secondary schools (ages 11-16) were divided between three different types of schools:

Secondary technical schools taught science and engineering minded students; **Secondary modern schools** taught practical life skills for blue collar or home employment; and **Grammar schools** taught general academics to intellectually inclined students destined for University.

Students took an examination (the eleven-plus exam) in their last year of primary school (ages 5-10) to determine which type of school they would attend; a future decided at age ten. Most schools were funded by the government, although some had endowments bequeathed by former pupils.

At the time of its creation, the Tripartite System was lauded for providing free education and merit-based social mobility. In practice, however, the public was dissatisfied with both the eleven-plus exam and the quality of education at the secondary modern schools. Thus in the 1950s and 60s an alternative, the **Comprehensive school**, was introduced. The comprehensive school was an amalgamation of the grammar and secondary modern schools, and depended on a national curriculum.

The 1980s

In the 1980s, education was considered complete at age sixteen at which point students took exams in multiple subjects, called the General Certificate of Secondary Education or GCSE. After this, school was no longer compulsory. However, for those students wishing to enter University, two additional years of study (the Sixth Form) were available at many comprehensive schools. In these classes, students studied for their General Certificate Advance Level exams (A-levels). Most universities required a certain number of A-levels for entrance and some, such as the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, required additional special admissions exams for entrance.

The History Boys takes place after the boys have taken their A-levels, while they are preparing for these special exams. Alan Bennett deliberately chose to set his play in the early 1980s, as it was the last time that pupils applying for Oxford or Cambridge would come back to their schools in the Autumn, having completed their 'A' Levels in the summer, and do an extra term in preparation for applying for Oxbridge.

Grammar Schools in the 1980s

Grammar Schools have a long history in the UK, dating back to the medieval period.

However, by the 1980s, their role and prevalence in the educational system had become a topic of considerable debate. Grammar Schools were selective, admitting students based on their performance in the 11-plus exam, typically taken at age 11. These schools were often seen as providing a more academic education compared to other secondary schools, and they were traditionally associated with higher academic achievement and progression to prestigious universities.

In the 1980s, the number of Grammar Schools was significantly reduced due to the push for a more comprehensive system of education. The Labour government in the 1960s and 1970s had promoted the Comprehensive School model, which aimed to provide a more egalitarian form of education by eliminating the selective Grammar School system. By the time Margaret Thatcher came to power, the majority of secondary schools in England were comprehensives, but some Grammar Schools remained, particularly in certain counties and urban areas.

Thatcher herself was a product of a Grammar School education and had a complex relationship with the concept of selective education. While her government did not actively promote the expansion of Grammar Schools, it also did not pursue the aggressive closure of these institutions. Instead, Thatcher's government focused on increasing competition and parental choice within the existing framework of secondary education. This approach indirectly supported the survival of Grammar Schools, as these institutions were often seen as more desirable by parents who wanted their children to receive an academically rigorous education.

The Challenges of Getting into Oxford and Cambridge

Access to elite universities such as Oxford and Cambridge (collectively known as Oxbridge) remained a significant challenge for students from less privileged backgrounds in the 1980s. These institutions had long been associated with the British establishment and were seen as gateways to the upper echelons of society. However, admission to Oxford and Cambridge was highly competitive, and students from state schools, particularly comprehensives, were often at a disadvantage compared to their peers from private or Grammar Schools.

One of the key barriers to Oxbridge entry for state school students was the perception that these universities were only for the wealthy and well-connected. This perception was reinforced by the social and





Opposite page: A typical 1980s classroom in a middle-ranking Grammar School.
Above: Protesting teachers outside a 1980s Pricefighter store.
Below: Spitting Image's puppet of Conservative Education Secretary Kenneth Baker.

cultural milieu of the universities, where the majority of students came from affluent backgrounds, often having attended prestigious private schools such as Eton, Harrow, and Westminster. The admissions process itself was also seen as biased against state school students, with interviews and entrance exams that favoured those who had been prepared in environments that closely mirrored the academic and social culture of Oxbridge.

In the 1980s, there was increasing awareness of these inequalities, and efforts were made by both universities to reach out to a broader range of applicants. However, these efforts were often hampered by the entrenched advantages enjoyed by private school students, including better resources, smaller class sizes, and a curriculum that was more closely aligned with Oxbridge entrance requirements.

