

# A MURDER IS ANNOUNCED

by Agatha Christie

adapted by Leslie Darbon

by arrangement with ORiGiN Theatrical  
on behalf of Samuel French Ltd



## Director's Note

Mathew Pritchard, grandson of Agatha Christie, wrote in a recent essay that in turning to playwriting, his grandmother recognized that she faced an "entirely new challenge, one requiring a different approach". And success was not immediate - a play called *Verdict* ran only briefly in London's West End.

Nonetheless, the phenomenally successful novelist eschewed the easiest route. Adapting for the stage four novels that featured her beloved detective Hercule Poirot, she removed the character completely. By 1954 Agatha Christie had three West End hits running simultaneously. The plays differed in kind: *The Mousetrap* was a whodunnit; *Spider's Web* as much a comedy as a mystery; and *Witness for the Prosecution* - the play of which she was most proud - was built around a court of law. Sixty-five years after its London premiere the opening run of *The Mousetrap* is still under way.

Christie also wrote radio plays, one-act plays - and one play that has been compared to the best of Terence Rattigan. Held back by her family until recent years, *A Daughter's Daughter* was described in 2009 by The Daily Mail as "well worth catching ... showing a ferocious understanding of the human heart" and depicting "the suffocating lot of women in times past".

The poet W.H. Auden, a great aficionado of detective fiction, proposed in his essay 'The Guilty Vicarage' (the title being a kiss blown to *Murder at the Vicarage*, Agatha Christie's first published novel) that a whodunnit "gives Genesis a happy ending". It introduces a serpent into the garden of Eden but concludes with its expulsion, leaving Adam and Eve to enjoy their restored innocence. It shows us what we most fear, and then creates the illusion that human reason can both understand it and resolve it.

I trust that in attending the 2017 Genesian Theatre production of *A Murder Is Announced* - an Agatha Christie novel adapted by Leslie Darbon - audiences will enjoy seeing Miss Jane Marple confront and scotch an unexpected snake, lighting the way for the return of village bliss.

*John Grinston*  
Director

**JOHN GRINSTON - Director** John Grinston studied at The Drama Studio, Sydney. He has acted with The New England Theatre Company (*Brer Rabbit*); at New Theatre (*No End of Blame*, *Privates on Parade*, *Queen Christina*, *Death of Peter Pan*, *Misalliance*, *The American Clock*, *After The Fall*, *The Tempest*, *Assassins*, *Traitors*, *The Canterbury Tales*); in the title role in Tryst Theatre Co's *Amadeus*; at the Stables (*Sting Ray*); at Theatre Royal (*Chess*); at Genesian Theatre (*Saint Joan*, *Dangerous Corner*, *Sherlock Holmes*); at the Old Fitz (*King Lear*, *Measure For Measure*); in the Sydney and Melbourne seasons of Pop Up Theatre's *My Mother and Other Catastrophes*; and with Sport for Jove (*Three Sisters*). Television roles include Elizabeth Bligh's solicitor in *A Place to Call Home*. *A Murder Is Announced* marks his debut as a director of a full-length play.

**JONTY DAVIES-CONYNGHAM - Assistant Director** Jonty is a film director, editor, actor, and writer making his debut in theatre direction as the Assistant Director for *A Murder Is Announced*. Jonty has been directing short films since he was fifteen, one of which was screened at the Into The West film festival. Currently studying film production at UTS, he is also involved professionally in film editing, photography, and music video creation. In 2016, he performed at The Genesian Theatre in *Our House*.

**RACHEL GIUFFRE - Set & Costume Design** Rachel graduated from NIDA with a high distinction in 2014. Since completing her course, Rachel has taken on a wide variety of design roles in events, theatre, and film as well as pursuing a career in illustrating. Amongst many notable projects, she has designed sets and costumes for Opera Australia's Young Artist Program, designed and made costumes for *Get To Work*; a dance troupe in the Solomon Islands, and designed the costumes for Tourism Australia's first ever hologram museum.

**LIAM O'KEEFE - Lighting Design** Liam is a freelance Lighting Designer and technician based in Sydney. Recent design work includes *Transcience* (leftofcentre theatre co.), *Smudge* (The King's Fools), *The Tragedy of Antigone* (Ninefold), *Contrite Spirit* (Edgewise Forum), *Shut up and Drive* (subtlenuance), *Year of the Family* (Tooth and Sinew), *The Poor Kitchen* (subtlenuance), and *Femme Fatale* (leftofcentre theatre co.). As a technician, he has been a part of the lighting team for five national tours, the Sydney Festival, and The Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour's *Carmen*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Aida*, and *Turandot*. Liam was lighting designer for *Dracula* at the Genesian in 2016, and *Under Milk Wood* in 2017.

**MICHAEL SCHELL - Sound Design** Michael has been a member of the Genesian Theatre for over 35 years. A professional Sound and Lighting Designer, his Genesian credits include *Great Expectations*, *St Joan*, *The 39 Steps*, *Terra Nova*, *Frankenstein*, and *Sherlock Holmes: The Final Adventure*. Other recent Genesian sound design credits include *Pride and Prejudice*, *The Mousetrap*, *Crown Matrimonial*, *Spider's Web*, and *Three Sisters*.



**MOLLY HADDON - Julia Simmons** Molly attended Macquarie University to study Media and is currently training at AFTRS, doing a Graduate Certificate in Cinematography. She began acting at an early age, but since 2013, Molly has mainly been working behind the scenes both in theatre and film. She is happy to be returning to the stage. Past theatre credits include *Murder on the Nile*, *The Removalists*, *The Tender Age*, *Hamlet*, *Cursed Hearts*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Molly's film credits include *Alex and Sam* and *Restroom*.

**SUZANN JAMES - Letitia Blacklock** Suzann James studied performing arts in her native NZ at the National Academy of Singing and Dramatic Art. Her acting career has included the classics as well as musical theatre and television. Some of her memorable characters include Blanche Dubois in *Streetcar Named Desire*, Babe Botrelle in *Crimes of the Heart*, Julia in *Me and My Friend*, and Christina in *Dancing at Lughnasa*. Suzann was last seen as Paulina in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* - she is delighted to be performing *A Murder is Announced* with the GTC.



**ROS RICHARDS - Dora Bunner** Ros Richards originally trained as a dancer and worked professionally for many years in musical theatre in the U.K., South Africa, and Australia. She has been involved in community and fringe theatre for over 25 years. Ros last appeared at the Genesians in *Murder on the Nile*. Recent favourite roles include *Sister City* and *After Easter* (Factory Space Theatre Company), *Nana* (Short & Sweet Grand Finals, 2014), and *Horizons* (awarded Best Actress at Port Macquarie Festival of One Act Plays).

**ANTHONY KING - Patrick Simmons** Anthony King graduated from St Mary's Cathedral College in 2016, placing first in Drama, and has been accepted into NIDA. His previous experience includes lead roles in: *Hairspray: The Musical*, *Chess: The Musical*, *Into the Woods*, and *Julius Caesar*. In 2015, Anthony was one of 20 students selected across NSW to participate in Sydney Theatre Company's inaugural 'Young Wharfies' programme. This is Anthony's first production with The Genesian Theatre Company.



**JESS DAVIS - Mitzi** Jess Davis is excited to be a part of her first production at The Genesians. Her previous roles include Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Celia in *As You Like It*, Elena in Chekhov's *The Bear*, Marty Maraschino in *Grease*, Morticia Addams in *The Addams Family Musical*, and Lotte Jones in *Trojan Barbie*. In 2017, she did *The Vagina Monologues* for Vday Central Coast, *Blithe Spirit* for Endless Night

Theatre Company, and appeared in her first feature film as Sheridan in *Bugs* for Winona Winona Productions.

**SANDRA BASS - Miss Marple** Sandra Bass is a long-standing member of the Genesian Theatre. Over the years, she has progressed from being the glamorous murderess in *The Murder Room* to such roles as Lady Westholme from *Appointment with Death*, who regarded murder as an inconvenient interruption to her holiday. Sandra is delighted to be playing Miss Marple and challenges you to solve the problem of whodunnit before she reveals the solution.





**EMMA WRIGHT - Phillipa Haymes** Emma Wright, a Bond University graduate, played Hannah in *Mako Mermaids*. Her directing debut *Anchor* recently launched on ABC having screened at 14 film festivals internationally. Theatre credits: Fiona in *Eyes to the Floor*, Emma in *Orbit* (QTC/Grin and Tonic), Tegwyn in *That Eye The Sky* (New Theatre), Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing* (Genesian Theatre), Amanda in *Consensual* (New Theatre), and Emma in the upcoming *Emma* (Genesian). Emma's training includes Warehouse Workshop, ACA, The Hub, ATYP, and 16thStreet.

**LOIS MARSH - Clara Swettenham** Lois Marsh trained at the Independent Drama School in North Sydney. She has appeared in other Agatha Christie murder mysteries: *Appointment with Death* at the Genesian Theatre and *Black Coffee* at Pymble Players. At the Genesian Theatre, she has also performed in *The Winslow Boy*, *Pride & Prejudice*, *Coward at Christmas*, and *Great Expectations*, and for the New Theatre she was cast in the Australian musical *Dinkum Assorted*.