Margaret Thatcher's Education Policy

Margaret Thatcher's government is perhaps best known for its market-oriented reforms in various sectors of British society, and education was no exception. One of the key principles underlying Thatcher's education policy was the belief that competition and consumer choice would drive up standards. This approach marked a significant shift from the more egalitarian principles that had guided educational policy in the post-war period.

The 1988 Education Reform Act, introduced under the Conservative's Education Secretary Kenneth Baker, was the cornerstone of Thatcher's educational reforms. This legislation introduced several significant changes, including the establishment of a national curriculum, the introduction of standardised testing at key stages of a child's education, and the publication of school league tables. These measures were intended to increase accountability and transparency in the education system, enabling parents to make more informed choices about their children's education.

The marketisation of education had several important consequences. Firstly, it increased the pressure on schools to perform well in standardised tests and league tables, which often led to a narrowing of the curriculum and a focus on exam preparation at the expense of a

broader educational experience. Secondly, it exacerbated inequalities between schools, as those that performed well in league tables attracted more students and resources, while those that struggled found it increasingly difficult to improve. Finally, it reinforced the divide between different types of schools, with Grammar Schools and successful comprehensives becoming more selective and elitist, while less successful comprehensives and former Secondary Modern Schools faced declining enrolments and resources.

The Impact on Teachers and Teaching

Thatcher's education policies also had a profound impact on teachers and the teaching profession. The increased emphasis on standardised testing and accountability led to greater scrutiny of teachers' performance and a more centralised control over what was taught in schools. The introduction of the national curriculum meant that teachers had less autonomy over their lessons and were required to focus on the subjects and content specified by the government.

These changes led to a significant increase in workload and stress for teachers, as they were expected to meet the demands of the new testing and accountability regime. The emphasis on performance and results also contributed to a more competitive and less collaborative atmosphere in schools, with teachers feeling pressured to ensure their students achieved high test scores, sometimes at the expense of their overall development and well-being.

The Conservative government's relationship with the teaching profession was often contentious during the 1980s. Teachers' unions were critical of many of the government's reforms, arguing that they undermined the professional autonomy of teachers and imposed a narrow, test-focused approach to education. Strikes and industrial action by teachers were relatively common during this period, reflecting the tensions between the government's market-oriented policies and the values of the teaching profession.



The Legacy of the 1980s in Education

The education policies and changes introduced in the 1980s under Margaret Thatcher have had a lasting impact on the English education system. The market-oriented approach to education, with its emphasis on competition, parental choice, and accountability, has continued to shape educational policy in the decades since, under both Conservative and Labour governments.

One of the most enduring legacies of the 1980s is the continued debate over the role of Grammar Schools in the English education system. While the number of Grammar Schools has remained relatively small, they continue to be a contentious issue, with

some arguing that they provide opportunities for bright students from disadvantaged backgrounds, while others contend that they perpetuate inequality and social division.

The 1980s also set the stage for the ongoing discussion about access to elite universities like Oxford and Cambridge. While there have been efforts to increase the number of students from state schools and less privileged backgrounds at these institutions, the challenges of achieving true equity in access remain significant. The social and economic inequalities that were evident in the 1980s continue to influence educational outcomes and opportunities today.

A Glossary

Accessions Desk – Library Circulation Desk.

St. Aelred – (1109-1166) Abbot of Rievaulx Abbey.

Apotheosis – the perfect example.

Black Magic – Nestlé brand high-end (in the 1980s) chocolates.

CV – the abbreviation of the Latin curriculum vitae meaning “course of life.” Like a resumé, it outlines individual academic achievement, “cheats visa” is Hector’s pun on the abbreviation.

Cenotaph – A memorial for those whose remains are elsewhere. The Cenotaph referred to here is the one in London erected in 1919 inscribed with “The Glorious dead” words chosen by Rudyard Kipling.

Cistercian – A monastic order founded on the Rule of St. Benedict as interpreted by St. Bernard of Clairvaux. There are two suborders of the strict (Trappists) and common observance (Cistercians).