**CHRIS BARTLETT - Edmund Swettenham** Chris Bartlett is currently a part-time acting student in his first year at The National Institute of Dramatic Art. The most recent production he has had the pleasure to be a part of was Salt House Theatre Company's production of *The Importance of Being Earnest* in which he played one of the leads, Algernon Moncrieff. This is Chris' first production with The Genesian Theatre Company.

**DAVID LUCAS - Rudi Scherz** David Lucas, a young actor for 3 years, plays the role of Rudi Scherz. He is extremely proud to join the Genesian Theatre for his theatrical debut, after years on the short film circuit. He has acted in and directed several university films and national commercials.



**PETER ALLISON - Inspector Craddock** Peter David Allison graduated from Wesley Institute (now Excelsia College) with a Bachelor of Drama in 2010. Since then, he has acted steadily in the theatre, with highlights including productions of *Hamlet* (2011), *The Importance of Being Earnest* (2011), *The Whiskey Bar* (2012), which won the People's Choice Award at that year's Short + Sweet Festival, *Orpheus in the Underworld* (2016), *Romeo and Juliet* (2016), *The Great Divorce* (2016), and *Journey's End* (2017).

**ANTHONY SADLER - Sergeant Mellors** Anthony Sadler graduated from Curtin University, Perth, in 2014, with a Masters in Creative Practice, specializing in Performance Studies. As part of his studies he acted in various university theatre productions and produced his own show from the Chekhov farce play, *The Bear*. After graduating, Anthony acted in a number of short films, commercials, feature films, and plays. Last year, Anthony made his Sydney theatre debut in *Three Sisters*, with Sport for Jove. *A Murder is Announced* marks Anthony's first engagement with Genesian Theatre Company.



## **Production**

Director

**John Grinston**

Assistant Director

**Jonty Davies-Conyngham**

Set & Costume Design

**Rachel Giuffre**

Lighting Design

**Liam O'Keefe**

Sound Design

**Michael Schell**

Production Manager

**Debbie Smith**

Costume Assistant

**Susan Carveth**

Lighting Assistant

**Daniel Hitchings**

Rehearsal Prompt

**Amit Mehta**

Set Construction

**Tom Fahy, Members of the Company**

Photography

**Debbie Smith, Anthony Burns - Homepix**

Graphic Design

**Patrick Magee, Tom Massey**

Ticketing

**Shane Bates**

Transport

**Debbie Smith**

## **Crew**

Stage Manager

**Concey Bosco**

Assistant Stage Manager

**Isabela Sandoli**

Lighting & Sound Operation

**Macushla McGown, Carlin Hurdis**

## **Cast**

Julia Simmons

**Molly Haddon**

Letitia Blacklock

**Suzann James**

Dora Bunner

**Ros Richards**

Patrick Simmons

**Anthony King**

Mitzi

**Jess Davis**

Miss Marple

**Sandra Bass**

Phillipa Haymes

**Emma Wright**

Clara Swettenham

**Lois Marsh**

Edmund Swettenham

**Chris Bartlett**

Rudi Scherz

**David Lucas**

Inspector Craddock

**Peter Allison**

Sergeant Mellors

**Anthony Sadler**

# About the Genesian Theatre

The Genesian Theatre Company celebrated our 70th year as a company in 2014. For over 60 years we have been operating from our home at 420 Kent St in the Sydney CBD. We boast among our alumni numerous household names in Australian theatre and film such as Bryan Brown, Baz Luhrmann, Judi Farr, and John Bell. We are also just as proud of the hundreds of other talented actors, directors, stage managers, set and costume designers, lighting and sound specialists, stage and production staff who have contributed to Sydney's unique little theatre. We are particularly proud of all our members who volunteer their time to work Front of House to help you enjoy your visit to the Genesian Theatre.

Over the years the company has developed into a theatre providing a training ground for young theatre professionals and a place where those who love the theatre can meet, share, and extend their knowledge of the performing arts. The Genesian Theatre Company is one of Sydney's most active theatre companies. In addition to six main stage productions each year we run classes, workshops, and many other activities.

The building which houses the Genesian Theatre Company was originally St John's Church, and dates from 1868. It served as both a church and a poor school until 1932 when it became the Kursaal Theatre, housing the Sydney Repertory Company. In 1938 it became the first Matthew Talbot Hostel. Since 1954 it has been the home of the Genesian Theatre Company which was formed in 1944.

The Genesian Theatre Company acknowledges the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation as the traditional custodians of the land our theatre stands on.

## Membership

If you're interested in acting, directing, stage management, sound, lights, publicity, admin, etc, or if you just want to experience being a member of the group, we would welcome you as a member. You don't need to be experienced, we can provide training and can cater to different levels of involvement. Please see our web site for further information.

Coming next to the Genesian Theatre...

# EMMA

by Jane Austen

adapted by Pamela Whalan

[www.genesiantheatre.com.au](http://www.genesiantheatre.com.au)

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