Compound adjective – formed when two or more adjectives are put together to modify the same noun for example homemade or in the case of the Hardy poem quoted in the play unconfined.

Decrepitude – the state of being decrepit, weakened by old age.

Dons – A head tutor or fellow at Oxford or Cambridge.

Diffidence – hesitant, lacking self-confidence.

Eponymous – Of the same name, in this case the navel orange.

Ethos – distinguishing character.

Euphemism – The substitution of an inoffensive or indirect expression for one that may cause offense.

Exhibition – a merit scholarship, the amount is less than a scholarship.

Fiddling – British slang for fondling the genitals.

Gerund – A gerund is a verb that ends in -ing and functions as a noun.

Give him the Money, Barney

– A phrase introduced by Wilfred Pickles in the long running BBC radio show “Have A Go.” Barney referred to Barney Colehan, who was a producer for BBC in the North and gave money away as prizes on general knowledge quizzes.



Gobbets – a mouthful, morsel or lump; in the play the gobbets refer to the quotations being used in essays and there seems a method of applying these sources at Oxford.

Hecatombs – Large scale sacrifice or slaughter, originally Greek or Roman slaughter of 100 cattle or oxen.

Histrionics – Theatrical performances, deliberate display of emotion for effect.

Hun – Disparaging slang for Germans, used especially during World War I.

Je divague – French for “I am rambling” or “I digress”.

Kitty – a pot or pool of money generally for a card game.

Matins – Morning prayer, originally part of the series of hours of prayer: Matins, Lauds, Vespers, etc. In the context of the play would mark Scripps religious observance as being “high church” for the Church of England and be an additional service Scripps is attending.

Nancy – British, negative slang for a homosexual man.

In addition, to the scenes in French and numerous literary references, Alan Bennett also uses a number of words, names, phrases and references that may be unfamiliar to some...

National Front – A British right wing political organisation formed in 1967 from other political groups who shared an anti-immigration, racist fear of the impact of immigrants on England as well as fears about communism and capitalism. A strong proponent of nationalism, they opposed both NATO and the UN. In short, Irwin’s assertion that Orwell would have been a member of the National Front is contrary to all of Orwell’s anti-totalitarian and anti-racist writing.



Off your own bat – to do something without being told; slang, probably with its origins in cricket.

On stream – British slang for on line, on track.

Otiose – futile, lacking use or effect.

Pass the parcel – a children’s game in which music is played and when it stops the person holding the parcel is allowed to take a layer off; when the music starts the parcel must be passed again. The person who removes the last layer gets to keep the present.

Push the boat out – To spend more than one is normally accustomed to doing, often to mark a special occasion.



Mr. Quelches – Likely refers to Mr. Quelch in the Billy Bunter serial first published in 1908 by Charles Hamilton under the pen name Frank Richards. The series follows the schoolboy adventures of Billy Bunter. Mr. Quelch was the master at the school known for hitting his pupils.

Quid pro quo – Something given or received for something else – direct trade.

Reconnoitered – To explore with the goal of finding something or somebody.

Renaissance Man – An individual who excels in multiple fields.

Reredorter – A Latrine attached to the abbey, generally involving some water mechanics to move the waste away from the abbey and yet not pollute drinking water.

Rievaulx Abbey –

In North Yorkshire, a Cistercian Abbey, founded by St. Bernard of Clairvaux.





Roche Abbey – The ruins of twelfth-century Roche Abbey lie in the wooded valley of the Maltby Beck, about 9 miles from Doncaster and 13 miles from Sheffield in South Yorkshire. During the reign of Henry VIII, the abbey was dissolved, the monks dispersed and the abbey buildings destroyed.

Shrunken violets – derisive slang for homosexuals. Here the Headmaster is referring to Plato, Michelangelo and Oscar Wilde, all of whom were known to be or believed to be homosexuals.

Sod – Mildly offensive slang in the UK derived from sodomites but not retaining the sexual connotations in the insult.

The Spectator – British weekly political and literary magazine founded in 1828.

Subjunctive – is a verb tense used for talking about events that are not certain to happen.

Tot – generally slang for a small child or a small amount of liquor.

Totty – formerly slang for a prostitute in the 1800s.

Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner – a French proverb meaning to understand all is to forgive all. Rudge quotes this during the discussion of the Holocaust.

Travel on the other bus – a euphemism for homosexuality.

Trollop – A vulgar or disreputable woman, especially one who engages in sex for money.

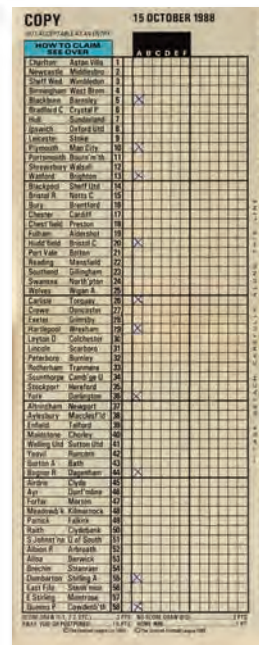
Twat – fathead, jackass, originally slang for female genitalia.

The Unknown Soldier – A symbolic tomb set up to honour soldiers whose bodies were not recovered during a war, often containing the remains of an unidentified soldier. The modern trend was started when a soldier of World War I was buried in Westminster Abbey in 1920.

Vertiginous – dizzying, causing vertigo.

West Riding – A historic subdivision of Yorkshire.

Won the pools – The Football Pools was the forerunner of the National Lottery, when people would bet on the results of the Saturday afternoon football matches. (All games were played on Saturday afternoon in the 1980s). If you correctly predicted 8 matches (out of your chosen 10) that ended in a score-draw, you would win the jackpot. A score draw was worth 3 points on the pools, a 0-0 draw 2 points, an away win 1 1/2 points and a home win 1 point, and - depending upon that day's results - prizes were paid out for claimants with between 24 and 21 points.



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**Tues 1 –
Sun 6 October**

**An Irish tale of love and loss,
with a bit of madness
in between...**

Martin McDonagh's

THE BEAUTY QUEEN OF LEENANE



Directed by
Mark Giggins

"Sometimes I dream... of anything! Of anything. Other than this."

In the mountains of Connemara, County Galway, Maureen Folan – a plain, lonely woman, tied to her manipulative and ageing mother, Mag – comes alive at her first and possibly last prospect of a new life. But Mag has other ideas; and her interference sets in motion a train of events that leads inexorably towards the play's breathtaking conclusion.

A Tony Award-winning dark comedy thriller, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* is one of playwright Martin McDonagh's (*Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri*, *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*) finest achievements. The play conjures up the unbearable tension and loneliness of an isolated existence that surely speaks to all of us today.

"Crackles with emotional fire and the blackest of comedy that is both hilarious and horrific" (The Guardian)

WARNING: This production includes scenes of violence, cruelty and strong language. The production also contains sexual references and themes of loneliness, abuse and mental health.

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!

We value your feedback, and would like to invite you to share your thoughts about the Altrincham Garrick Playhouse. Have you enjoyed a recent performance, or didn't enjoy it for some reason? Perhaps there's something we could improve on? Are there specific plays, musicals, or shows you'd love to see on our stage? Any visiting acts you'd like to recommend? What do you think of this programme? How did you find out about what you came to see? We would love to receive your reviews and suggestions.

This season, we've partnered with Star Feedback to make it easy for you to share your opinions. Simply scan the QR code (right) and let us know what you think. Thank you for helping us create the best experience possible!



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WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Our Next Production on the Main Stage

A bold, exciting and inspirational retelling of one woman's struggle for freedom against all odds.

JANE EYRE

Written by **Charlotte Brontë**

Adapted by **Polly Teale**

Directed by **Carole Carr**

As a child, the orphaned Jane Eyre is taught by a succession of severe guardians to stifle her natural exuberance. A part of herself is locked away, out of view of polite society... until she arrives at Rochester's house as a governess to his young child.

Soon, Rochester's passionate nature reawakens Jane's hidden self, but darker secrets are stirring in the attic...

A bold and theatrically inventive adaptation of the literary classic that puts the interior life of the novel on stage.

Charlotte Brontë's story of the trailblazing Jane Eyre is as inspiring as ever!

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Monday 7 –



Saturday 12 October



Evenings 7:30pm

Matinée, Saturday 12 at 2:30pm

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